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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy failed to secure even pass marks in any public survey conducted last year. The discontent among people has been consistent across all sections, reflecting poorly on the Congress Government's performance. Ask anyone, and the response is the same. People are unhappy with Revanth's governance



- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

SpaDeX precursor to India's own space station: Jitendra

'I'VE MOVED
past dwelling on what's not happening—gratitude drives me forward

Preity looks stunning as Princess Nemali in KANNAPPA

DON'T MISS...

Multiple violations found at restaurants

The Task Force Team of Telangana's Commissioner of Food Safety inspected restaurants in Kompally and found multiple violations. The Task Force Team inspected Malnadu Kitchen and found raw chicken and mutton stored unhygienically in refrigerators, risking contamination. Prepared foods, such as mutton curry and fried chicken wings, lacked proper labelling and were discarded. The FSSAI license was not displayed and documents like water analysis reports, pest control ...

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Manipur CM says sorry for ethnic strife

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Tuesday apologised for the ethnic conflict in the state which claimed over 250 lives and rendered thousands homeless, and appealed to all communities to forget and forgive past mistakes and live together in a peaceful and prosperous state. Addressing reporters here, Singh said that there has been relative peace in the state in the last three-four months, which gives him hope that normalcy will be restored in the new year. "I want to say sorry for what happened..."

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Emerging technologies to drive job growth

Indian IT ecosystem is poised for a promising growth trajectory in the coming years with emerging technologies expected to witness a 20 per cent increase in new jobs in 2025. Human Resources (HR) platform FirstMeridian Business Services said on Tuesday. Looking back at 2024, it said the Indian IT and tech ecosystem witnessed a 17 per cent surge in new employment opportunities, driven by rapid digital transformation and the concurrent rising demand for emerging tech niche job profiles. "After a muted..."

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Deepti jumps to 5th spot in ICC rankings

India off-spinner Deepti Sharma climbed a spot to enter the top 5 in the latest ICC women's ODI ranking for bowlers following her match-winning performances in the recently-concluded series against the West Indies at home. Deepti, who is fifth now, has 665 rating points and is marginally behind fourth-placed South Africa's Marizanne Kapp (677 rating points). The 27-year-old made headlines, taking eight wickets in two matches, including 6/31 in the last game as India completed a clean sweep ...

-SPORTS

No decision so far on Rythu Bharosa: Tummala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has not taken any decision on Rythu Bharosa, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao said.

The government's idea is to provide Rythu Bharosa to all farmers who cultivate their lands, Tummala said.

"The government has not thought of any regulations regarding Rythu Bharosa but is not trying to reduce the number of eligible farmers citing cultivated lands. The Cabinet Sub-Committee has only discussed procedures. No decision

has been taken so far on Rythu Bharosa, but the opposition should not think of slandering the government through the media. We will place the results of the discussions on Rythu Bharosa in the Cabinet. The decision of the cabinet on Rythu Bharosa will be the final



one," he said. Addressing the media at an agriculture field on the outskirts of Sathupally on Tuesday, Tummala said the Congress government spent Rs 21,000 crore for waiving farm loans, Rs 7,625 crore on Rythu Bandhu and Rs 3000 crore on Rythu Bima till now. The Congress government intends to give Rythu Bharosa to all farmers who cultivate crops, he said.

It may be recalled that the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Rythu Bharosa met on Sunday under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. The Committee members Tummala Nageshwara Rao, Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy attended the meeting. However, no final decision was taken at that meeting.

Cabinet meeting scheduled for Jan 4

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Cabinet is scheduled to meet on January 4 at 4 pm at the Cabinet Meeting Hall in the Secretariat. The meeting will be chaired by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and is expected to address key policy issues and development initiatives.

The agenda for the meeting is likely to include discussions on farmer insurance, cash assistance for the landless poor, new ration cards and the state's tourism policy.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has already announced that insurance benefits for farmers will be deposited directly into their accounts after Sankranti, and the cabinet is expected to formalise this decision.

The cabinet will discuss proposals to supply sand, cement, and steel at subsidized rates to the beneficiaries of Indiramma housing scheme.

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Sub-Registrar offices being revamped to provide better services: Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government will reorganize sub-registrar offices to provide effective, transparent services to the public, Revenue, Housing and Information Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said.

He said the government will construct permanent buildings with state-of-the-art facilities and that construction will be carried out in four districts in the first phase. He said that a Model Registration Office will be constructed at Gachibowli.

On Tuesday, the Minister held a meeting with the collectors of Rangareddy Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajigiri and Sangareddy and district registrars along with the MP of Khammam, Ramsahayam Raghurama Reddy, Revenue Principal Secretary Naveen Mittal, Stamps and Registration IG Jyoti Buddhaprakash and others attended the meeting.



Continued on Page 2

Cong govt not seizing graft money: BJP

Says huge scam in coop societies in the name of farm loan waiver

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Recalling the Congress statement before the 2023 Assembly elections that it will seize money earned through corruption immediately after coming to power as corruption involving lakhs of crores took place during BRS rule, the BJP said the Congress Government has done nothing so far. The BJP said the Congress Government had assured that it would waive farm loans amounting to Rs 41,000 crore. However, it waived only loans amounting to Rs 21,000 crore.

Addressing the media at the State BJP office here on Tuesday, Telangana BJP General Secretary

Kasam Venkateshwarlu said that scams took place in many cooperative societies in the name of loan waiver and that the Nidigonda village in Jangaon district is the best example of that. "All farmers have submitted petitions to the Collector but till now they have not been given justice. It is Congress leaders who are engaging in corruption in cooperative societies," he said. Venkateshwarlu said the Congress government had assured that it would give Rythu Bharosa by Sankranti. However, the state government owes Rs 26,000 crore to farmers, that is, the first and second instalments. He said that there is no relevance

now for former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's words that villages are important for the development of states as the Congress Government is not conducting elections to local bodies. Rajiv Gandhi would have cried seeing Revanth's governance if he was alive, he said.

Revanth is afraid of holding local body elections as the Congress has to face people's anger, he said.

Recalling that Congress had assured before the elections that it would cancel the ORR lease contract, Venkateshwarlu said that although the Congress came to power it had not cancelled the ORR lease contract and is now busy with settlements.



FORMULA-E RACE CASE

HC reserves order on KTR's quash petition

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court reserved its order on the quash petition of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao in the Formula-E race case and directed the ACB not to arrest him till orders are given.

The High Court also extended the operation of its interim order barring the ACB from arresting KT Rama Rao till the pronouncement of the final order.

Justice Lakshman reserved the order after hearing the arguments of KT Rama Rao's counsel Siddhartha Dave and Advocate General A. Sudarshan Reddy on Tuesday.

The ACB had booked a case on December 29 against KT Rama Rao, senior IAS officer Arvind Kumar

and former HMDA chief engineer BLN Reddy for alleged irregularities in organising the Formula E-race in 2023.

KT Rama Rao filed the petition, seeking orders to quash the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the ACB.

Arguing on behalf of the ACB, the Advocate General told the court that Rs 46 crore in British Pounds were paid to Formula-E Operations Limited (FEO) violating rules even before the signing of an agreement for season 10 of the Formula-E car race.

When the court enquired about the status of the investigation, the AG informed that it is in the preliminary stage. The court was also told that the ACB recorded the statement of



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WELCOME 2025
Every new year is a fresh start for everyone, instilling hopes and fuelling aspirations. The Pioneer wishes its readers, suppliers, agents and advertisers a happy and prosperous New Year. As our offices will remain closed today (01-01-2025), there will be no issue of the paper tomorrow (02-01-2025)
Resident Editor

Revanth failed to secure pass marks in public surveys: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao launched a blistering attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, saying that the Congress leader failed to secure even passing marks in all public surveys conducted last year.

He emphasized that the discontent among people has been consistent across all sections, reflecting poorly on the Congress government's performance.

"Ask anyone, and the response is the same — people are dissatisfied with Revanth's governance," he said, alleging that surveys have uniformly exposed the government's inability to fulfil promises.

He accused the Congress leadership of indulging in diversion tactics and focusing on political vendettas instead of governance.

Harish pointed out that despite guaranteeing the immediate implementation of key schemes within 100 days of assuming power, the Congress government failed to deliver even after 390 days.

"The guarantees have turned into empty words, and instead of fulfilling

Continued on Page 2

Focus on extending irrigated area at minimal cost: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy asked irrigation officials to prioritise extending the ayacut with minimal expenditure.

Addressing Tuesday's review meeting at the Jala Soudha on irrigation projects in Nalgonda Parliament constituency, he warned of strong action against inefficiency, stating that inefficient officials would face suspension rather than transfers.

The meeting was attended by Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, MLAs Balu Naik Nenavath (Devarakonda), Mandula Samel (Thungathuri),

Bathula Laxma Reddy (Miryalaguda), Principal Secretary Irrigation Rahul Bojja, Special Secretary Prashant Patil, ENC Anil Kumar and other senior officials. The ministers reviewed ongoing and proposed projects, emphasising timely completion.

Uttam stressed the importance of responsibility among employees, urging them to stay at their designated postings and work hard so that the

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KTR should not drag film industry into controversies: Dil Raju

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU
venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

The Chairman of the Telangana Film Development Corporation (TGFDPC), Dil Raju, asked BRS Working President KT Rama Rao not to drag the film industry into controversies.

Posting regarding this on X on Tuesday, Dil Raju said that KTR's comments on film industry repre-

sentatives meeting Chief Minister Revanth Reddy were painful. He said that everybody knew that the meeting between film industry representatives and the Chief Minister was not a secret one with one or two persons.

Dil Raju said the meeting was held in a friendly atmosphere and it discussed the state of the Telugu film industry. The meeting was held openly and the Telugu film industry is happy about the meeting, he

said. Dil Raju said the Chief Minister identified the Telugu film



DRONE SHOW, REMOTE-CONTROLLED LIFEBOUYS

Tech to meet tradition at Maha Kumbh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cutting-edge technology will light up the night sky of Sangam during the upcoming Maha Kumbh, as a fleet of 2,000 drones will take off in the holy city of Prayagraj to depict the mythical 'Samudra Manthan' and the emergence of 'Amrit Kalash'.

The Union Culture Ministry on Tuesday said that Maha Kumbh 2025 is set to be a "divine and digitally advanced event", reflecting the "seamless integration" of spirituality and technology.

Held every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh will be organised from January 13 to February 26 to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and spiritual traditions.

As part of the efforts to celebrate tradition while embracing technol-



ogy, 360-degree virtual reality stalls will be set up in the fair area, officials said.

"These stalls will show videos of

major events such as 'peshwai' (grand procession of 'akhadas'),

auspicious bathing days ('snaan'), 'Ganga aarti', and multiple special footage from the grand festival of faith and harmony, the ministry said in a statement.

A major attraction will be a drone show in the night skies of the holy city. "A fleet of 2,000 drones will narrate the legendary tales of 'Prayag Mahatmyam' and 'Samudra Manthan', creating a magical evening spectacle over the Sangam Nose," it said.

The drone show will also depict the emergence of 'Amrit Kalash' (nectar pot), creating a "magical visual narrative in the evening sky", the statement said.

The show will further highlight the religious and spiritual significance of Prayagraj, offering a unique experience for

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Vijayanand assumes office as AP Chief Secretary

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

K. Vijayanand has officially assumed office as the new Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh at the State Secretariat on Tuesday evening, with Vedic priests offering their blessings. He succeeds Neerabh Kumar Prasad, who retired from the position of Chief Secretary on the same day.

Vijayanand's appointment was formally announced through a Government Order (GO RT No. 2209) issued on December 29, 2024, by the General Administration Department.

K Vijayanand began his career in the united Andhra Pradesh in 1993 as an Assistant Collector in Adilabad district. He later served as the Sub-Collector of Rampachodavaram until 1996 and



also held the position of Project Director in the Rural Development Department. From 1998 to 2007, he worked as Joint Collector in the districts of Rangareddy, Srikakulam, and Nalgonda.

From 2007 to 2008, Vijayanand served as the State Project Director for Planning

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Govts taking consumers for granted on power tariff

Given long-standing inefficiencies in the utilities following unbundling of the power sector, it appears that consumers are being taken for granted by successive governments over power tariff, be it hike or collection of true-up charges. No section of power consumers in society is spared when it comes to periodical increases in power tariff by the government of the day, regardless of the party or grouping in power.



PIN POINT

In the past, Governments did apply their mind on proposals for hiking power charges. In the process, they exempted domestic power users to some extent based on their usage of power units. That is, the lesser the consumption, the more they gained in terms of free units and by way of lower-priced tariff for consumption over 100 units. For instance, there was no billing for those using less than 100 units of power, benefitting thousands of families belonging to weaker sections. In the process, thousands of power users belonging to Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes enjoyed exemption for use of power up to 100 units. However, the NDA government in the state of Andhra Pradesh stopped the

In the past, Governments did apply their mind on proposals for hiking power charges. In the process, they exempted domestic power users to some extent based on their usage of power units. That is, the lesser the consumption, the more they gained in terms of free units and by way of lower-priced tariff for consumption over 100 units

provision of 100 units of free power, leaving down-trodden sections of society in the lurch. A responsible government should consider the interests of all sections of society.

The subject of true-up charges -- meant to be collected from consumers retrospectively -- is another major irritant. Though it is a ridiculous proposition, it appears that consumers will have to pay extra money for the power they had used in the past in addition to the payment previously made. Imagine those living in rented houses moving their residence and newcomers having to pay for the previous tenants' consumption. This is just one dimension of the complications involved. Despite strong public



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

resentment, the present government has moved forward with proposals to net additional power tariff to the tune of Rs. 18,000 crore from consumers. The Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC) will help collect the enhanced

charge matter-of-factly, while consumers would feel the pinch. In this context, the present rulers may not face any immediate backlash from the people.

During his first stint as chief minister of combined Andhra Pradesh N. Chandrababu Naidu gave a concrete shape to ERC. It appears that, with the advent of ERC, rulers can wash their hands off the 'recommended' hike in tariff, since ERC is an independent body charged with addressing issues concerning the power sector. The ERC, in its initial days, used to consult political parties to elicit their opinions. This healthy practice has since been shelved. Former chief minister of combined AP and Congress leader K. Rosaiah and politburo member of Communist

Party of India (Marxist) B. V. Raghavulu had participated in such meetings with ERC.

All told, avoiding responsibility for effecting hike in power charges on the grounds that it is "ERC's decision" is nothing but an act of escapism. Public backlash is guaranteed; if not now, certainly in the future.

The process of collecting true-up charges from the people was given concrete shape during the tenure of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) earlier. However, the collection of true-up charges did not materialize for 90 days, probably due to the election schedule and in view of probable impact on public and their predictable reaction.

The NDA government has gone ahead with implementation of the collection of true-up charges. The government

might get huge money from this decision, enabling it to meet its fiscal requirements substantially. Further, the ruling NDA can always blame the YSRCP for putting "unbearable burden on the shoulders of people".

Isn't there any other way to prevent people from bearing this huge burden? If the present government is convinced that the proposal of the previous dispensation is flawed, why should it be implemented at all? If the land titling law could be scrapped, what prevents the present AP government from looking at alternatives to hike in power tariff and collection of true-up charges?

Perhaps, in the context of political 'power' play, this is a politically advantageous issue that can bring huge mileage for the ruling party!

TG budget to focus on welfare, fiscal sustainability & infra

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government, through GO MS No: 149, has issued detailed guidelines for the preparation of budget estimates for 2025-26, with a strong focus on fiscal sustainability, public welfare and infrastructure development.

The instructions were sent by the Finance Department on December 31 urging all departments to adhere to strict timelines to ensure efficiency and transparency.

The budget, aimed at optimising resources, aims to strike a balance between economic growth and reducing disparities. Special Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao emphasized that all heads of departments must submit detailed estimates for revenue and expenditure in line with the state's development priorities.

The heads of departments are required to provide comprehensive data on cadre strength, salaries and grants-in-aid, ensuring alignment with sanctioned posts and govern-

ment orders. Departments have also been asked to submit details for employees engaged on contract, outsourcing and grant-in-aid positions, categorized across various proformas.

In a bid to enhance transparency, the government has made provisions for online

The instructions were sent by the Finance Department on December 31 urging all departments to adhere to strict timelines to ensure efficiency and transparency

submission of budget proposals through the Integrated Financial Management and Information System (IFMIS) portal.

This step aims to streamline data collection and eliminate errors in reporting. Special attention has been given to classifying expenditure into establishment, maintenance,

and schemes, ensuring accurate allocation of resources.

The government reiterated its commitment to welfare programmes, with detailed guidelines for submitting proposals under Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and state schemes. Departments have been directed to focus on increasing revenue through efficient tax collection and curbing leakages.

All budget proposals for 2025-26 and revised estimates for 2024-25 must be submitted by January 4. Any delays or omissions will not be accepted and departments failing to comply will be held accountable for funding issues. Public works departments have been instructed to furnish detailed spill over commitments and agreement-wise data for ongoing projects, emphasizing the need to prevent cost overruns and ensure timely completion.

The government's approach for the upcoming financial year aims to maintain fiscal discipline while prioritizing the welfare of Telangana's people.

R&B Minister Venkat hints at action against KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Targeting BRS Working President KT Rama Rao, the Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, said, "Let us allow KTR to enjoy for two or three more days. Don't hurt KTR on the eve of New Year. Let him enjoy the New Year. We will see about KTR on January 3 and 4."

Addressing the media after a meeting with officials of the Irrigation Department on Tuesday at the Jalasoudha, Venkat said the BRS had been doing injustice to Nalgonda district during the last 10 years. He said that only AP rulers did justice to the Nalgonda district earlier. He said that former R&B Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy functioned as the Minister for farmhouses and Pragathi Bhavan and that he doesn't know anything about roads.

KTR criticises Rahul's Vietnam trip

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) took to X to criticize Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Vietnam trip during the mourning period of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. KTR expressed his disapproval, highlighting the Congress's pattern of disrespect towards its senior leaders.

"I am surprised by the naivete of people who are surprised by Rahul Gandhi's Vietnam trip during the mourning period for

Manmohan Singh ji!" KTR said in his post.

He reminded people of the treatment meted out to former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, saying, "We in Telangana didn't forget what they did to Late PV Narasimha Rao ji!"

KTR sharply criticised the Congress calling their actions a reflection of their core ideology.

"Disrespecting great leaders who spent every breath of their life for the Congress and our country is the very definition and the core DNA of the Congress," he added.

Speaker says no to New Year celebrations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Assembly speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar called upon people to stay away from New Year celebrations as it is our responsibility as the sons of Telangana to mourn former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh till January 3. The Speaker posted regarding this on Tuesday

saying that New Year celebrations have been cancelled. There is a need for the people of Telangana to honour Manmohan Singh as he gave us the Telangana state.

The Speaker appealed to the people of Vikarabad district and his constituency not to come to his residence to extend New Year greetings.

ACB nabbed 223, records 64% conviction rate

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) achieved significant milestones in 2024, by registering 152 cases involving 223 accused individuals. Of this 129 were trap cases.

The ACB detected 11 cases of disproportionate assets and 12 cases of criminal misconduct resulting in the arrest of 18 government servants.

Highlighting its proactive approach, the ACB also carried out 11 regular inquiries into corruption allegations and conducted 29 surprise checks in various offices, with comprehensive reports submitted to the government. 105 sanctions were obtained for prosecution resulting in a 64% conviction rate in 16 cases.

The year saw the ACB seize Rs. 82.78 lakh in 129 trap cases, with Rs 64.8 lakh reim-

bursed to complainants. In cases of disproportionate assets, properties worth Rs 97.42 crore were attached in 11 cases, showcasing the ACB's commitment to curbing corruption.

In 2024, the ACB finalized 26 old cases spanning from 2018 to 2022, including one case from 2018, three from 2019, five each from 2020 and 2021, and 12 from 2022.

Recognising the importance of excellence, the ACB conducted basic induction training for 32 officers, including 29 police officers, one public prosecutor, and two engineers. Training focused on improving skills in drafting, financial investigation, and understanding landmark legal judgments.

The ACB observed "Anti-Corruption Week" from December 3 to December 9, organizing awareness campaigns across districts.

Cabinet ...

Continued from page 1

New income limits and eligibility criteria for ration card applications are expected to be discussed. Reports from the Electricity Commission, BC Dedicated Commission, and SC Classification Commission are also likely to be reviewed during the session.

The formation of a special governing board for the Yadagirithilla Temple modelled after TTD will be on the agenda. The proposed board is expected to include 20 members and will oversee temple administration and development. The cabinet will also consider approving the state's new tourism policy, recently debated in the assembly.

The General Administration Department has directed all Special Chief Secretaries and Principal Secretaries to submit agenda items for cabinet approval by 2 pm on January 3 along with their Telugu translations. Any delay or omission will result in the agenda being postponed to future cabinet meetings.

Revanth failed ...

Continued from page 1

promises, the Congress is performing tricks to divert public attention," he said.

He criticized the state government's failure to honour commitments made to farmers, students, and women's groups. He cited delays in implementing loan waivers, bounced cheques for farmers, and broken promises of bonuses for crops. He also alleged that funds meant for women's self-help groups and student aid, such as the promised increase in diet charges, have not materialized.

He accused the Congress government of neglecting Gurukul schools established during KCR's tenure. He lamented the increasing dropout rates and student suicides and said the Chief Minister is more focused on Delhi visits than addressing issues on the ground.

Harish said the government has no vision for critical infrastructure projects, citing delays in repairs to Kaleshwaram, the Metro Rail, and pharmaceutical projects.

He also blamed the Congress for tarnishing Hyderabad's reputation with its HYDRAA which he said disrupted the lives of commoners and damaged the city's image.

HC reserves order ...

Continued from page 1

M. Dana Kishore, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration and Urban Development, who is the complainant in the case.

The High Court was also informed that the FIR was registered after the Governor granted permission for the same. The government counsel submitted to the court that HMDA required permission from the Finance Department for payment of amounts exceeding Rs 10 crore, but in this case, it made a payment of Rs 54 crore without any approval.

The court was told that Secretariat Business Rules were not followed in the matter and that the then minister KT Rama Rao had signed the note file. His counsel Siddhartha Dave argued that the sections invoked by the ACB in the FIR were not valid. He submitted to the Bench that it was not proper to name KT Rama Rao as an accused in the case.

He also said that the Secretary of the Municipal Administration Department had signed the agreement for the Formula-E race. The BRS leader's counsel contended that the ACB has not provided any evidence of corruption. He told the court that KTR was not the beneficiary.

The ACB registered the FIR registered under Sections 13(1)(A) and 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, along with Sections 409 and 120(B) of the Indian Penal Code.

Sub-Registrar ...

Continued from page 1

The Minister advised officers to reorganize Sub-Registrar offices and construct new buildings to provide people with better facilities.

He said that permanent sub-registrar offices are being built across the state with state-of-the-art facilities and ordered collectors to identify lands for them.

"At present, there are 144 sub-registrar offices in the state, out of which only 37 have own buildings and the rest are in rented buildings. We will construct sub-registrar offices with modern facilities in a phased manner," the Minister said.

In the first phase, Sangareddy, Patancheru in Sangareddy district, Medchal, Quthbullapur, Uppal in Medchal Malkajgiri district, Kandukur sub-registrar office in Fourth City, Gandipet, Serilingampally, Rangareddy district registrar office would be constructed. An integrated sub-registrar's office is being constructed for these three sub-registrar offices at Gachibowli at the Telangana Academy of Land Information and

Management office and have been ordered to take steps to lay the foundation stone for it within a month, he said. He said that this integrated sub-registrar's office would be a model. Regarding Hyderabad district, it has been decided to build the three sub-registrar offices of Banjara Hills, SR Nagar and Golconda in the Sheikhpeta area.

He said that sub-registrar offices to be built in the first phase will be built on at least three acres and the building will have an area of 10,000 to 15,000 square feet. They would have a waiting hall, drinking water facility and ample parking space.

He said that officials were advised to undertake reorganisation of Sub-Registrar offices to provide better services to the public. Setting up of new sub-registrar offices in areas where demand is high will provide efficient services to the public.

The Minister said integrated sub-registrar offices will not only improve performance but also facilitate supervision and reduce corruption, equalize workload and speed up the processing of files.

Only 10 km of SLBC tunnel completed in 10 years: Venkat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Highlighting the decade-long stagnation of the SLBC (Srisailem Left Bank Canal) tunnel project, Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that only 10 km of the tunnel were completed in the last 10 years, despite 70% of the work being finished earlier.

"The completion of the SLBC tunnel would have prevented the need to declare a crop holiday on three lakh acres in Nalgonda last year," he pointed out, emphasizing its critical importance for both irrigation and drinking water supply in the district. Venkat was speaking after a review of irrigation projects in the Nalgonda LS constituency.

He hailed Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy for advancing projects in Nalgonda, emphasizing that progress was achieved by rectifying setbacks caused by the BRS government's neglect.

Venkat revealed that as per directions from Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, he went to the United States to finalize a deal with Robbins Tunnel Boring Machine Company.

Tech to meet ...

Continued from page 1

pilgrims and locals, it added.

The ministry said under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and efforts of the Uttar Pradesh government, the Maha Kumbh will stand as "a beacon of faith, innovation and global cultural unity".

Expected to attract over 40 crore devotees from across the globe, the 45-day festival will showcase India's rich cultural heritage and spiritual traditions.

The ministry said large-scale deployment of "remote-controlled lifebuoys" has also been introduced to enhance the safety of the devotees.

"These devices can rapidly reach any location and transport individuals to safety in case of emergencies, ensuring the well-being of the pilgrims," it said.

In a first, 'high-tech' lost and found registration centres are being established in association with the state police, the ministry said. These centres aim to reunite lost pilgrims with their families through digital registration of missing individuals, public announcements, and updates across social media platforms, along with police assistance for unclaimed individuals after 12 hours, as per the ministry statement.

Also, the deployment of 2,700 artificial intelligence-powered cameras will provide "real-time monitoring", while facial recognition technology will be used at the entry points for enhanced safety, the ministry said earlier.

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 29°
Humidity: 47%
Sunrise: 6:50 AM
Sunset: 5:49 PM
Updated: December 31, 2024 5:00 PM

KTR should ...

Continued from page 1

industry's contributions in the development of Telangana. The Chief Minister hoped that the Telugu film industry would cooperate in the development of the state, he said.

"As the representatives of the Telugu film industry, we welcomed the Chief Minister's plans to make Hyderabad a Global Entertainment Hub. So we request KTR that he should not drag the Telugu film industry into controversies and desist from attributing non-existent politics to the film industry. We request KTR not to use the film industry for his political attacks and counterattacks," Dil Raju said.

He said the Telugu film industry which provides livelihood to lakhs of people is hoping that it will get the cooperation of all governments and support from the public.

It may be recalled that KTR, while reacting on the Allu Arjun issue once again on Monday, said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's statements were intended to divert attention from public issues.

The Chief Minister is not speaking now as he has struck a deal with cinema people, KTR had said.

Vijayanand assumes ...

Continued from page 1

and Programme Implementation. He was appointed Joint Managing Director of AP Transco from 2008 to 2009. Between 2016 and 2019, he held dual roles as Managing Director of AP Genco and CMD of AP Transco. In 2019, Vijayanand was appointed Chief Electoral Officer & Ex Officio Principal Secretary, overseeing critical election processes in the State.

Since 2023, he has served as the Special Chief Secretary in the Energy Department, in addition to holding several other key responsibilities, including Chairman of AP PCC, APPDCL, NREDCAP, and APSFC. Furthermore, he chaired the Southern Regional Power Committee (SRPC) during 2023-24.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Vijayanand played a pivotal role in formulating and notifying the Andhra Pradesh Integrated Clean Energy Policy-2024. This ambitious policy aims to position the State as a global hub for clean energy, with a target of over 160 gigawatts of renewable energy generation. The initiative is expected to attract investments worth ₹10,00,000 crore and create approximately 7,50,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Focus on extending ...

Continued from page 1

government can attain its goals. Based on complaints from CE Nalgonda and the local MLA, Executive Engineer Lakshman was suspended, setting an example of zero tolerance towards neglect and inefficiency. He warned officials that negligence would lead to suspensions and that all employees should perform with commitment. He directed officials to stay in districts where projects are being implemented, conduct live on-ground reviews and adhere to tight schedules.

Uttam highlighted the challenges inherited from the previous government, describing the irrigation sector as being in a "chaotic state" due to lack of proper planning, manpower, infrastructure and organisational structure.

He revealed that 700 Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs), including graduates from premier institutions like IITs and IIITs, were recruited to address these gaps. Additionally, 1,800 Laskar staff were hired through outsourcing, and the Telangana State Public Service Commission was directed to fill more vacancies. He emphasised the importance of young talent in streamlining irrigation projects and strengthening the sector.

He criticised the BRS administration for spending Rs 1.81 lakh crore on irrigation projects without achieving significant ayacut expansion. High-cost short-term loans were taken, leaving a massive financial burden on the state. He pointed out that half of the annual irrigation budget - Rs 11,000 crore out of Rs 22,000 crore - is used for loan repayments.

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 1, 2025

03



TGSRTC announces 6,432 special buses for Sankranti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) has planned special buses for Sankranti to ensure passenger convenience. A total of 6,432 special buses will operate between January 9 and 15, compared to 5,246 buses last year. Pre-booking is available for 557 services.

Special buses will depart from key areas in Hyderabad like MGBS, JBS, Uppal Cross Roads, LB Nagar, KPHB, Bowenpally and Gachibowli. These buses will connect passengers to destinations in Andhra Pradesh, including Amalapuram, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Tirupati, as well as Karimnagar, Nizamabad and Warangal in Telangana. Return buses are also arranged.

Facilities such as seating areas, drinking water, mobile toilets and public address systems will be provided at busy Hyderabad locations. Women can avail of free travel under the Mahalaxmi scheme in select bus categories but must obtain zero-fare tickets.

TGSRTC urges passengers to avoid private vehicles and use its safe, reliable service. Tickets can be booked online at tgsrtcbus.in, or call 040-69440000 / 040-23450033 for details.



CITY EVENTS

Live Performance

By Maahive (Band)
Venue
Amnesia - Lounge Bar
January 1 (8 pm)

Live Stand-Up Comedy Show

By Sandesh Johnny
Venue
Aaromalé
January 1 (8 pm)

Founders' Fest

The Great Hyderabad Business Challenge
Venue
Public Gardens
January 1 (12:30 pm)

Migrant Memory

Art Exhibition By Raki Nikahetiya
Venue
Kalakriti
Till January 5 (8 pm)

Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends
Venue
Culinary Guru Institute, Hyderabad.
Till January 11, 2025.

Tree to honour Manmohan Singh mooted

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Lubna Sarwath, socio-environmental activist and Indian National Congress member, proposed planting a Baobab tree instead of installing a statue to honour former prime minister Manmohan Singh. In her letter to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, she suggested planting Baobab trees as a unique, eco-friendly tribute. She emphasised the rarity of Baobab trees in India, highlighting one 500-year-old specimen at Naya Quila, Golconda. Known as "Hathiyon ka Jhaad," the Baobab tree lives for centuries, grows up to 30 meters, and offers immense ecological benefits.

Dr Lubna suggested installing plaques commemorating Dr Singh's values of integrity, humility and determination.

She proposed adding a chapter about his life and achievements to school curricula and declaring December 26, 2024, as "Dr Manmohan Singh Day," marked by scholarships promoting wisdom and tolerance. Additionally, she also recommended establishing Dr Manmohan Singh Research & Development Institute in Hyderabad.

SCR releases new railway timetable

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway advised passengers to check the new Railway Public Timetable, effective from January 1, 2025.

Passengers travelling on or after January 1, are requested to verify train timings before starting their journey. Updated train schedules and station-specific changes can be checked on the IRCTC website (www.irctc.co.in), the National Train Enquiry System (NTES), or by contacting the station manager or enquiry counters at relevant railway stations.

According to the South Central Railway (SCR), the Ratnachel Express from Vijayawada to Visakhapatnam will now depart 15 minutes earlier. Instead of 6:15 am, it will leave Vijayawada at 6:00 am. SCR advised passengers travelling to Visakhapatnam to take note of this change.

Rs 5,937 crore urban transformation plan for a signal-free city: Mayor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi has shed light on projects of 2024.

The list of important projects under road-widening worth Rs 200 crore allocated for expanding major roads to Rs 5,937 crore initiative to create a signal-free city, reducing travel time and pollution.

The State government has prioritised urban development in Hyderabad, with a strong focus on improving civic amenities through the GHMC's 2024 initiatives, said the Mayor.

She extended gratitude to the corporators and citizens for their cooperation, aiming for greater achievements in 2025.

Road-widening: Rs 200 crore allocated for expanding major roads, including Dabeerpura police station to Nagabowli, Sheikh Fayazkaman to Dabeerpura flyover and Shastripuram Junction to Falaknuma bus depot.

Traffic decongestion: In all, 74 junctions were developed across Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda with an investment of Rs 233 crore. It has issued 14,043 building permits in 2024,



generating Rs 815.76 crore for the GHMC. Integrated 38 strategic road projects were taken up under the Hyderabad City Innovative Transparency Infrastructure (H-CITI), with 27 approved and 11 in progress.

Disbursed Rs 564.61 crore to 5,174 SHGs and set up 1,075 new groups. It has established four training centres under CSR at Chandanagar, Macha Bolarum, Mallepally and Borabanda. In all, 230 group units and 2,871 individual units were set up under the Indira Mahila Shakti Scheme. An amount of Rs 528.51 crore was allocated for constructing 34 stormwater canals over 46.7 km to address flooding.

In the upcoming projects, Rs 149.84 crore was allocated for 224 beautification projects, including artistic murals, park renovations and central median improvements and

Rs 5,937 crore initiative was taken up to create a signal-free city, reducing travel time and pollution.

The GHMC completed 37 out of 42 projects, including Bairamalguda flyover. Remaining projects are set for completion by December 2025. Introduced AI-powered mobile-based facial recognition attendance for sanitation workers, reducing costs and improving accuracy.

Transition to a live attendance tracking system in GHMC offices resulted in significant savings.

Multiple violations found at restaurants in Kompally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

The Task Force Team inspected Malnada Kitchen and found raw chicken and mutton stored unhygienically in refrigerators, risking contamination. Prepared foods, such as mutton curry and fried chicken wings, lacked proper labelling and were discarded.

The FSSAI license was not displayed and documents like water analysis reports, pest control records, FOSTAC certificates and employee health records were missing. Synthetic food colours were found and discarded, while rodent excreta was spotted in storage areas. Refrigerators



were dirty, floors were patchy and food waste littered the premises.

Walls were greasy, tiles were broken and open dustbins were found.

A paintbrush was being used to apply butter. Raw and semi-cooked food, including veg and non-veg items, were improperly stored together. Later, the team inspected

Ulavacharu and found expired food items worth Rs 14,936, including crushes and goli soda bottles, which were seized. Rotten tomatoes and synthetic food colours were found. Floors were slippery, walls and ceilings were flaky and drains were clogged. The grinding and washing areas were filthy.

Finally, the team also inspected the Train Theme Restaurant and found that floors were slippery and littered with food waste.

Drains were clogged, and refrigerators were dirty, with uncovered and unlabeled food. Veg and non-veg items, as well as food and non-food items, were stored together. Staff aprons were unclear.

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

RPF rescues 1,385 children under 'Operation Nanhe Farishte' 2024

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) rescued 1,385 children in 2024 under 'Operation Nanhe Farishte.' The RPF also made other notable achievements this year, focusing on passenger safety and protecting railway property.

Led by Aroma Singh Thakur, IG and Principal Chief Security Commissioner of South Central Railway (SCR), the RPF has taken strong steps against criminals and improved safety on Indian Railways.

The key achievements include, through Operation Rail Suraksha, the RPF arrested 674 criminals in 367 cases, recovering railway property worth Rs 83.31 lakh. In passenger safety, RPF booked 68,746 cases for offences like trespassing and nuisance, collecting Rs 1.31 crore in fines. Operation Yatri Suraksha: Apprehended 460 offenders, recovering stolen goods worth Rs 3.17 crore. In Operation Nanhe Farishte, RPF rescued 1,385 children, including 240 girls, needing care and protection. Operation AAHT: RPF rescued 491 children from 264 traffickers.

In Operation Narcosis, RPF seized 2,311 kg of ganja worth Rs 5.02 crore, arresting 127 smugglers. Operation Aamanat: RPF recovered 2,576 pieces of lost luggage worth Rs 6.93 crore, returning them to passengers.

Meanwhile, General Manager Arun Kumar Jain appreciated the RPF's dedication and achievements, reaffirming the Force's commitment to passenger safety as it enters 2025.

TSUTF State Committee and Family Welfare Fund (FWF) State Committee members were elected unanimously. Chava Ravi was elected as the president. A Venkat as the general secretary, K Jangaiah and Ch Durgabhavani as vice-presidents and T Lakshma Reddy as treasurer.

A 21-member State office-bearers' team, a 7-member State Audit Committee and an 18-

member FWF State Committee were also formed. At least 10 schools in every mandal should be developed into model schools with a focus on strengthening primary education. Each school should have a minimum of five teachers, including a dedicated headmaster. Both Telugu and English mediums should be conducted parallelly, and this initiative should begin by June 2026, they added.

Seven cybercriminals arrested in Rajasthan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) has executed a second inter-state operation in Rajasthan, resulting in the arrest of seven cybercriminals involved in operating mule accounts.

The operation conducted in Jaipur and Jodhpur seized 9 cellphones, a laptop, a Thar four-wheeler and Rs 97,000 in cash from the accused.

This operation is a follow-up to TGCSB's first inter-state operation in Rajasthan in September, during which 27 cyber criminals were apprehended. The earlier arrests involved individuals linked to 189 cybercrime cases in Telangana, resulting in losses of Rs 9 crore, and 2,223 cases nation-wide. The current arrests target absconding agents responsible for opening and operating mule accounts used for fraudulent transactions.

The arrested individuals were identified as Sourabh Singh Roy (22), delivery boy, Devendra Kumar Saran (25), kirana business owner, Rahul Vaishnav (19), student hailing from Pali district, Nitin Sisodiya (25), travel business owner, Naveen Kumar (22), travel business owner, Kuldeep Meena (21), student, and Sahil Khan (24), garments business owner from Jaipur.

2,200 km of sewage pipelines desilted over 90 days in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has successfully concluded its 90-day special drive aimed at making the city sewage overflow-free and constructing sink pits. The initiative, launched on Gandhi Jayanti under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar, achieved remarkable results.

As part of the drive, 2,200



kilometers of sewage pipelines and 1.75 lakh manholes were desilted across 17,050 locations in the city. This has resulted in a 30% reduction in daily sewage complaints, marking significant progress in resolving long-standing issues. Chief Minister Revanth

Reddy lauded the efforts of HMWSSB officials and staff for addressing these issues without incurring additional costs. Impressed by the outcomes, he directed the extension of the drive for another 90 days to cover remaining pipelines and manholes. He emphasised the importance of ensuring clear sewage lines by the monsoon season.

HMWSSB Managing Director Ashok Reddy credited the success of the initiative to the collective efforts of the

officials and staff. "This achievement is a testament to teamwork, and the appreciation from the Chief Minister is highly motivating," he stated. Reddy assured that the department would continue working diligently to achieve even better results in the coming days.

With the extended drive and continued monitoring, Hyderabad is set to make further strides toward becoming a sewage overflow-free city, improving the quality of life for its residents.

15% budget to education sector sought to strengthen primary schools

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State United Teachers Federation (TSUTF) has passed a resolution urging the State government to allocate at least 15 per cent of the budget to the education sector and to introduce pre-primary classes in all primary schools. The resolution was made during the 6th State General Assembly meeting.

During the meeting, new

TSUTF State Committee and Family Welfare Fund (FWF) State Committee members were elected unanimously. Chava Ravi was elected as the president. A Venkat as the general secretary, K Jangaiah and Ch Durgabhavani as vice-presidents and T Lakshma Reddy as treasurer.

A 21-member State office-bearers' team, a 7-member State Audit Committee and an 18-

member FWF State Committee were also formed. At least 10 schools in every mandal should be developed into model schools with a focus on strengthening primary education. Each school should have a minimum of five teachers, including a dedicated headmaster. Both Telugu and English mediums should be conducted parallelly, and this initiative should begin by June 2026, they added.

NTPC signs MOA with NIEPID

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Southern Region headquarters signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the National Institute for

the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID). This collaboration, under NTPC's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, focuses on providing Teaching

Learning Materials (TLM) and Awareness Materials at the NTPC office in Kavadiyada. The TLM kits aim to enhance learning and comprehension for children with intellectual disabilities.

Neonatal Sudanese baby gets new lease of life

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Sudanese couple travelled to Hyderabad for in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and welcomed a baby who faced severe complications, including pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH), respiratory distress syndrome (RDS), septic shock, meningitis and intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH).

Referred to Niloufer Hospital due to financial con-

straints, the baby received expert care, with doctors addressing infections and stabilising the condition.

Dr Ravi Kumar, Superintendent of Niloufer Hospital, told The Pioneer, "The mother, aged 43, had a history of five miscarriages due to hypertension and diabetes. After conceiving through IVF in Hyderabad, the baby was delivered but faced critical health issues.

With timely intervention, the child made a remarkable recovery and was discharged in stable condition, actively breastfeeding with no neurological concerns."

After a month of treatment under Neonatologist Dr Swapna and her team, the baby was discharged on Tuesday, healthy and thriving.

The mother has a second visit and she is leaving for Sudan by January 3. We used a translator due to the language barrier, said doctors.



Niloufer Hospital Superintendent Dr Ravi Kumar checking the baby

ENCROACHMENTS WITHIN FULL TANK LEVEL

HYDRAA demolishes 10 illegal structures near Bhagirathamma

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has demolished ten illegal structures, including tin sheds and boundary walls near Khajaguda-Nanakramguda main road in Serilingampally mandal, claiming 10 acres of land on Tuesday.

The official release of HYDRAA said that acting on complaints from locals, HYDRAA commissioner AV Ranganath inspected the sites last week. Later, the officials

confirmed that encroachments had taken place within the Full Tank Level (FTL) and buffer zones of the lakes.

Under the direction of Commissioner Ranganath, ten illegal structures, including tin sheds and boundary walls, were demolished. Authorities issued prior notices to the encroachers before initiating the demolition.

The HYDRAA plans to continue its efforts to remove encroachments in other areas to safeguard the city's water bodies and restore their natural state, said Ranganath.



HYDRAA demolishing illegal structures near Khajaguda-Nanakramguda main road in Serilingampally mandal

APTA KATALYST GLOBAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Telugu NRIs meet from Jan 3 to 5

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first-ever Telugu NRIs Global Business Conference 2025, called APTA Katalyst - Global Business Conference, will take place at Hitec Convention Centre, from January 3 to 5, 2025.

Organised by the American Progressive Telugu Association (APTA), the event aims to "Connect, Collaborate and Create." Over 1,000 entrepreneurs from 10+ countries, including India, North America, Europe and Asia, are expected to attend.

The conference begins on January 3 with a Banquet Night featuring Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu



Members of American Progressive Telugu Association (APTA) unveiling the poster of Telugu NRIs Global Business Conference 2025 at Mercure Hotel on Tuesday

Naidu. Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy and actor Chiranjeevi will participate on January 4 and 5, respectively. The event will host

100+ speakers in 42+ sessions, focusing on technology, green energy, education, health, agriculture and more. In a press conference on

Tuesday, APTA president Madhu Vulli highlighted APTA's initiatives, including scholarships worth Rs 4 crore and parental healthcare. Meanwhile, Business Forum Chair Ramesh Thumu emphasised the growth of APTA's business forum, facilitating Rs 400 crore in transactions during local meets.

The conference will also host the Katalyst Business Pitch Competition, with Rs10 million investments for innovative startups in AI, biotech, renewable energy and more. Organisers hope the event will create Rs 5 lakh crore in future transactions, boosting India's economic ambitions.

Ex-MLA booked for murder attempt

PNS ■ BELLAMPALLI

Police have registered a case of attempted to murder against former MLA Durga Chinniah. A complaint was filed stating that the Managing Director of Arjun Dairy A Narayana was attacked.

Former MLA Durga Chinniah has become embroiled in another controversy.

The incident, according to police, happened on the night of December 29 on in Bellampalli. Narayana filed a complaint against a total of 10 people.

Based on the complaint, One Town police registered a case. The case has been registered against former BRS MLA Durgam Chinniah, Ragamshetty Sathyanarayana (Sathish), Kottapelli Shyam, Raj Kumar (Sunnybabu) along with six others.



Durgam Chinniah

Farmers in distress as tomato prices crash

PNS ■ WARANGAL/MAHABUBNAGAR

Tomato prices, which soared to Rs 140 per kg six months ago, causing a significant burden on consumers, have now plummeted to below Rs 10 per kg, leaving farmers in distress. The sudden crash in prices is attributed to a surge in tomato imports from other states. Traders predict that the price of tomatoes will continue to decline in the coming months.

In June and July, the price of tomatoes in the Telugu states shot up due to a significant reduction in yield and a shrinkage of tomato-growing areas, primarily caused by cyclones. By the second week of June, a kilogram of tomatoes was priced at Rs 40. By the third week, the price had risen to Rs 90 per kg, and by the fourth week, it touched Rs 100. By July 1, it reached a peak of Rs 140 per kg, leading to significant losses for traders.

However, heavy rains in the following months led to a surge in tomato cultivation, resulting in an oversupply of the vegetables. By the end of August, tomato prices dropped to between Rs 60 and Rs 90 per kg. By September, the price continued to fall sharply, and in



November, it had dropped to Rs 50 per kg. In the first week of December, tomatoes were sold for just Rs 20 per kg. By the last Monday, prices had fallen further to Rs 10 per kg.

In markets such as Lakshimpuram in Warangal and Balasandram in Hanamkonda, the price of tomatoes was recorded at Rs 10 per kg. Traders offered a discount, selling tomatoes at Rs 8 per kg for bulk purchases of 10 kg or more. Initially, traders expected prices to be in the range of Rs 30-40 per kg, but the wholesale price had plummeted to just Rs 4 per kg, making it unprofitable

for them. Farmers are left with very little, often only Rs 3-4 per kg after deducting transportation costs.

Farmers in districts close to Hyderabad, such as Medak, Rangareddy, Medchal, Mahabubnagar, Yadadri, Suryapeta, and Warangal, cultivated tomatoes across thousands of acres. However, traders in Hyderabad have been purchasing tomatoes from neighbouring regions, such as Kurnool, Nandyal, Madanpalle, Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, and Bangalore in Karnataka. These traders buy tomatoes at Rs 2,500 to Rs 3,000 per quintal and resell them in

Telangana at Rs 6,000 to Rs 7,000 per quintal. As a result, local farmers are forced to sell their produce at similar low prices.

A woman farmer from Mahabubnagar shared her plight. She is selling tomatoes from her one-acre farm at Rs 8 per kg, and the unsold tomatoes are being discarded on the roads for cattle to graze, as she fears they will rot. She expressed frustration that she isn't even able to cover the costs of transportation for selling her tomatoes.

A vegetable trader from Mahabubnagar market explained that during the winter season, tomato yields increase, causing prices to fall.

Traders purchase 25 kg boxes of tomatoes for as little as Rs 80, which results in farmers receiving just Rs 3.50 per kg. In the open market, tomatoes are being sold at Rs 10 per kg, but by evening, traders are forced to lower the price to Rs 5 per kg.

The drastic fluctuation in tomato prices has left farmers in dire straits, struggling to make a living as prices continue to drop while the cost of cultivation and transportation remains high.



An alleged thief who drank himself into a stupor in a liquor shop

Thief drinks himself into stupor in liquor shop, arrested

PNS ■ MEDAK

In a bizarre incident, a thief, who broke into a liquor shop to steal liquor, drank himself into a stupor and was arrested on Monday.

The incident took place on Sunday night at Kanakadurga Wines in Narasingi district. The wine shop owner closed the shop and went home. Taking advantage of this, the thief gained entry into the shop, gathered the cash from the counter, and packed the bottles of liquor into a bag, but he did not leave the premises.

Before making off with the cash and liquor bottles, he could not resist and started drinking himself into a stupor. He drank so much that he ended up falling asleep right there.

He entered the shop by removing

tiles on the roof. While leaving the shop with the booty, he saw the different brands of liquor bottles all around, his thirst for liquor could have got the better of him, or he just could not control his urge to drink. He opened one of the bottles and drank it down quickly.

Having stolen, he now sat down and drank to his heart's content. He just kept drinking until he passed out, drunk. When the shop owner arrived in the morning and found the situation, he called the police.

The thief was blissfully oblivious to his surroundings, with liquor bottles scattered around him, lost in his own world.

The police who arrived on the scene woke up the alleged thief and whisked him away to the police station.



Nirmal District Additional Superintendent of Police Upendra Reddy speaking at a meeting in Nirmal on Tuesday

Operation Smile to be held from today in Nirmal dist

PNS ■ NIRMAL

In connection with the Operation Smile programme, which will be held from January 1 to 31, a meeting was held on Tuesday at the District Police Office Conference Hall on the instructions of District Superintendent of Police Janaki Sharmila and the guidance of the Telangana Women's Safety Wing. The meeting was attended by Additional Superintendent P Upendra Reddy as the chief guest.

Through the Operation Smile program, efforts will be made to identify missing children, address the issues of child laborers, rescue children subjected to illegal trafficking, rehabilitate them, and provide them with legal rights and protection.

In this regard, Additional Superintendent of Police Upendra Reddy stated that the police in coordination with the officials of other departments would form teams to visit railway stations, bus stands, factories, commer-

cial establishments, and other places to identify children working as labourers. He emphasised that rescuing missing children and child labourers is a key action in strengthening the foundations of society and that "protecting the future of children can bring a powerful change in society." He mentioned that this programme is taking a step forward in protecting children's rights and improving their future.

Immediate assistance will be provided to children with the cooperation of Childline 1098, the Child Welfare Committee, and voluntary organisations. Efforts will be made to collect detailed information about the children's names, details, and family connections to reunite them with their families.

Raja Linga, Labour Officer, CWC Chairman MD Waheed, Nagalakshmi, ACDPO, SI's Pradeep, Naresh, She Team Women's SI Sumanjali, CWC representative Simoin, and police personnel participated in the programme.

Collector spends night in SC Boys' Hostel

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANGIRI

Yadadri Bhongir District Collector M Hanumanth Rao emphasised the importance of hygiene and cleanliness in the food served to students in the Scheduled Caste Hostels. As part of the 'night stay' programme, the Collector spent the night with students at the Scheduled Caste Boys Hostel (pre-metric) in Narayanapur Mandal.

In the evening, the Collector visited the hostel, greeted the students, and inquired about the meals being provided and the daily routines. He inspected the surroundings of the hostel, including the kitchen, and personally supervised the cooking process. He checked the daily menu chart and asked the students if the meals were being served as per the menu. He also examined the stock register and inspected food items such as pulses, rice, tamarind, chilli, salt, eggs, and vegetables in the store room.

The Collector also visited the students' rooms and classrooms, interacted with them, and asked if they had any



M Hanumanth Rao

issues. He warned that if sub-standard rice, vegetables, or other food items were supplied, the officials concerned should be informed, and action would be taken. He stressed that only quality ingredients should be used, and strict measures would be implemented in case of any negligence. He directed the hostel staff to ensure that expired or pest-infested items were not used.

He also inquired if the water used for cooking came from the tank or the RO water plant. Afterwards, the Collector had a meal with the students and discussed their academic challenges, providing advice and suggestions for improvement.

He encouraged the students to aim for a 10/10 GPA this year and urged teachers to complete the syllabus on time, conduct special classes, and ensure 100% results for class 10 students.

The collector advised the students to listen attentively to the lessons taught by teachers, stressing that only through diligent studying can they secure a bright future and achieve higher positions. He told students that their parents have high hopes for them and that they should make their parents' dreams come true by excelling in education and settling well in the future.

The Collector reviewed the attendance registers of the staff and students. He instructed the concerned authorities to ensure that quality standards are maintained while serving tasty meals. He also directed that wardens must stay in the hostel at all times.

During the programme, the Collector distributed 15 bicycles to students. Tahsildar Srinu, Warden Sudhakar and other officials accompanied the Collector.

BJP calls for action against 'land grabbers' in Achampet

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The BJP leaders on Tuesday appealed to the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) to protect the government land in the Achampet Municipality limits. The BJP leaders submitted a memorandum to the RDO in this regard.

It was stated that government land measuring 4.32 acres in survey number 293, in the Achampet Municipal limits, is very valuable. A group of private individuals have been encroaching on the government land with impunity. The leaders urged the RDO to protect all government lands within the municipal limits. They also called for freeing the government lands that were already encroached upon by some vested interests.

The leaders also submitted the memorandum to Municipal Commissioner Shyamundar.

BJP leader Chandulal Chouhan demanded that encroachers, who grabbed the government land be



BJP Yuva Morcha State executive member Chandulal Chouhan submitting a memorandum to the Revenue Divisional Officer at Achampet in Nagarkurnool on Tuesday

punished. BJP Yuva Morcha State executive member Chandulal Chouhan, BJP district social media convener Akhil Reddy, Suresh, Anil, and others submitted the memorandum.

Patients forced to pay through nose at govt hospital

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Patients visiting the Shadnagar Government Hospital for treatment are reportedly being forced to pay fees by the hospital staff, sparking widespread concern among the poor who rely on free medical services. Contrary to government directives to provide quality healthcare at no cost, staff at the hospital are allegedly demanding Rs 10 from each patient for issuing outpatient (OP) slips, leading to frustration and distress.

Patients have reported that those who refuse to pay are being told to step aside from the queue, delaying their treatment. This illegal practice is being carried out openly, even in the presence of the hospital officials. Despite repeated complaints, no concrete action has been taken to curb the malpractice.

Victims have expressed their grievances, stating that the hospital staff, instead of offering free medical services, are exploiting the poor and badgering them. "If we ask why we have to pay, they



shout at us and force us out of the line," said a patient. Many patients have lamented the lack of accountability, as this illegal collection of money has reportedly been ongoing for several days.

The state government has consistently emphasised the importance of providing free and quality healthcare to the underprivileged, urging health department officials to adhere to strict standards. However, the actions of the Shadnagar Government Hospital staff stand in stark violation of these directives, undermining public trust in the healthcare system.

Criminal cases will be filed against repeat traffic violators

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Traffic Assistant Commissioner of Police Suman Kumar stated that if youth are caught violating traffic rules for the second time, criminal cases will be filed against them. He also



Suman Kumar

mentioned that action will be taken against bikers with modified silencers that cause excessive noise pollution. In the Siddipet, a total of 53 silencers of bikes that cause noise pollution were crushed with a road roller by the

traffic police. He suggested that parents keep watch on their children. The police warned that if vehicles are driven at high speed, leading to accidents, cases will be filed. The police also warned against minors driving vehicles.

Employee conned of money by cybercriminals

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Khammam Rural Inspector of Police M Raju has cautioned people against online cyber-crimes.

He said that a private employee from Nayudupet, Manoj Kumar, was tricked when he shared an OTP received on his phone, leading to a transfer of Rs 22,500 from his bank account by cybercriminals.

The police officer advised the people to report the incidents of cybercriminals tricked them into transferring money to their accounts. If the report is filed within the first hours of the crime by dialing 1930 or through cybercrime portal, the chances of recovering the swindled money were bright.

Cybercriminals can be traced through the bank accounts they use, and banks have a one-hour window to halt transactions between accounts. Therefore, filing a complaint within the first hour, even if the criminals transfer or convert the stolen money into cash, offers the best chance of recovery, said the Inspector. For digital safety, avoid sharing personal details like address, phone number, Aadhaar, PAN, date of birth, or any personal information over the phone or through messages.

Focus on controlling crime in Mulgu district: SP

PNS ■ MULUGU

Mulugu District Superintendent of Police Shabarish P on Tuesday said that special measures were taken to control crimes.

Releasing annual report, the Superintendent of Police told the media that the crime rate in the district increased when compared with that of last year. It was, however, to be noted that the police succeeded in presenting strong evidence in courts and it led to increase in conviction rate.

By setting up a command control room with 375 CCTV cameras, crime reduction and investigation of cases became easier.

In 2024, through visible policing, smuggling of rice meant for public distribution system (PDS), and marijuana was curbed. As part of this, 59 kilograms of marijuana were seized. Moreover, no discrepancy was overlooked in the registration of FIRs.

While 1,597 cases were registered last year in the district, 2,148 cases have been registered as of December 27 this year. He also mentioned that rape cases in 2024 were lower than those in 2023.

This year, peaceful conduct of Mederam and Lok Sabha elections showed that steps



Mulugu District Superintendent of Police Shabarish P speaking to the media in Mulugu on Tuesday

taken to ensure law and order were a success. No untoward incidents happened in the Maoist-affected areas during the Lok Sabha elections or VIP visits, thanks to tight arrangements made, he said.

The SP emphasised that the police department played a crucial role in maintaining peace in society and protecting the lives of the people. The police are always alert in preventing crimes and working continuously for public safety, he said.

Eturunagaram ASP Shiva Upadhyaya, Mulugu Additional SP Sadanandam, DSP DCRB Kishore Kumar, Mulugu DSP Ravinder, SBI Inspector Ajay, CCS Inspector Ramesh, CI Srinivas, CI Ravinder, and other staff members were present.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD
FORM-E
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML
(See rule 7 (c))
No. C6/66/2024 - LHS(76 to 100) Dated: 31-12-2024.
 Where a notification was issued vide No. C6/66/2024 - LHS(76 to 100) dated 16-11-2024 and published in the Gazette Hyd.-HAML No.24 dated 16-11-2024 for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shir-E- Hyderabad Village Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows.

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises		Extent in Sq.yds
		No.	Area	
Sri. Mohammed Abdul Qadeer S/o Late Mohammed Ahmed	79 LHS	22-3-499		22.01
Sri. Mohammed Abdul Qadeer S/o Late Mohammed Ahmed	80A LHS	22-3-499		46.89
Sri. Mohammed Abdul Qadeer S/o Late Mohammed Ahmed	80B	22-3-477	to-478	32.88
Sri. Mohammed Abdullah Siddique S/o Late Mohammed Ahmed	81 LHS	22-3-500		68.66
Sri. Syed Ashfaq Hussain S/o Late Muzafar Hussain F/o Sri. Syed Shabaz Hussain S/o Ashfaq Hussain	85 LHS	22-3-480	4 & 482	203.00

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/ Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 07-01-2025.

Signature of:
Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.
 Date: 31-12-2024
 DPCR No. 539/LA/PP-Advt/Agency/2024-25

ACROSS THE STATES



Govt forfeits medal awarded to CBI inspector

The government has "forfeited" the Union Home Minister's medal for Excellence in Investigation awarded to CBI Inspector Rahul Raj in 2023 who was later caught by the agency red-handed, allegedly receiving Rs 10 lakh bribe and dismissed from the service, officials said. The action comes on the recommendation of CBI Director Praveen Sood who has cracked down on corrupt elements detected in the agency's internal vigilance process. Raj, a recipient of a prestigious medal in 2023, was caught "red-handed" on May 19 while allegedly accepting an illegal gratification of Rs 10 lakh from Malay College of Nursing chairman Anil Bhaskaran and his wife Suma Anil, an official alleged. The couple were also arrested. The CBI swung into action after inputs and surveillance by its internal vigilance unit indicated that one of the support teams constituted on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to examine the infrastructure in nursing colleges in the state was indulging in corruption. Officials in the know of developments said that CBI Director Sood had made it clear in no uncertain terms that "internal vigilance is prerequisite to external action".



Dalit youth beaten to death in UP

A Dalit youth was beaten to death and his cousin seriously injured by some men after a dispute in Paldi village here on Tuesday, police said. Superintendent of Police (City) Satyanarayan Prajapat said that some people have been detained in connection with the murder of 20-year-old Sunny. Sunny was returning to his village from Khatauli along with his cousin Shilu on a motorcycle. A quarrel broke out between Sunny and the village head's son who was travelling in a car, the police said. The argument escalated and the two brothers were attacked with lathies by the accused in which Sunny died and Shilu got injured, they said. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination. Meanwhile, security has been tightened in the village and extra police force have been deployed in the area as a precautionary measure. Efforts are on to nab the accused, police said.



NPCIL invites proposals for small nuclear reactors

India's nuclear power operator NPCIL on Tuesday invited proposals from the industry to set up 220 MW Bharat Small Reactors for captive use, replacing the existing coal-fired thermal power plants used by the steel, aluminium, copper and cement industries. Bharat Small Reactors are 220 MW Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) with an impeccable safety and excellent performance record, which are compact and tailored for captive use, according to a statement from the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL). "NPCIL has today invited Request for Proposals (RFP) from visionary Indian industries for setting up 220 MW Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs) for captive use," said the statement. The nuclear power operator said BSRs can provide a sustainable solution for decarbonization of hard-to-abate industries. It would also help these industries secure economic benefits resulting from savings in carbon emission related taxes, thus increasing competitiveness of their products in the global markets, the statement said. The government plans to deploy 40-50 of these nuclear reactors over the next decade in partnership with the private sector.

SpaDeX precursor to India's own space station: Jitendra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will look forward to a heavenly handshake between its two satellites in the new year even as it sets its eyes on launching the most expensive earth observation spacecraft in alliance with NASA.

ISRO's maiden satellite docking experiment (SpaDeX) is scheduled to take place on January 7, which is expected to propel India into a select group of nations having mastered this complex technology.

"This is certainly the first such mission with smaller satellites. We will scale it up with heavier satellites and this docking technology will help us in setting up the Bhartiya Antariksh Station and subsequent missions to it," Jitendra Singh, Science and Technology Minister, told reporters here.

"ISRO's SpaDeX mission marks the beginning of a new era in space exploration, showcasing India's technological prowess and ambition. The 'docking' capability will enable future missions to accomplish unimaginable outcomes through transfer of payloads in space which will be a kind of a miracle and a testimony to 'Viksit



"This is certainly the first such mission with smaller satellites. We will scale it up with heavier satellites and this docking technology will help us in setting up the Bhartiya Antariksh Station and subsequent missions to it," Jitendra Singh, Science and Technology Minister, told reporters here.

Bharat," Singh said.

He said in the new year ISRO is set to launch the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite, billed as the most expensive satellite of its kind, by March.

The new year will see the 100th launch from Sriharikota when the GSLV will launch the NVS-02 satellite for the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) services

in January.

The first of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles (PSLV), built by HAL-L&T industry consortium, will launch a technology demonstration satellite incorporating the high thrust electric propulsion system in the first quarter, which will be followed by a commercial mission of LVM3 for an international customer.

The first of the Gaganyaan uncrewed mission, comprising

the Vyommitra robot, is also expected to be launched in the first quarter of the new year.

"We will have our human space flight - Gaganyaan - by the end of 2025 or early 2026," Singh said, adding that the mission depended on the success of the unmanned missions.

ISRO also plans to carry out a test of the Crew Escape System for the Gaganyaan mission before March.

Teacher sentenced to 111 years in prison for raping minor

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A special fast-track court here on Tuesday sentenced a tuition teacher to 111 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1.05 lakh for raping a plus-one student after luring her five years ago.

If the fine remains unpaid, the convict, Manoj, 44, will face an additional year of imprisonment.

Manoj's wife took her own life upon learning of her husband's abuse of the minor girl.

In the ruling, Judge R Rekha stated that Manoj, who was also supposed to be the child's guardian, had committed a crime that warranted no mercy. The incident occurred on July 2, 2019.

According to the prosecution, the accused, a government employee, conducted tuition classes at his residence.

He summoned the child for a special class and subsequently abused her, also taking photos of the abuse on his mobile phone.

Following the incident, the child became fearful and stopped attending tuition



classes. The accused then disseminated photos of the incident. Learning about the incident, the child's family lodged a complaint at the Fort Police Station.

Upon the accused's arrest, his phone was seized and sent for forensic examination, revealing photos of the child being abused.

Manoj claimed to have been at the office on the day of the incident, producing registered leave records with signatures. However, call records from the accused's phone, presented by the prosecution, revealed that Manoj was near the tuition centre on the day of the incident.

Special Public Prosecutor R S Vijay Mohan and R V Akhilesh appeared for the prosecution.

Punjab to SC: Dallewal to take medical aid if Centre agrees to talk

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Punjab government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite fast for over a month, has agreed for medical aid given the Centre accepted his proposal to hold talks.

A vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia took note of a plea moved by Punjab government seeking an additional three days to comply with SC's December 20 order.

"...As per the negotiators there is a proposal given by the farmers to the Central government that in case they get an invite for a talk, Dallewal is ready to take medical help as desired," Punjab



advocate general Gurminder Singh said, "therefore, the state government was seeking some more time and work positively towards compliance of the directions."

The bench said, "We will not comment on what's going on as far as negotiations or your law

and order is concerned. If something happens, which is acceptable to both sides and all stakeholders concerned, we will be equally happy. At the moment, we are only concerned with the compliance of our orders. If you want more time, we in peculiar circumstances are inclined to

grant you some time." Singh agreed with the bench on the point that no comments should be made on the negotiations at this stage and sought some time.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and Haryana government, said he did not have any instructions on this issue.

The AG said the intervenors and negotiators had tried complying with the court directives by engaging with the farmers in a dialogue.

Additionally, the government mobilised 7,000 personnel at the protest site, but on December 30, a call for Punjab bandh was called by other farmer organisations, hindering its efforts, he said.

Tigress Zeenat to return to Similipal

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After terrorising villagers in Jharkhand and West Bengal, tigress Zeenat on Tuesday night is scheduled to return to the Similipal Reserve Forest in Odisha from where she escaped about three weeks back, an official said.

The process of getting her back from West Bengal has started and she will reach Similipal in the night,

Odisha's Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) Prem Kumar Jha told PTI.

"She will be released in a natural enclosure in the core area of the Similipal Tiger Reserve where another tigress, Jamuna, was earlier kept," he said.

"After watching her activities, the authorities will take a decision to release her into the wild," he added.

Poor, deprived suffering brunt of 'Manuvaad' under BJP: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

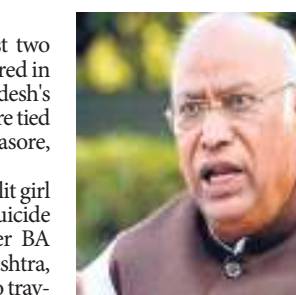
Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday accused the BJP governments at the Centre and the states of having a mindset against the deprived sections of society who are suffering because of the brunt of 'Manuvaad'.

In a post in Hindi on X, Kharge alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah insults Babasaheb Dr BR Ambedkar in Parliament and the same mindset against the deprived is being repeated in the BJP ruled

states. He claimed that in the last two days -- a Dalit youth is murdered in police custody in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas and the tribal women are tied to trees and beaten in Balasore, Odisha.

In Bhiwani, Haryana, a Dalit girl student is forced to commit suicide after being unable to pay her BA exam fees. In Palghar, Maharashtra, a tribal pregnant woman has to travel 100 kilometers in search of ICU and dies."

"In Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh,



three Dalit families are forced to migrate because of caste-based

attacks on them and the police remains silent," he claimed.

"It is well known that atrocities are being committed against Dalits, tribals, backward and minority communities under the 'anti-constitutional rule' of the Modi government. Those who are poor and deprived are suffering the brunt of Manuvaad," the Congress chief alleged. He said a crime is committed every hour against Dalit-tribal women and children, and according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), this figure has doubled since 2014.

No evidence of paper leak in BPSC exam: Bihar minister

PNS ■ PATNA

Amid the stalemate over demand for cancellation of a recent competitive exam in Bihar, a close aide of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday asserted that it has received no evidence, so far, of question paper leak. The avertment came from Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, one of the senior-most ministers in the state cabinet, a day after the chief secretary spoke to a delegation of protesters, in a gesture aimed at breaking the deadlock.

Speaking to reporters, Chaudhary said, "The government could not have acted with greater clarity. The top official gave a patient hearing to the aggrieved party. But, to my information, no evidence of question paper leak has been furnished so far."

"So, as of now, we hold that there has been no paper leak. This is also the stand of the public service commission. One examination centre had witnessed some disturbances and a re-examination has been ordered for the candidates who were affected," the minister said. "But obviously, there was a conspiracy. Rumours of question paper leak were spread, but nobody knew where was it leaked, and to whom. Those behind this played with the future of young students. They must be unmasked," he said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD

FORM-F
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML
(See rule 7 (c))
No. CB/111/2024-LHS (151 to 175) Dated: 31-12-2024

Where a notification was issued vide No. CB/111/2024-LHS (151 to 175) dated: 07-12-2024, and published in the Gazette, Hyd., HAML, No. 39 dated: 07-12-2024, for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the selling affected persons are as follows:

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1) Sri. Mohammed Ali Hussain S/o. Mohammed Fazil Hussain	LHS 169, 170	22-2-095 & 22-2-062	132.42
2) Sri. Mohammed Yusuf Hussain S/o. Mohammed Fazil Hussain, 17-6-590, Police line Dabeerpura Charminar, Hyderabad.			

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/ Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Raosolpura, Hyderabad within the **seven days** of publication of this Notification, i.e., by 07-01-2025.

Signature of:
Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Raosolpura, Hyderabad.
Date: 31-12-2024
DIPR RO NO. 543/LA/PP-Adv/Agency/2024-25

'Naxals trying to expand to new areas without much success'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facing tough action from the security forces, the Naxals are making efforts to seep into new areas along inter-state borders but without any notable success, the latest report from the Union Home Ministry has said.

The government's multi-pronged approach -- anti-Naxal operations by paramilitary and state police and simultaneous development initiatives in Maoist-affected areas -- has resulted in a 48 per cent reduction in violent incidents, from 1,136 in 2013 to 594 in 2023, the report said. A 65 per cent reduction was

also noticed in the deaths of civilians and security forces, which came down from 397 to 138 in 2023 as compared to 2013, it said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that the country would be free of Naxalism by March 31, 2026.

The geographical spread of Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) violence has shrunk considerably. In 2023, 171 police stations in 42 districts reported such incidents, compared to 328 police stations in 76 districts in 2013, the MHA report said.

"The arc of violence has been considerably restricted with just



25 districts accounting 91 per cent of the LWE violence," it said.

According to the ministry's annual report 2023-24, the CPI (Maoist) continues to be the most potent among the various LWE

outfits in the country, accounting for more than 90 per cent of total violent incidents and 95 per cent of resultant deaths.

"Amidst increasing reverses, the CPI (Maoist) has been mak-

ing efforts to expand to new areas along inter-state borders, albeit without any significant success," the report said. They wish to keep the population in their areas of influence marginalized to perpetuate their outdated ideology, it said. "Consequently, the process of development has been set back by decades in many parts of the country under LWE influence," it said.

Various measures adopted by (state) governments and the developmental outreach by the Union government have seen an increasingly large number of LWE cadres shunning the path of violence and returning to the main-

stream. Continued operations and crackdowns in the 'core Maoists' areas' have slightly increased the number of resultant deaths and casualties to security forces when compared with the corresponding period in 2022, the report said.

Noting that improvised explosive devices cause the majority of casualties to security forces in anti-LWE operations, the Home Ministry issued a Standard Operating Procedure to promote best practices in IED management besides putting in place extensive counter-IED capacity building of CAPFs and state police forces, it said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A wish list for 2025

As we reflect on the year that has passed and welcome the new one, let us resolve to make this a year of progress and unity

As we welcome year 2025, the world stands at the cusp of opportunities and challenges. The new year offers a chance to reflect, reset, and reimagine the future. Amidst the advancements and setbacks of recent years, 2025 should be a time for hope, action and collaboration. Here is a wish list for a better world and an earnest appeal to global and Indian leaders to strive for transformative change. The urgency of addressing climate change cannot be overstated. We hope for concrete actions to reduce carbon emissions, promote renewable energy, and protect biodiversity. Let 2025 be the year when words transform into impactful deeds. The pandemic underscored the disparities in healthcare access. A global commitment to equitable healthcare systems, and increased investments in public health are essential. Bridging the digital divide, improving infrastructure and making quality education accessible to marginalised communities should be a universal priority. As AI and other technologies advance, their application should focus on solving pressing global issues— from poverty to climate resilience—rather than exacerbating inequalities.



The crises we face are interconnected and so must be our solutions. A concerted effort is required under the UN to bring an end to wars raging in Ukraine and West Asia. The untold misery of Gaza people must end. All involved must work to deescalate tensions and bring about a lasting peace in the region which has seen enough misery and human tragedy. Policies should reflect empathy and foresight, ensuring that no one is left behind. India, with its diversity and potential, holds a unique position in shaping the global future. As we

step into 2025, Indian leaders must focus on rural development, job creation and support for small businesses to bridge economic disparities. They should invest in vocational training and innovation to prepare the youth for a competitive global market. Ambitious climate targets must be implemented, alongside enhanced urban planning for sustainable cities and promotion of water and energy conservation. Transparency, accountability and citizen participation must remain central to policy-making, fostering trust and unity. The fringe elements must be brought to mainstream and efforts must be stepped up in places like Manipur to bring about a lasting peace. The government and the citizens alike must work to have a country which is as per the wishes of our Constitution makers—a country which ensures dignity, liberty and freedom for all and no section of society is alienated. The people on the fringe—tribals and dalits need to be given their due and efforts must be made in that direction. The minorities must not feel alienated and targeted. They deserve their due respect and dignity. All religious issues must be settled amicably as per the law. The democratic institutions must be strengthened and parliamentary democracy must work for the people in the right earnest. Wishing all our readers a very happy new year!

A turning point in Taliban politics

The assassination of Maulvi Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, a key leader in the Haqqani network, has sent shockwaves across Afghanistan and the region



NISHAKANT OJHA

The assassination of Maulvi Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, the Taliban's Minister for Refugees and a senior figure in the Haqqani network, has exposed significant fractures within the Taliban leadership and deepened the complexities of regional geopolitics. Claimed by the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), the attack not only highlights the Taliban's internal divisions but also reshapes the broader strategic landscape, especially for India. On December 11, 2024, Khalil Haqqani was killed in a high-profile suicide bombing in Kabul. This incident underscored the Taliban's failure to ensure internal security and revealed growing tensions between its Kandahar faction, led by Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, and the Haqqani network, headed by Sirajuddin Haqqani. These tensions have been fueled by the Haqqani's perception of neglect or even sabotage by the Kandahar faction. In response to this crisis, Sirajuddin Haqqani convened an emergency meeting in Gardez with key network leaders to address security breaches and the escalating threat posed by ISKP. This development points to potential fragmentation within the Taliban, which carries significant implications for regional stability and India's security.



A fragmented Taliban could destabilize Afghanistan, creating fertile ground for extremist groups like ISKP. This faction's hostility toward both the Taliban and regional actors, including India, raises the specter of increased attacks targeting Indian interests. The resultant instability might also spill over into Pakistan, indirectly affecting India's border security, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir. Another concern lies in the potential strengthening of the Pakistan-Taliban nexus. Pakistan's historical ties to the Haqqani network could enable it to leverage this faction against Indian activities in Afghanistan, including infrastructure and



FOR INDIA, THE ASSASSINATION OF KHALIL HAQQANI SIGNIFIES A CRITICAL MOMENT TO RECALIBRATE ITS APPROACH. INDIA MUST BOLSTER ITS INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES AND BORDER SECURITY, PARTICULARLY IN SENSITIVE AREAS LIKE JAMMU AND KASHMIR

development projects. Such a scenario could escalate cross-border terrorism, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, and erode India's strategic influence in Afghanistan. Indian investments in key infrastructure projects like the Zaranj-Delaram Highway and the Chabahar Port route may face heightened risks amidst this instability. India also faces an increased terror threat as ISKP may collaborate with groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which are active in Pakistan. Such alliances could intensify attacks on Indian targets, while prolonged conflict in Afghanistan might radicalize vulnerable populations across the region, including within India. Regionally, these developments complicate India's diplomatic landscape. Iran, for instance, might shift its focus to countering Afghan instability, potentially undermining its collaboration with India on projects like Chabahar Port. Similarly, a stronger Pakistan-Haqqani alliance could align with China's ambitions under the Belt and Road Initiative, further sidelining India in the region. Globally, Pakistan's backing

of the Haqqani network provides it with a lever to influence Afghan politics but risks alienating the Kandahar faction and exacerbating internal Taliban conflicts. ISKP's growing power, meanwhile, poses a direct challenge to South Asian security, threatening to destabilize the region and affect India's geopolitical interests. For India, the assassination of Khalil Haqqani signifies a critical moment to recalibrate its approach. India must bolster its intelligence capabilities and border security, particularly in sensitive areas like Jammu and Kashmir. Strengthening partnerships with Iran, Central Asia, and Russia could counterbalance Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. Coordinating with international allies to combat ISKP and other extremist groups will also be vital. Furthermore, India must protect its investments in Afghanistan through global partnerships and maintain diplomatic efforts via multi-lateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the United Nations. The killing of Khalil Haqqani has revealed the fragile balance within the Taliban and underscored the potential

for regional destabilization. For India, this evolving scenario demands vigilance, proactive diplomacy, and strengthened security measures to safeguard its interests amid shifting geopolitical realities. For India, the implications are profound, ranging from the potential rise of terrorism to a weakening of its strategic foothold in Afghanistan. The escalating instability could embolden extremist groups like ISKP, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammed, increasing the risk of attacks targeting India. To address these challenges, India must adopt a multi-pronged strategy. Enhancing intelligence capabilities, securing its borders, and deepening ties with Iran, Central Asia, and Russia are crucial steps. Engaging multi-lateral platforms to combat the ISKP threat and protect investments is equally vital. The situation demands vigilance and proactive measures to safeguard India's interests in an increasingly volatile region, ensuring its strategic and security objectives remain intact amidst shifting dynamics. (The writer is an eminent expert on counter terrorism in West Asia; views are personal)

PICTALK



Devotees look at a sand sculpture themed on 'clean Mahakumbh' ahead of Mahakumbh 2025, in Prayagraj PTI

New year resolutions: Small steps, lasting change

A meaningful new year vow isn't about dramatic reinvention; it is about mindful reflection, small adjustments and cultivating habits that truly last



O P SINGH

On every new year eve a lot of people take a vow to make a new beginning. Families come together, friends exchange greetings, and bold resolutions quietly take shape. "I'll wake up at 5 a.m.," someone might vow, or "This year, I'll get back in shape." However, by February, alarms are snoozed, fitness goals abandoned, and life returns to its familiar rhythm. Why do resolutions often fail? They are usually ambitious yet unrealistic, conceived more in the excitement of the moment than with a long-term perspective. A meaningful New Year doesn't demand grand reinvention; it thrives on small, deliberate adjustments—holding on to what works, letting go of what doesn't, and fostering habits that last. The New Year feels unique due to the "fresh start effect," a concept psychologists use to describe how temporal milestones—such as January 1, birthdays, or even a new week—create a mental reset. These milestones give the illusion of starting afresh, prompting us to buy planners or sign up for gym member-



ships. But enthusiasm alone doesn't guarantee success. Without reflection and structure, even the most well-intentioned plans falter. Reflection is the starting point—not the kind that dwells on failures but one that evaluates life with curiosity. What brought joy or progress last year? Perhaps it was reconnecting with family, starting an evening walk routine, or improving time management. What left you feeling drained? Overcommitting to work, excessive screen time, or trying to please everyone might top the list. Psychologists recommend "self-distanced reflection," where you analyse your life as if observing someone else's. Why did this person abandon their plans? Why did they agree to activ-

ities they didn't enjoy? This detached perspective helps pinpoint habits to retain and those to discard. Even with clarity, life is seldom linear. Setbacks are inevitable, but resilience—the ability to adapt and recover—makes all the difference. Resilience isn't innate; it can be nurtured through practices like gratitude, mindfulness, and reframing challenges. Gratitude shifts focus to what's working. Recognizing small positives rewires the brain to spot opportunities over obstacles. Mindfulness, on the other hand, anchors the mind in the present—whether during a heartfelt conversation or a quiet morning. These practices reduce stress and enhance focus. Reframing failure is equally crucial. Unmet resolutions aren't defeats; they're feedback. Adjusting goals is far more effective than abandoning them altogether. Strong relationships are another cornerstone of happiness. This insight resonates deeply in India, where family bonds and social networks are integral. However, maintaining

these connections in today's fast-paced world requires conscious effort. Being present is challenging in a world of constant notifications, endless emails, and overflowing to-do lists. Yet studies show that mind-wandering—even toward pleasant thoughts—correlates with reduced happiness. The richest moments are those we fully engage in, whether during a family meal, a morning walk, or a simple act of kindness. Adaptability is another essential skill. Life rarely unfolds as planned, and the ability to pivot determines how well we navigate change. After reflection and building resilience, action must follow. Instead of sweeping declarations like "I'll meditate for an hour daily" focus on creating systems. Systems grounded in routine, rather than fleeting motivation, are more sustainable. The New Year isn't magical. It's a psychological cue to pause and reassess, but its real value lies in how you use it. Progress, not perfection, is the key to a fulfilling year. (The writer is author and DGP and head, Haryana State Narcotic Control Bureau; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUSTRALIA DEFEATS INDIA

Madam—India's hopes for the World Test Championship final took a major hit with a big loss to Australia in the Boxing Day Test at Melbourne, when Australia beat India by 184 runs in the fourth Test of the Border-Gavaskar series to take a 2-1 lead in the 5-match series. The match played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground saw Australia take seven wickets after tea on day five to secure a famous win. Despite a valiant effort from Yashasvi Jaiswal, India's batting collapse on the final day sealed their defeat. Meanwhile, Australia has bettered their chances to face South Africa in the WTC Final at Lord's next year with the win. The Proteas have booked their spot in the WTC final after a thrilling two-wicket win over Pakistan on Sunday. Interestingly, the Australian last wicket fought hard for adding more than 60 runs, whereas after the final day tea break India's last seven wickets tumbled for just 34 runs in 20.3 overs. Wicket had no devils. This fragile nature of the Indian team is very discouraging. Fighting till the last ball - spirit is missing. And we are now blaming the third umpire for Jaiswal's out to malign the Aussies victory and India's shocking performance. But the true cricket lovers are completely agreeing with the Indian skipper Rohit Sharma about Jaiswal's controversial dismissal at the post-match press conference: "Look, I really don't know what to make of that because the technology didn't show anything. With the naked eye, it seemed that he did touch something. I don't know how the umpires want to use the technology, but in all fairness, he did touch the ball." Now it is the time to assess Team India's performance. Actually, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja passed their prime sometime ago but they won't gracefully retire like Ashwin. Please drop them out to build a future team. We only do hero worshipping - only to be disappointed by our so-called heroes. Indian fans and media need to immediately stop making celebrities of hero worship. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Elon Musk stands with immigrants



A rift has emerged among the supporters of US President-elect Donald Trump over the contentious issue of immigration. The faction spearheaded by billionaire Elon Musk and fellow entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy contrasts sharply with Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) base, which firmly endorses his stringent anti-immigration policies. Amid the simmering row, the President-elect seems to be aligning with Musk and other supporters in the tech industry over the immigration visa issue. Those who claim to be 'natives' of the country themselves have foreign roots. It is meritocracy that has thrived in that country over the centuries and that has made America the world's most powerful nation by attracting top talents in many fields from across the globe. However, many people may claim that the next century belongs to China or some other country, the fact is that behind all modern day tech innovations and inventions have all been the products greatly attributable to the 'American Dream.' That dream will keep the United States of America as the land of opportunities for a long time to come. That is what will attract the best brains from across the world to sail the oceans to reach the shores of America and create new ideas and innovations that the world will need to use. N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

make them more foolproof. More than deterrent acts combined efforts of all institutions and socially conscious individuals, irrespective of political lenience should make sustained efforts to tide over this menace. A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

JIMMY CARTER PASSES AWAY
Madam—The 39th president of the United States has died at age 100. Jimmy Carter was a peanut farmer and US Navy lieutenant before going into politics, eventually serving one term as governor of Georgia and as president of the United States from 1977 to 1981. He was the only former US president to reach 100 years old. He championed the human rights at the centre of US foreign policy, Carter forged a still-standing peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. He will always be remembered for his key policy decisions making and action-driven blueprint into the execution. Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur Nagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN EMPOWERING ADOLESCENTS WITH SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Spirituality can help adolescents face life's challenges with resilience



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

We all know that as per the laws of nature, we live our lives through various stages such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Of these life stages, the most adventurous and interesting stage is adolescence which represents an inner emotional upheaval, a struggle between the eternal human wish to cling to the past and the equally powerful wish to get on with the future. It's indeed a very critical phase in the life of every human being because, in this phase, there is intense growth not only physically but also morally, cognitively, emotionally and intellectually. Hence, in this stage of life, parents elders or peers must provide adolescents with proper guidance, and support and create an environment to facilitate their holistic development. The primary goal of every adolescent is to achieve complete independence, for which they often seek a lot of space and freedom. They start to think more rationally and abstractly as they form their moral code. In the process, they may often become assertive, rebellious, non-conformist, self-opinionated and aloof. Therefore, they need to be guided and supported with great sensitivity and maturity.



To attain a well-integrated maturity, a series of factors need to be addressed for adolescents, like they need to acquire self-certainty, be ready to try out new roles, strive for achievement, acquire a self-identity, balance their rights with responsibilities and identify personal goals and ideals. One should understand that while dealing with the problems of adolescents, one should try and step into the young person's world and treat them with discerning respect rather than suspicion. It always helps when we share their joys and sorrows and genuinely address their questions whilst engaging them in moral and spiritual discipline. It is so unfortunate that in the formative stage of adolescence when children need a strong sense of direction & guidance, there is no source for them to get it. The family is no longer the strong institution it used to be. Hence, under this scenario, adolescents try to find support from other means such as their peer group, TV, internet, books etc. Tempted by the glamour and gloss that is promoted by the media, there is a constant conflict that adolescents go through to measure up to their peer group's values and to cope with the ideals and the reality of life. Unfortunately, in the absence of proper guidance, it is natural that many adolescents are pulled into crime, abuse and drug addiction. While family, educational institutions and social groups do have a major role to play in guiding and supporting adolescents, spirituality lends a deeper and stronger basis for forming a clear identity and value system upon which the edifice of a strong character can be raised. Since spirituality touches on the core goodness of every human being, it is the most potent tool for guiding all sections of society. The process of empowering adolescents begins with the practice of treating them with respect and facilitating their growth in such a way that they can realise their hidden potential. So, instead of looking at them as helpless or ignorant beings who need to be chastised and controlled, spiritual treatment calls for accepting them as potential carriers of higher wisdom, pure values, fresh ideas and skills that need to be channelised in the proper direction. Such a growth process is driven by their inner self, gently guided by wisdom and love rather than a forced development compelled by insecurity, fear and false expectations. Remember! If adolescents are motivated to explore spirituality at their age they will be equipped with excellent powers to cope with any life situation and excel in their chosen roles, thereby living a quality life.

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

Capitalising on 'China Plus One': Will India step up?



UTTAM GUPTA

As global trade dynamics shift under Donald Trump's policies, India stands to gain from the move by multinational companies to diversify supply chains beyond China

Releasing a report the 'Trade Watch', on December 25, 2024, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam has suggested that trade policies under US President-elect Donald Trump could result in a potential economic boom for India, driven by significant trade diversion in global trade. He said 'Whatever Trump has announced so far, which is likely to come up... there are opportunities. We are the man at first slip. The ball is coming in our direction. Whether we hold the catch or drop it is for us to decide. There will be huge disruption, and if we prepare for it, there will be a massive boom due to trade diversion.'

This comes after Trump announced additional tariffs on imports from its biggest trading partners - 25 per cent on Canada and Mexico if they fail to check illegal immigration and drug trade. He also announced a general 10 per cent tariff on the US on all imports and a 60 per cent tariff on imports from China. Meanwhile, the US has also announced restrictions on the export of computer chip-making equipment, software, and high-bandwidth memory chips to China. Trump has also threatened to impose 100 per cent tariffs on BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries if they try to undermine the US dollar. The US is the biggest importer in the world with a mammoth import valued at US\$ 3200 billion during CY 2022. During that year, its import from China alone was US\$536.3 billion which works out to 16.7 percent of total goods imports.

US goods imports from Canada and Mexico were US\$436.6 billion and US\$454.8 billion or 13.6 per cent and 14.2 per cent respectively. In sharp contrast, US goods imports from India during 2022 were US\$85.5 billion or a meagre 2.6 per cent of its total goods import. Now, if Trump executes his threat of imposing a 60 per cent additional tariff on imports from China, this will lead to an exorbitant increase in the cost of the latter's goods to American consumers thereby rendering them uncompetitive vis-à-vis similar goods coming from other exporting countries such as India. This should help India capture a big slice of the US import basket currently served by China. This should be possible even if Trump imposes a 10 per cent additional tariff on all its imports including from India. As for Trump's threat to impose 100 per cent tariffs on BRICS countries (India is one of them) in the event of the latter putting into action their so-called 'de-dollarization' plan (De-dollarization is a process of moving away from the world's reliance on the U.S. dollar as the chief reserve currency), this is theoretical.

At the 16th summit held on 22-24 October 2024 in Kazan, BRICS leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, publicly voiced their commitment to jointly introduce an alternative payment system that wouldn't be dependent on the U.S. dollar. The feasibility of implementing this idea anytime soon is suspect. Second, the US is also hell-bent on taking measures that will undermine the capabilities of China to



AN OVERARCHING REASON BEHIND INDIA 'DROPPING THE CATCH DESPITE THE MAN AT FIRST SLIP AND THE BALL COMING IN OUR DIRECTION' IS A HIGH-COST DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT WHICH MAKES OUR PRODUCTS UNCOMPETITIVE IN THE EXPORT AS WELL AS DOMESTIC MARKET

boost the production of its goods such as electronics (including smartphones), automobiles etc in which it has a comparative advantage. So, it has imposed restrictions on the export of computer chip-making equipment, software, and high-bandwidth memory chips to China. As a result, China not have much surplus to send to the US (and other countries), and India will have more space to boost its export of electronics, automobiles etc. Third, European Union (EU) countries have also imposed tariffs on Chinese EVs (electric vehicles) and solar equipment. Moreover, the multinational companies (MNCs) headquartered in the US and EU countries are shifting their factories away from China, thanks to growing geopolitical uncertainties, the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, cyber-security, and rule-of-law concerns, rising labour costs in China etc. This opens up opportunities as these MNCs can relocate their production bases to India. All of this reinforces a case for 'China Plus One', a potent business strategy that involves diversifying manufacturing and sourcing away from China aimed at reducing the risk of over-reliance on China for manufacturing and sourcing.

Is India ready to capitalise?

None other than NITI Aayog's 'Trade Watch' report says that even as many Asian countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia have emerged as bigger beneficiaries of the 'China Plus One' strategy - enabled by factors such as cheaper labour, simplified tax laws, lower tariffs, signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) - lead-

ing to substantial surge in their exports especially in high-growth sectors, India has lagged. Although India has achieved production gains, they have not significantly contributed to domestic value addition, unlike its peer economies.

In India's high-tech sector, while exports surged by 350 per cent between 2017 and 2023, domestic value-added output fell by 18 per cent. In manufacturing, by contrast, during this period, even as domestic value-added grew at 26 per cent, it still trailed behind merchandise export growth of 44 per cent. In electronics, India's share in US imports has grown from 0.2 per cent in 2017 to 2.1 per cent in 2023, courtesy of, the government's push toward high-tech exports. However, competitors like Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand dominate, with each holding a substantially higher market share in US electronics imports.

An overarching reason behind India 'dropping the catch despite the man at first slip and the ball coming in our direction' is a high-cost domestic environment (this is despite a host of incentives given under the Production Linked Incentive or PLI schemes to industries) which makes our products uncompetitive in the export as well as domestic market. It also explains why our industries demand high protective tariffs and government yields; for instance, it has on the table a proposal for a 25 per cent hike in steel import duties. It is also a major factor behind India's reluctance to join major multilateral trade agreements, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and Comprehensive and

Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) etc which help the country to better integrate into the global economy and benefit from expanded trade opportunities by facilitating access to markets of their member countries duty-free or at close to zero tariffs. Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute nearly 40 per cent of exports. But, India not being a part of such trade alliances, they are denied an opportunity to boost exports. At the same time, they suffer due to high protective tariffs on the import of basic materials such as steel. A 25 per cent hike in import duties on steel products - asked by the Ministry of Steel - will impart a deadly blow to the MSMEs.

There are four major reasons as to why costs in India are high. First, businesses in basic materials and feedstock such as copper, zinc, aluminium, oil and gas, chemicals, petrochemicals etc are natural monopolies enabling them to set high prices. Second, tax rates are pretty high particularly when it comes to petroleum products which are still taxed under the pre-GST regime. By increasing movement costs, these increase the cost of all goods across the board.

Third, power tariffs are exorbitant thanks to excessive State controls on power distribution companies. Finally, industries operate in highly interest-rate environments. India can catapult itself to the position of fully leveraging the 'China Plus One' strategy only if it effectively addresses the present high-cost syndrome.

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

De-dollarisation: A bold step toward economic equity or a path fraught with uncertainty

The global economy stands at a crossroads as the concept of 'de-dollarisation' gains momentum, sparking debates about the future of international trade and finance

The global economy is currently rife with discussions surrounding a potential 'de-dollarisation,' which pertains to the anticipated transition away from the supremacy of the US dollar in international trade and finance. Advocates argue that it could stabilise economies, reduce inflation, and ultimately relieve financial pressure on everyday individuals. However, is this change truly the solution to the world's economic problems, or does it introduce a new set of challenges?

De-dollarisation refers to the reduction of dependence on the US dollar in the realms of global trade, investments, and reserves. For many years, the dollar has held its position



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

as the leading reserve currency globally, influencing markets and moulding economic strategies across nations. Nevertheless, numerous countries have begun to challenge this reliance on the dollar. The drive towards de-dollarisation arises from a combina-

tion of elements: an increasing yearning for financial independence, the unpredictability of US policies, and the necessity for a different system that is more resilient against sanctions and market instability. Several nations, particularly those within economic alliances like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), have put forth the concept of establishing a new shared currency to facilitate trade and lessen their dependence on the dollar. Undoubtedly, a significant appeal of a unified currency lies in its potential to mitigate inflation. By minimising the volatility of exchange rates and reducing reliance on fluctuations in the dollar, it could offer a pathway to sta-

bilise prices for traded goods through a singular global currency unit. Countries that rely on importing oil or other essential items ought to engage in negotiations for fixed prices, free from the influence of market fluctuations driven by the volatility of the dollar rate. Inflation, frequently influenced by fluctuations in local currency, could, in principle, be mitigated within a cohesive framework. The reasoning is straightforward: when trade and pricing frameworks are synchronised with a single currency, fluctuations in the dollar will likely exert a diminished impact from external shocks. Having more stable prices for essential items would alleviate the financial strain on



families. A unified currency could simplify many aspects of daily life for the average person. Crossing border lines may appear quite effortless, as there will be no need for currency exchange. Global enterprises will thrive in an environment where stable financial conditions enable

them to provide savings to their customers. Nevertheless, the transition to a unified currency faces several challenges. A cohesive monetary system requires exceptional coordination among countries with diverse economic priorities, growth rates, and fiscal strategies.

Creating confidence and setting up governance frameworks for the currency would present a significant challenge.

Critics contend that a unified currency could unfairly benefit more robust economies, putting smaller or developing countries at risk. Without the ability to modify their currency values, nations may find it challenging to address specific economic crises effectively. In the immediate term, this may unsettle global financial systems, leading to instability as markets adjust. Although the dollar's strength might not be flawless, it serves as a stabilising force in a tumultuous global economy. The ideas of de-dollarisation and the potential rise of

a unified currency represent daring approaches to addressing enduring economic challenges. The outcome of lower inflation and an improved quality of life hinges on the ability of nations to collaborate effectively and create frameworks that prioritise fairness and stability. However, the journey towards this transformation is set to be long and complex. The discussions it has ignited suggest a more equitable economic future. Whether they evolve into genuine transformation is something only time will reveal—or if the world navigates towards fresh financial horizons is yet to be determined.

(The writer is a freelance writer; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Key infra sectors' growth slows to 4.3 pc

The output of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 4.3 per cent in November 2024 against 7.9 per cent growth registered a year ago, according to official data released on Tuesday. On a monthly basis, the production growth of these sectors was higher than the 3.7 per cent expansion recorded in October 2024. In November, production of crude oil and natural gas contracted. The production growth of coal, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, and electricity moderated to 7.5 per cent, 2.9 per cent, 2 per cent, 4.8 per cent, and 3.8 per cent, respectively, against 10.9 per cent, 12.4 per cent, 3.3 per cent, 9.7 per cent and 5.8 per cent in November last year. However, cement output rose to 13 per cent in the month under review. The growth of core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 4.2 per cent during April-November this fiscal. It was 8.7 per cent in the same period last fiscal. The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which measures overall industrial growth.



Anthem Biosciences files draft papers for IPO

Anthem Biosciences on Tuesday filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to float a Rs 3,395-crore initial public offering. The proposed initial public offer (IPO) is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) worth Rs 3,395 crore by promoters, investors and other selling shareholders, according to a Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP). Under the OFS, promoters -- Ganesh Sambasivam and K Ravindra Chandrappa, and investors -- Viridity Tone LLP and Portsmouth Technologies LLC -- will sell the shares in Anthem Biosciences. Other shareholders -- Malay J Barua, Rupesh N Kinekar, Satish Sharma, Prakash Kariabettan, and K Ramakrishnan will also offload their shares in the company. Since the IPO is entirely an OFS, the company will not receive any funds from the issue and the proceeds will go to the selling shareholder.



Cyber attack on IT infra of Thomas Cook (India)

Travel services provider Thomas Cook (India) Ltd on Tuesday said there has been a cyber attack on its IT infrastructure and it is working with security experts to support its investigation and take remedial action. In a regulatory filing, the company said, "...there has been an incident involving a cyber attack on our IT infrastructure." Without disclosing the exact timelines, it said, "Immediately upon becoming aware of the incident, we have taken the necessary steps to investigate and respond to the incident, including shutting down affected systems." Thomas Cook (India) added, "We are working with leading cyber security experts to support our investigation and identify the extent of the issue and take remedial action as necessary."

Emerging technologies to drive job growth: Report

Indian IT ecosystem is poised for a promising growth trajectory in the coming years with emerging technologies expected to witness a 20 per cent increase in new jobs in 2025, Human Resources (HR) platform FirstMeridian Business Services said on Tuesday. Looking back at 2024, it said the Indian IT and tech ecosystem witnessed a 17 per cent surge in new employment opportunities, driven by rapid digital transformation and the concurrent rising demand for

emerging tech niche job profiles. "After a muted H1, the sector regained momentum, as we gear up for 2025, these trends will continue, while also eyeing an average 20 per cent rise in profiles like application developers, software engineers, DevOps engineers, AI, ML, and Cyber Security," FirstMeridian Business Services CEO, IT Staffing, Sunil Nehra said. Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI), which was a major trend in 2024, is expected to further accelerate in 2025,

Interest rates on small savings schemes remain unchanged

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday left the interest rates unchanged on various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, for the fourth straight quarter beginning January 1, 2024.

"The rates of interest on various small savings schemes for the fourth quarter of FY 2024-25, starting from January 1, 2025, and ending on March 31, 2025, shall remain unchanged from those notified for the third quarter (October 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024) of FY 2024-25," said a finance ministry notification. As per the notification, deposits under the Sukanya Samridhi scheme will attract an interest rate of 8.2 per cent, while the rate on a three-year term deposit remains at 7.1 per cent prevailing in the current quarter. The interest rates for pop-

ular Public Provident Fund (PPF) and post office savings deposit schemes too have been retained at 7.1 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the Kisan Vikas Patra will be 7.5 per cent, and the investments will mature in 115 months.

The interest rate on the National Savings Certificate (NSC) will remain at 7.7 per cent for the January-March 2025 period.

Like the current quarter, the Monthly Income Scheme will earn 7.4 per cent for investors.

The interest rates have been left unchanged for the last four quarters now. The government had last made changes in some schemes for the fourth quarter of the last fiscal.

The government notifies the interest rates on small savings schemes, majorly operated by post offices and banks, every quarter.



WB'S B-READY REPORT

India may face challenges in achieving good scores: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India may face challenges in achieving good scores on parameters like business entry, labour regulations, and international trade in the World Bank's Business Ready report, according to think tank GTRI.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said as India is preparing for its inclusion in the B-READY framework, its focus should be on leveraging global insights while championing local reforms.

Business Ready (B-READY) is the World Bank's new flagship report benchmarking the business environment and investment climate in most economies worldwide.

The report assesses the regulatory framework and public services directed at firms, and the efficiency with which regulatory framework and public services are combined in practice.

It is replacing the World Bank Group's earlier Doing



Business index. In 2020, the World Bank decided to pause the publication of its Doing Business report following a number of irregularities regarding changes to data in previous reports.

"In Business Entry, countries like Singapore offer online business registration within a day at minimal cost.

In India, businesses still face multiple steps and incomplete digital integration. India is likely to score moderately on this parameter," it said.

Similarly, in labour regula-

gles with delays and inconsistent regulations and due to this India may achieve a low score.

However, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said India is expected to score healthy in the three key parameters - Quality of Regulations, Effectiveness of Public Services, and Operational Efficiency.

"The World Bank's B-READY Report offers a valuable lens to evaluate business environments globally, but India must resist overemphasising its rankings," he said.

As a vast and complex economy, the country's challenges - high logistics costs, burdensome GST compliance, limited SME credit access, slow dispute resolution, and the need for digital and green technologies - cannot be fully addressed through standardised metrics, he said.

The B-READY report evaluates ten key areas of a firm's lifecycle.

Gold set to extend record run; may hit Rs 90,000

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold, a safe-haven bet, is likely to continue its record-smashing journey in the New Year, rising to Rs 85,000 per 10 grams and even Rs 90,000 level in domestic markets if geopolitical tensions and global economic uncertainties continue.

Also aiding the run is a dovish tilt in monetary policy and buying by central banks, but if the geopolitical crisis eases, the precious metal will turn weak on depreciating rupee.

Gold price is hovering at Rs 79,350 per 10 grams in spot markets at present, and Rs 76,600 per 10 grams in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

The precious metal capped off 2024 on a strong note with its best performance, notching 23 per cent returns in the domestic markets. The yellow metal hit an all-time high of Rs 82,400 per 10 grams on October 30 this year. Silver mirrored this stellar performance with a 30 per cent gain, surpassing the Rs 1 lakh level per kg level.

Globally, Comex gold futures started the year at around USD 2,062 per ounce and rallied to a peak of USD



2,790 per ounce on October 31, giving returns of up to 28 per cent, reinforcing their appeal amid global uncertainties.

Experts believe that precious metals remain strong performers in 2025 as well, buoyed by geopolitical tensions, central bank purchases, and a pivot towards lower interest rates by major central banks.

The outlook for gold in 2025 remains positive, though the pace of growth may moderate compared to 2024, LKP Securities VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, Jateen Trivedi said.

"Domestic gold prices are expected to reach Rs 85,000 as modest targets, with a best-case scenario of Rs 90,000 and silver expected to deliver bit higher gains towards Rs 1.1 lakh on modest and even hit Rs

1.25 lakh, if geopolitical tensions persist or escalate," he said.

He noted that interest rate cycles are also pivotal as a global shift toward lower interest rates would inject liquidity into markets and weaken the US Dollar, bolstering gold prices.

However, the US Federal Reserve's cautious approach to rate cuts may temper the pace of price increases. Additionally, sustained gold purchases by central banks, driven by diversification strategies and concerns over currency stability will provide strong support to bullion, Trivedi added.

Several factors have shaped the demand and supply dynamics of gold in 2024, including a turbulent geopolitical landscape. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and tensions in West Asia have spurred safe-haven demand for bullion, thus impacting its prices this year.

"Gold and silver markets have been directly impacted by a turbulent geopolitical environment. These geopolitical crises have typically caused an immediate 2-3 per cent spike in prices, reaffirming investors' preference for precious metals as a shield against uncertainty," Trivedi said.

Reliance spends \$13 bn on acquisitions in five years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has spent USD 13 billion on acquisitions in the past five years across new energy, telecom, retail and media business to set a pivot away from core oil and petrochemicals business to clean energy and consumer facing verticals. Last week, Reliance bought oncology platform Karkinos Healthcare for Rs 375 crore, adding another stack to its diagnostic and digital healthcare ecosystem, Morgan Stanley said in a report. "Over the past five years, RIL has announced USD 13 billion in acquisitions with 14 per cent in new energy, 48 per cent in technology, media and telecommunications (TMT), 9 per cent in retail, and increasingly more in healthcare," it said.

Of this, USD 6 billion was in acquisition of companies and assets in media and education business and USD 2.6 billion in telecom and internet verticals. It spent USD 1.7 billion on acquisitions in new energy and USD 1.14 billion in retail, according to Morgan Stanley.

WhatsApp Pay can now extend UPI services to all users

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has lifted the limit from onboarding UPI users for the third-party app provider WhatsApp Pay with immediate effect.

With this development, WhatsApp Pay can now extend UPI services to its entire user base in India, NPCI said in a statement.

Previously, NPCI had permitted WhatsApp Pay to expand its UPI user base in a phased manner, it added.

There was a cap of 100 million users which has been lifted by NPCI.

With this notification, it said, NPCI is removing the limit restrictions on user onboarding on WhatsApp Pay.

WhatsApp Pay will continue to comply with all existing UPI guidelines and circulars applicable to existing Third-Party Application Providers (TPAPs), it said.

NPCI, an initiative of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association, is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India (IBA).

NPCI governs the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) framework in India.



Markets bid goodbye to 2024 with impressive gains

INVESTORS' WEALTH SOARS BY RS 77.66 LAKH CRORE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock market investors became richer by a whopping Rs 77.66 lakh crore in 2024, helped by an overall optimistic trend in equities, where the BSE Sensex surged over 8 per cent.

Analysts said the year witnessed a tug of war between the bulls and bears marked by volatility but, despite the uncertainties around the world, the Indian markets sustained the pressure and delivered impressive returns.

"The year 2024 has been a

challenging yet rewarding one for the markets. The Nifty steadily climbed from January to September, reaching a historic high of 26,277.35, before giving up some gains to still close the year with an impressive rise. This marked Nifty's ninth consecutive year of positive returns, despite FII's selling shares," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 5,898.75 points or 8.16 per cent this year. The BSE benchmark index hit its all-time high of 85,978.25 on

September 27. Thanks to the overall optimistic trend in equities, the market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed firms surged Rs 77,66,260.19 crore to Rs 4,41,95,106.44 crore (USD 5.16 trillion) in 2024.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the coveted Rs 400-lakh crore mark for the first time on April 8 this year. The market cap of these firms had hit the Rs 300-lakh crore mark in July last year.

"Early in the year, a combination of anticipated inflation

moderation, expected interest rate cuts, and optimism surrounding the BJP's re-election fuelled a strong rally, pushing indices to record highs. However, the election results, while favouring the BJP, fell short of a complete landslide, leading to a brief market correction.

"Subsequently, the unwinding of the Yen carry trade in August, a global phenomenon where investors borrowed in low-yielding currencies like Yen to invest in higher-yielding assets, triggered another round of volatility.



Nehra added. The sector is set for remarkable expansion, with high demand for roles like data analysts, data engineers, data scientists, and others, he said, adding that the Gen-AI industry alone is projected to have 1 million new job opportunities by 2028, contributing significantly to the

nation's GDP. Salaries for Gen-AI positions like Generative AI engineer, Algorithm engineer, and AI security specialist are projected to rise from the previous year, indicating a 25-30 per cent upward trend in compensation for the mid-level category. As businesses expand and innovate, this surge in hiring will support new projects, enhance digital infrastructure, and keep pace with technological advancements. For instance, industries like Global Capability Centers (GCCs) have created over 6,00,000 jobs between 2018-19 and 2023-24.

By 2030, they are projected to employ 2.5 to 2.8 million professionals. Additionally, other non-tech sectors like BFSI and Telecom are also likely to increase their intake of IT/tech professionals in 2025.

"As we move towards an evolving IT landscape in 2025, there will be an essential focus on tech upskilling to cultivate a robust workforce pool. The majority of large enterprises and mid-sized companies are expected to marginally increase their upskilling budgets by an average of 15-20 per cent in 2025," Nehra said.

Indian startups look for a promising new year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian startup ecosystem experienced a rollercoaster ride in 2024, characterised by a slight-yet-concerning decline in funding activity and a shift in investor sentiment, alongside a silver lining with several startups achieving unicorn status.

Despite facing global economic challenges, India's startups showcased remarkable resilience, adeptly navigating changing market conditions, while continuing to attract investments.

According to data from Tracxn, Indian startups raised a total of USD 30.4 billion in funding throughout 2024, a 6.5 per cent decline from the USD 32.5 billion secured in 2023.

Despite this dip, the Indian startup ecosystem demonstrated resilience, with several companies achieving unicorn status this year. Noteworthy entrants to the unicorn club include Rapido, Ather, Perfios, Porter, and Money View, highlighting ongoing innovation and invest-

ment interest in the sector. The overall funding trend reflects a cautious-yet-optimistic approach from investors, as they navigate a more selective funding environment, while still recognising the potential of high-growth startups in India.

A slight shift towards early-stage investments was evident during the year, with seed and Series A rounds gaining traction, as investors sought to back innovative ideas with long-term potential.

Businesses that could demonstrate robust underlying unit economics found greater favour this year, Dushyant Singh, Managing Partner at Playbook Partners, noted.

Gig economy, retail, and enterprise applications stood out as top-performing sectors, according to Tracxn.

Quick commerce emerged as a high-growth sector, with 40 active companies, including unicorns Zepto, Blinkit, and Swiggy Instamart, and promising newcomers Dunzo, Swish, and Farmako.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

1) Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for 1 no RSI work in Bhadradi Kotlagudem District Vide Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle, Bhadradi Kotlagudem: NIT No. 07/SE/R&B/BK/GM/2024-25 Date: 28.12.2024. 2) The interested bidders can download the tender schedule from e-market place i.e. www.tender.telangana.gov.in. The last date of receipt of tenders is on or before 09.01.2025 up to 3:30 PM. 3) Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place www.tender.telangana.gov.in. Sd/- Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle: Bhadradi Kotlagudem

'I've moved past dwelling on what's not happening—gratitude drives me forward'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

With an effortless charm and a career defined by versatility, Samir Kochhar has established himself as a prominent figure in Indian entertainment. A dynamic actor, acclaimed host and familiar face across film, television and digital platforms, Samir's journey is a testament to his relentless passion and adaptability. From captivating millions as the host of the Indian Premier League (IPL) for over a decade to delivering memorable performances in films and groundbreaking web series, he has continually evolved, earning admiration for his talent and dedication. As he ventures into exciting new projects, Samir remains a force to be reckoned with in the world of entertainment.

In a candid conversation, Samir Kochhar reflects on his remarkable journey in the entertainment industry, his upcoming projects and the challenges that continue to inspire him. From his early days in Delhi to becoming a versatile actor and presenter, he shares insights into his craft and his excitement for his latest venture, *Moonwalk*.

Reflecting on his two-decade-long journey, the *Jannat* fame describes it as one filled with perseverance and self-discovery. "I come from a family of academics and doctors. My mother, a Ph.D. holder, pursued Chartered Accountancy, and our world was far removed from the media industry. But I was always encouraged by my family and school to participate in extracurricular activities—be it theatre or sports. That foundation sparked my interest in the media world."

The *Bade Achhe Lagte Hain* actor reminisces about his days performing plays in Delhi and hosting live events before taking the leap to Mumbai—a city he had never visited before. "Mumbai was an uncharted territory for me. It was tough initially, but the city gave back as much as it demanded," he says.

From hosting the Indian Premier League (IPL) for 10 years to starring in films like *Jannat*, *Zehar* and now making a mark in the OTT space with shows like *Sacred Games* or his latest project *Moonwalk* to name a few, Kochhar has embraced every opportunity with gratitude. "I consider myself fortunate to have been part of both acting and hosting. It's been an enriching journey, and I'm excited for what lies ahead." Talking about his latest project, *Moonwalk*, he shares how the script instantly drew him in. "Ajay Bhuyan, the director, approached me with the idea of making something edgy and out-of-the-box," he recalls. "When I read the 10

FROM HOSTING THE INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE (IPL) FOR A DECADE TO DELIVERING IMPACTFUL PERFORMANCES, SAMIR KOCHHAR'S PATH HAS BEEN MARKED BY GRIT, ADAPTABILITY AND AN UNRELENTING PASSION FOR HIS CRAFT. NOW BACK WITH HIS LATEST VENTURE, MOONWALK, THE CHARISMATIC ENTERTAINER REFLECTS ON HIS CHALLENGES, TRIUMPHS AND THE EXCITING CHAPTERS AHEAD



“I, OF COURSE, WAIT FOR THE RIGHT PROJECT TO COME MY WAY. YOU NEED TO DRAW A THIN LINE BETWEEN WHAT YOU GET AND WHAT YOU WANT TO GET. YOU NEED TO FIND YOUR OWN CALLING IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL OF IT. IF MY HEART IS IN SOMETHING, THEN I'M INTO IT.”

episodes in just one day, I was smiling and laughing throughout. The story's bizarre, eccentric tone reminded me of Guy Ritchie's films and the Coen Brothers' humour. It was an irresistible blend."

The character of Maddie Sharma, a con artist with a penchant for elaborate heists, was another compelling factor. "Maddie is slick, manipulative and unapologetically ambitious. He's from a family of thieves, but he doesn't consider himself just a thief—he sees himself as an elite heist artist," Samir explains.

What makes Maddie even more intriguing is his layered personality. "Underneath his narcissistic exterior, he has mommy issues and a desperate need for her approval. That emotional complexity made the role so much fun to explore," he says. The *Four More Shots Please* star dived deep into preparing for Maddie. "I had to step away from my usual self to embody this character. Maddie is cunning and calculated, almost like a snake that paralyzes its prey," he explains.

To bring authenticity to the role, he worked closely with the director to fine-tune the script and add quirks to Maddie's persona. "We decided that Maddie would occasionally speak French—not proper French, but enough to confuse people around him. It's these little eccentricities that make him stand out," he says.

The physical transformation was equally significant. "I grew a thick beard for the role, which is something people haven't seen me with before. It's been a rollercoaster playing Maddie, constantly thinking of ways to make him crazier and more unpredictable," he shares.

For him, selecting a project is about

following his instincts. "I absolutely wait for the right project. Sometimes, the roles you want don't come your way, and you have to find a balance between what's available and what resonates with you. If my heart's not in it, I won't do it."

When asked about his earlier statement of being a 'struggling actor', he believes the struggle is ongoing. "An actor is always struggling. Even when you get the right role, you struggle to perfect it," he says.

However, Samir emphasises the importance of gratitude over struggle. "I've moved past dwelling on what's not happening. Instead, I focus on the opportunities I have and look forward to what's next," he says.

The *Typewriter* fame further shared his thoughtful approach to choosing projects, emphasizing the importance of balance and alignment with personal aspirations. "I, of course, wait for the right project to come my way. You need to draw a thin line between what you get and what you want to get. You need to find your own calling in the middle of all of it." He further added, "If my heart is in something, then I'm into it." For Samir, passion and purpose are the guiding principles behind every career decision.

Beyond *Moonwalk*, Samir has an exciting slate of projects. "I'm currently working on my own podcast series, with four or five episodes already shot. It should be out soon," he reveals.

Additionally, he has signed a show with Netflix, slated to begin production at the end of January. Though he's bound by contract confidentiality, he hints at it being a significant milestone. "I'm also hosting the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) for Sony and a concert series featuring legends like Shankar Mahadevan and Hariharan," he adds.

As he juggles multiple ventures, Samir remains optimistic and driven. "I'm in a good space, but I'm hungry for more. I love the space that I am in. I look forward to continuing this journey with passion and gratitude."

Samir Kochhar's evolution from a budding performer in Delhi to a celebrated actor and host is a testament to his unwavering dedication. With *Moonwalk* and other exciting projects on the horizon, he's set to embark on yet another remarkable chapter in his career.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ANTICIPATION:

The films that have us excited for 2025



RAAD 2

The much-awaited sequel to the 2018 hit *Raad*, *Raad 2* brings back Ajay Devgn in his intense role as an income tax officer fighting against corruption. This time, the stakes are higher as the story dives deeper into the world of black money, political influence and criminal activities. Directed by Raj Kumar Gupta, and also featuring Shruti Haasan and Sanjay Dutt, *Raad 2* promises to offer an even more intense and action-packed thriller, guaranteed to keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

AZAAD

Azaad takes the spotlight as one of 2025's most highly anticipated films, promising to captivate audiences with its compelling story of courage, freedom and companionship. Set against the backdrop of 1920s British-occupied India, this epic tale follows 19-year-old Govind (played by Aaman Devgan) and his bond with a remarkable horse, *Azaad*, as they embark on a life-changing journey. With beautiful period settings, stunning visuals, and an emotionally gripping storyline, this adventure film is expected to be one of the biggest blockbusters of the year. Produced by Pragma Kapoor and Ronnie Screwvala, this film is set to be a visual spectacle on the big screen this January.



WAR 2

Following the success of *War* (2019), *War 2* promises to take the action quotient even higher with intense spy action and massive set-pieces. Featuring Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR reprising their roles, the film will also introduce Kiara Advani in a powerful role, making it one of the most awaited films for action movie lovers. *War 2* is scheduled to release on August 14, 2025 coinciding with Indian Independence Day.



AS WE ARE COMING TO THE END OF 2024, BOLLYWOOD FANS ARE EAGERLY WAITING FOR AN EPIC LINEUP OF MOVIES IN 2025. NEW YEAR PROMISES A LINEUP OF THRILLING, HEARTWARMING, AND ACTION-PACKED FILMS.

ALPHA

The first female-led spy movie in the YRF universe, *Alpha* stars Alia Bhatt and Sharvari Wagh, directed by Shiv Rawail. Catch it in theaters on December 25, 2025.



MAALIK

Maalik, starring Rajkumar Rao in a never-before-seen role as a gangster, has quickly become one of the most anticipated films of 2025. Known for his versatile acting, Rajkumar's transformation into a menacing criminal figure is sparking immense curiosity among fans and critics alike. With its gripping narrative and Rajkumar's powerful performance at its core, *Maalik* is undoubtedly shaping up to be one of the most-watched films of the year. The action thriller *Maalik* is directed by Pulkit and produced by Kumar Taurani of Tips Films and Jay Shewakramani of Northern Lights Films.

SIKANDAR

An action thriller directed by A.R. Murugadoss, starring Salman Khan is set to release on Eid 2025. Salman plays a dual role alongside Rashmika Mandanna, Suniel Shetty and Kajal Aggarwal.



Beyond wax, nano-tech meets auto detailing

The automotive industry is progressing rapidly, with nanotechnology emerging as a transformative force in redefining car care. This cutting-edge technology is revolutionising the car detailing process and offering unmatched protection, durability and aesthetic appeal, ushering in an exciting new era for car owners and enthusiasts.

Nanotechnology in car maintenance is based on the atomic and molecular manipulation of matter. Nanoparticles, measured in billionths of a meter, possess extraordinary properties and enhance various aspects of car maintenance. One of the most prominent applications is in the development of nano-ceramic coatings. Nano-ceramic coatings, Nano and regular ceramic coatings are both popular choices for car detailing, but they differ in particle size and composition. Regular ceramic coatings typically consist of micrometre-sized particles, while nano-ceramic coatings utilise particles in the nanometre range. The smaller size of nanoparticles allows for a denser and more uniform coating, improving scratch resistance and chemical protection.

Nanotechnology offers a revolutionary approach to car detailing, providing superior protection and easier maintenance than traditional methods. There are several benefits of nanotechnology in car detailing, such as:

Enhanced protection: Nanoparticles form a microscopic barrier that shields the car's paint and glass and protects it from UV rays and environmental problems, such as bird droppings, during weather conditions. This results in a long-lasting shine and reduced risk of fading or wear and tear.

Deeper cleaning and glossier finishing: Nano-formulated polishes and cleaners can penetrate deeper into the car's surface due

to the particles' tiny size. It removes dirt and grime more effectively, revealing a glossier finish to the car after detailing.

Durability & longevity: Nanotechnology car care products typically offer extended protection compared to traditional waxes and sealants. It translates to fewer detailing sessions and keeps the car looking its best for longer.

Easier maintenance: The hydrophobic coatings created by nanoparticles makes future washes a breeze. Dirt and grime slide off, requiring less scrubbing and reducing the risk of introducing swirl marks.



While the benefits of nanotechnology in car care are undeniable, it is important to approach its implementation with a clear eye. Not all nano-coated products are created equal and selecting reputable brands that adhere to stringent quality standards is crucial. Moreover, proper application and maintenance are always vital to maximising the performance and longevity of these treatments.

As nanotechnology evolves in the rapidly increasing technology world, there are expected to be even more groundbreaking advancements in the car care industry. The future holds immense potential, from self-healing paintwork to intelligent coatings that adapt to environmental conditions. By embracing this technology, the automotive industry can be poised to deliver cars that look stunning and offer unparalleled protection and convenience. From the car owner's perspective, there will be several benefits, such as enhanced car ownership experiences characterised by less time spent on maintenance and greater pride in the car's appearance, instilling a sense of hope for the future of car care.

(The author, Kunal Sethi, is the CEO of The Detailing Mafia.)

what's brewing?



As the clock struck midnight, Hyderabad's youngsters gathered at iconic spots like Necklace Road and Tankbund to bid adieu to 2024 and warmly welcome 2025. The city's vibrant youth celebrated the dawn of a new year with infectious enthusiasm, embracing the promise of fresh beginnings and exciting possibilities that 2025 has in store.



Shubh Kalash Jewellers wrapped up the year with a bang, hosting a Bumper Lucky Draw event at their Panjagutta store on December 31, 2024. Padma Bhalla was declared the lucky winner of a brand new Honda Activa, selected from 200 entries by influencer Aparna Reddy. The promotion, which ran from October 18, rewarded customers with coupons for every Rs 11,000 spent.



PARTY
Photos by- SV Chary



Begumpet Country Club hosted Asia's Biggest New Year Bash 2025 at the Police Hockey Ground in Hyderabad, featuring a star-studded lineup of performances. The event included mesmerizing dance performances, a live show by Bollywood playback singer Jahnvi and her team, and a captivating dance performance by actress Daksha Nagarakar.

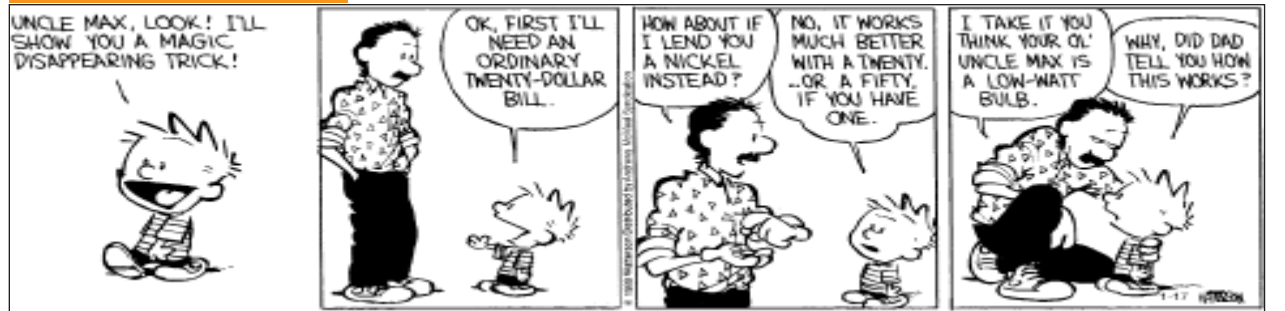


FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



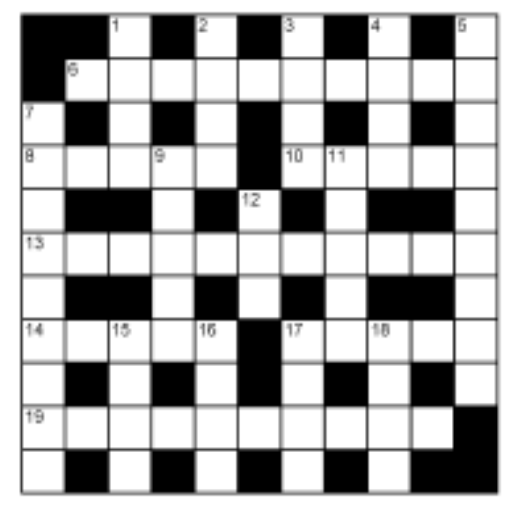
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SPEED BUMP



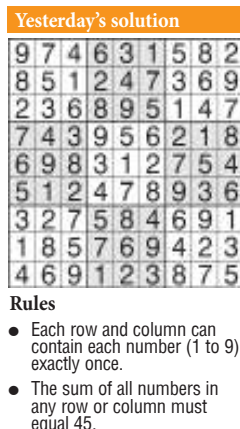
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



ACROSS

- 6 The group of people who are in charge of a country
- 8 Correct
- 10 A black and white animal
- 13 Coming nearer to
- 14 Before second
- 17 Bad smell
- 19 A popular jam flavour

DOWN

- 1 Measuring a lot from one end to the other
- 2 A compass direction
- 3 Break suddenly
- 4 Stitched
- 5 People who are unknown to you
- 7 A meal
- 9 Cows and goats have these
- 11 Throbbled painfully
- 12 A month
- 15 Uncommon
- 16 A place with houses, shops, schools
- 17 Unlock
- 18 Rowers pull on these



GINGER MEGGS



WATCH OUT FOR THESE FILMS IN THIS NEW YEAR



GAME CHANGER

Budget: Rs 450 crore

Cast: Ram Charan, Kiara Advani, Anjali, SJ Suryah, Prakash Raj, Srikanth, Samuthirakani and others

Music: S Thaman

Director: Shankar

Producers: Dil Raju, Shirish

Release: January 10, 2025

Ram Charan and Kiara Advani are the lead pair in this film, directed by Shankar. Dil Raju is the producer. Actors like Srikanth, SJ Suryah, Samuthirakani, Sunil, Prakash Raj, Jayaram, Naveen Chandra, and many others played key roles. Anjali is playing one of the female leads alongside Kiara Advani. Ram Charan plays dual roles and portrayed Appanna in the flashback episode, which everyone is raving about. The makers have started promoting the film aggressively, and in the coming days, AP Deputy CM and Ram Charan's uncle, Pawan Kalyan, will attend as the chief guest for the pre-release function in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, on January 4.

The budget for this film is approximately Rs 450 crore, according to a source. It took a few years to complete the film as Shankar got busy with another project, resulting in a nearly two-and-a-half-year-long shoot. While the Telangana government may not agree to a ticket price hike and benefit shows, the AP Government may consider increasing the ticket price. Interestingly, Ram Charan's father, Mega Star Chiranjeevi, has already seen the film, along with director Sukumar and shared his review, stating that the film is going to be a blockbuster. The film will release not only in Telugu but also in other languages.

DAAKU MAHARAJ

Budget: Rs 100 crore

Cast: Balakrishna, Pragna Jaiswal, Shraddha Srinath, Urvashi Rautela, Bobby Deol

Music: S Thaman

Director: Bobby Kolli

Producers: Suryadevara Naga Vamsi, Sai Soujanya

Release: January 12, 2025

In 2023, Balakrishna had two films released, *Veera Simha Reddy* and *Bhagavanth Kesari*, both of which were blockbusters. Interestingly, he didn't have any releases in 2024, so in this New Year, he is making a comeback with his *Daaku Maharaj*. Bobby Kolli, who earlier delivered a blockbuster *Waltair Veerayya* to Chiranjeevi, directs this film. Pragna Jaiswal, Shraddha Srinath, and Urvashi Rautela play the female leads, while Bollywood actor Bobby Deol portrays the villain. The film was released on January 12, 2025, during the Sankranti festival. Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya are the producers. The budget for this film is approximately Rs 100 crore and Balakrishna is on a successful streak with his previous three films. He is also an MLA, representing the Hindupur Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh. The film is releasing primarily in the Telugu States only.



SANKRANTHI VASTHUNNAM

Budget: Rs 50 crore

Cast: Venkatesh, Aishwarya Rajesh, Meenakshi Chaudhary, Rajendra Prasad, Upendra Limaye, Naresh and others

Music: Bheems Ceciroleo

Producer: Dil Raju, Shirish

Director: Anil Ravipudi

Release: January 14, 2025

Venkatesh is one of the senior and safest bets in Tollywood, but he delivered a dud during the 2024 Sankranti season. Now, this Sankranti, he is coming up with a film titled *Sankranti Vasthunnam*, directed by Anil Ravipudi. This marks the third collaboration between Anil and Venkatesh, as they earlier delivered a blockbuster film, *F2: Fun and Frustration*. Generally, Venkatesh has a huge following and his films are perfect for the Sankranti festival, making this year's celebration promising to be fun and entertaining. Venkatesh is promoting this film like never before and judging by the promotions, it's clear that this one is an entertainer. The budget of this film is nearly Rs 50 crore.



HARI HARA VEERA MALLU

Budget: Rs 200 crore

Cast: Pawan Kalyan, Nidhi Agerwal, Bobby Deol

Music: MM Keeravani

Director: Jyothi Krishna

Producer: AM Rathnam, A Dayakar Rao

Release date: March 28, 2025

Actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan is busy serving as the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and at the same time, he has allotted a few days to his upcoming films, which are nearing completion. Three films are slated to be completed and *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* is the first film to hit the screens on March 30, not March 28. Krish Jagarlamudi was the initial director, but he opted out of the project due to delays. Producer AM Rathnam's son, Jyothi Krishna, took over as the director. The first part is scheduled to release this year, not in the New Year's, as the New Year has already begun. This film is definitely one of the most awaited ones this year. The budget of this film is also relatively high, with Rs 200 crore, due to the multiple-year delay. The actor's other film, *OG*, is also highly anticipated this year, and fans are eagerly waiting for its release. It is an action-packed film directed by Sujeth.



The Prabhas-starrer *The Raja Saab* is also one of the most-awaited films this New Year. Maruthi directs the film, a horror comedy that marks Prabhas' first foray into this genre. Prabhas has delivered two consecutive hit films, *Salaar* and *Kalki 2898AD*, both of which are first installments. The second parts of these films are slated for release in the coming years. Currently, all eyes are on *The Raja Saab*, with the makers announcing April 10 as the release date.

Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt plays the antagonist in the film. The budget of this film is approximately Rs 350 crore.

THE RAJA SAAB

Cast: Prabhas, Nidhi Agerwal, Malavika Mohanan, Riddhi Kumar, Sanjay Dutt and others

Music: S Thaman

Director: Maruthi

Producer: TG Vishwaprasad

Release date: April 10, 2025



THANDEL

Budget: Rs 75 Crore

Cast: Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi

Music: Devi Sri Prasad

Producer: Bunny Vasu

Director: Chandoo Mondeti

Release: February 7, 2025

Naga Chaitanya is looking for a good hit, as his last few films didn't fare well. In 2024, he didn't have any releases and he is now banking on *Thandel*, which is scheduled to release on February 7, 2025. This is a high-budget film in Naga Chaitanya's career, with top producer Allu Aravind backing the project. Bunny Vasu of Geetha Arts is producing it. Sai Pallavi, the female superstar, plays the female lead. Chandoo Mondeti, who has worked with Naga Chaitanya earlier, directs the film. The story is based on a true incident that occurred near Srikulam. Naga Chaitanya portrays a fisherman, while Sai Pallavi plays his love interest. In their interaction with the media, the producers stated that they aim to add Naga Chaitanya to the Rs 100 crore club with *Thandel*. They expressed confidence in the film's success due to its compelling story and the presence of Sai Pallavi, who has cemented her place in the South Indian film industry with a massive fan following.



Preity looks stunning as princess Nemali in *Kannappa*

Manchu Vishnu's most anticipated film, *Kannappa*, is scheduled to release on April 25, 2025. Initially, the movie was launched with Nupur Sanon, the younger sister of popular actress Kriti Sanon, as the female lead. However, due to certain reasons, Nupur opted out of the project and the makers subsequently cast Preity Mukundhan in her place. The shooting has been completed, and the film is currently in post-production. Manchu Vishnu plays the title role of Kannappa, while his father, senior actor

Mohan Babu, plays an important role. Several stars, including Prabhas, Akshay Kumar, Mohan Lal, Sarath Kumar and Kajal Aggarwal, make cameo appearances in the film. Mukesh Kumar Singh directs the movie, which was primarily shot in New Zealand. In this mythological film, Preity Mukundhan portrays Nemali, a character embodying grace, beauty, bold courage, extraordinary capacity for love and unwavering devotion. As the heart and soul of *Kannappa*, Nemali plays a pivotal role in the story.



Prabhas joins CM Revanth Reddy's crusade against drugs

Recently, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy met with prominent figures from the Telugu film industry, led by Dil Raju, to discuss the new Telangana Film Development Corporation (TFDC). During the meeting, the Chief Minister requested the industry's support, particularly from actors, in promoting a drug-free Telangana state. He emphasised that Telugu actors have a massive fan following and that their influence can inspire fans to follow their advice. To this end, he asked the actors to create awareness videos about the dangers of drugs.

Prabhas, a top actor, was the first to respond to the Chief Minister's call. He released a video urging the youth to avoid drugs, saying, "There's plenty of entertainment in life, and with loved ones surrounding us, we don't need drugs." In his signature style, he added, "Darlings! Do we need drugs? Say no to drugs!" Prabhas also shared a vital message, informing viewers that those struggling with drug addiction can call a toll-free number for support from the Telangana government, which will provide complete care until they recover. It appears that other actors are following Prabhas' lead and may release similar videos to raise awareness about the dangers of drugs, with the message "Say no to drugs."

Brahmaji's *Baapu* is a dark comedy

Brahmaji plays the lead role in the upcoming film *Baapu*, a dark comedy. "The story is based on a farmer's suicide that occurred in Karimnagar, and it's a dark comedy with humor," said Brahmaji. He added that the film has a lot of emotion and drama. Balagam Sudhakar Reddy plays one of the important roles in this film. "He played my father, and the scenes between us have turned out very nicely. It's not a regular story; director Daya has written this story based on a true incident but narrated it in a different style," said Brahmaji. The confrontation between the father, son and grandson is interesting in this film. Amani plays Brahmaji's wife, making it a complete family drama that explores the emotions between them against the backdrop of farmer suicide. The story revolves around one person in the family who wants to sacrifice their life for others. How the other family members react to this and what ultimately happens is the story, narrated in a unique way with humour.



DESPITE LOW SUCCESS, 2024 BELONGS TO MEENAKSHI

Meenakshi Chaudhary is the actress who stole the show in 2024, not because of her great success, but because of her prominent presence in Tollywood. The actress had two films released in 2022, *Khiladi* and *Hit: The Second Case* and in 2023, she didn't have any Telugu film releases. Interestingly, she is the only actress with four of her Telugu films and a Tamil-dubbed Telugu film released in 2024. Meenakshi started 2024 with superstar Mahesh Babu's film *Guntur Kaaram*, followed by *Lucky Bhaskar*, *Matka* and *Mechanic Rocky*. Although only *Lucky Bhaskar* achieved significant success, the other films didn't fare well. The actress was also paired opposite Tamil superstar Vijay in *GOAT*, which was released in Telugu but bombed at the box office. Despite her low success rate, 2024 undoubtedly belongs to Meenakshi, with multiple film releases. In one of her interviews, Meenakshi mentioned, "These films were signed much before and released one after another in 2024." Now, her upcoming film *Sankranti Vasthunnam*, where she plays a cop opposite Venkatesh, is scheduled to release during this Sankranti. She hopes that the New Year brings more joy with this festival release.

Indian cricket has depth to fill Rohit, Virat's void: Lehmann

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Indian cricket has produced a generational superstar in Yashasvi Jaiswal and will remain in good health even when Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma decide to call time on their careers, feels former Australia head coach and two-time World Cup winner Darren Lehmann. The 54-year-old, who played 27 Tests and 117 ODIs during his decade-long career, is also captivated by Jasprit Bumrah's skills, claiming to have never seen any player have more impact in a single series. Talking about impending retirements of Rohit and Kohli following their poor show in the ongoing series where India trail 1-2, Lehmann was empathetic and practical about the transition in Indian cricket. "Look whenever they decide to give it away and whatever

happens in next few days they have been great players for India over a long period of time," Lehmann, a member of 1999 and 2003 ODI World Cup-winning teams told PTI. "Now actually we see younger players starting to step up for India and play well at next level. There is so much depth in Indian cricket I won't worry too much." Lehmann was pretty matter of fact. "Whenever these two guys decide to retire, there are so many talented youngsters that Indian cricket will be in good stead." Having watched Jaiswal emerge as the flagbearer of Indian batting in the series, Lehmann made a bold prediction about the southpaw, who has scores of 161, 82 and 84 in this series. "Oh, superstar. One of the best I have seen," Lehmann said quickly, before the question was finished.



"He (Jaiswal) and Harry Brook are two next generation players. They are the ones that people will sit back and say they are good players. He played very well



in Melbourne and was outstanding in Perth. He has come up leaps and bounds on this tour," the beefy left-hander of yesteryears said. But Lehmann reserved his

highest praise for Bumrah, equating him with all-time greats such as Wasim Akram and Glenn McGrath. "I presume he (Bumrah) is the next captain when Rohit finishes. He did a really good job in Perth. He is the best bowler I have ever seen live. "I have seen Wasim Akram, Glenn McGrath and all but I have not seen a bowler have impact like him in a single series like Jasprit Bumrah has since Mitchell Johnson in 2013-14 Ashes win. "This is very similar as Bumrah already has 30 wickets. He has been outstanding to watch. He will do well when he gets a chance to lead India." Talking about transition, Lehmann noted that Australia's batting could be a concern, rather than the bowling, even though Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, and Michael Neser are all in their early to mid-

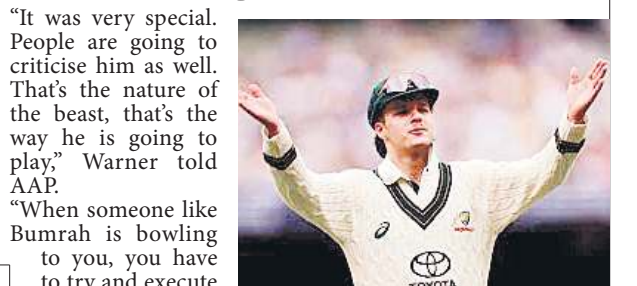
30s. "I am not so worried about bowling as lot of good kids are coming up. Lance Morris, Xavier Bartlett from Brisbane Heats, so there are plenty of them. Spinners are okay but it is the batting that is being tested at the moment," said Lehmann. "There will be some changes with greats retiring but fast bowling will be good enough. How long Cummins and Starc survive time will tell, but hopefully, they will get to till next Ashes." Lehmann has had a decent reputation as a coach but when asked if he would consider coaching the Indian national team, the answer was negative. "It would have been an honour to work with Indian national team but I am done with international cricket. I just want the young guys to get better," Lehmann signed off.

Warner wants Australia's seniors to follow Konstas' mindset against India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Lavishing praise on young Sam Konstas, former opener David Warner has urged Australia's senior players to adopt a similar aggressive approach when facing Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who has been a dominant force with the ball in the ongoing series. The 19-year-old Konstas played some stunning scoops and lapped off Bumrah en route to a 65-ball 60 on his Test debut during the fourth Test at Melbourne, which the Aussies won by 184 runs on Monday.

"It was very special. People are going to criticise him as well. That's the nature of the beast, that's the way he is going to play," Warner told AAP. "When someone like Bumrah is bowling to you, you have to try and execute somehow. They put a third-man in and fine leg to him and bowled him through the gate (in the second innings). "He will look back on that and go 'what a great experience in the Boxing Day Test'. He now gets to come here for New Year's Test." Konstas had scored 107 off 97 balls against India for the Prime Minister's XI. He had also scored an unbeaten 73 at the MCG against India A, besides making two centuries in the Sheffield Shield and a record-breaking 50 on debut for the Sydney Thunder in the Big Bash League. "What he did in the Prime Minister's XI shows he has that talent. But it also shows he is brave." "Him being brave at the top of the order, you've got guys who have played 50 Tests, they could have been brave as well, they could have played different shots, they could have moved out of their crease and batted different." Warner added that while players like Steve Smith had experimented with various approaches, it shouldn't take a newcomer's boldness to shift the momentum. "Smudge (Steve Smith) tried a million different things. But it shouldn't take someone to come out there and be brave to get that momentum shifting. You have experience at the top of the order, experience in that whole line up," Warner said.



Warner wants Australia's seniors to follow Konstas' mindset against India.

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Deepti jumps to fifth spot in ICC ODI rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India off-spinner Deepti Sharma climbed a spot to enter the top 5 in the latest ICC women's ODI ranking for bowlers following her match-winning performances in the recently-concluded series against the West Indies at home. Deepti, who is fifth now, has 665 rating points and is marginally behind fourth-placed South Africa's Marizanne Kapp (677 rating points). The 27-year-old made headlines, taking eight wickets in two matches, including 6/31 in the last game as India completed a clean sweep in the three-match series in Vadodara. Among batters, Jemimah Rodrigues (537 rating points) is closing in on a top-20 as she has jumped four spots to 22nd thanks to scores of 29 and 52 during



the series. The big-hitting Richa Ghosh (13 not out and 23 not out) has moved seven spots to 41st (448 rating points), with Chinelle Henry's half-century in the third ODI leading to a 21-spot leap to 65th (349 rating points). However, charismatic India opener Smriti Mandhana (720 rating points), who scored two half-centuries in the series, has dropped one place to third and trails South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt (773) and Chamari Athapaththu (733). Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur has dropped three places to 13th. Hayley Matthews' seventh ODI century in Vadodara has helped the West Indies opener climb six places to seventh in the ICC Women's Batting Rankings.

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