

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
Justice is alive because of what Chandrababu did. I said on November 5, 2004, that 'Dharma' will win on any day. My special thanks to the judges who gave a verdict in favour of us. Chandrababu categorised SC reservations in United Andhra Pradesh. Now also Chandrababu is the CM of AP when the SC issued a verdict favouring us.

-Manda Krishna Madiga, MRPS P4

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We support development, not expansionism: PM Modi **'INDIA'S NEW EV POLICY NOT SUITABLE FOR JLR AT PRESENT'** **Ramesh Taurani addresses rumours about Sreeleela's role in HIS NEXT**

DON'T MISS...

Pawan, Lokesh welcome apex...

Deputy CM K Pawan Kalyan has said that the struggles of the Madiga community have borne fruit with the Supreme Court delivering its judgment in favour of Scheduled Caste categorisation. He congratulated Manda Krishna Madiga who fought for categorisation. He said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded positively to the creation of reservations for Madigas during the NDA-2 regime. In February this year, the central government informed the Supreme Court that social justice is possible through categorization and..."

-PAGE: 3

'Bad' cholesterol among new risk...

Loss of vision and high "bad" cholesterol levels have been added to risk factors for dementia, according to a new report by Lancet Commission. Researchers said addressing risk factors childhood onwards and monitoring them throughout life could help stave off or delay onset of the mental condition, even in people having a high genetic risk. Quality education for children and reduced exposure to air pollution have been suggested to reduce the risk of the disease, the 2024 Lancet Commission for...

-PAGE: 5

Domestic food market expected...

The domestic food market was expected to grow by over 47 per cent between 2022 and 2027 and expected to touch USD 1,274 billion, a top industry official said. Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Foodpro Expo 2024 Chairman B Thiagarajan said the food processing sector was growing at an average annual growth rate of 5.35 per cent between 2015-16 to 2022-23. "In 2022-23, the sector accounted for 7.66 per cent of the GVA (Gross Value Added) in manufacturing at 2011-12 prices," Thiagarajan, also...

-PAGE: 8

Indians disappoint in 20km race walk...

National record holder Priyanka Goswami finished a poor 41st in the women's 20km competition while Vikash Singh and Paramjeet Singh ended at lowly 30th and 37th positions respectively in the men's event as Indian race walkers produced a disappointing performance at the Paris Olympics here on Thursday. Priyanka, an Asian silver medalist, clocked 1 hour, 39 minutes and 55 seconds, more than a whopping 10 minutes outside her season's best of 1:29:48, to bring up the rear. Only two race walkers...

-SPORTS

SC upholds Madigas' demand

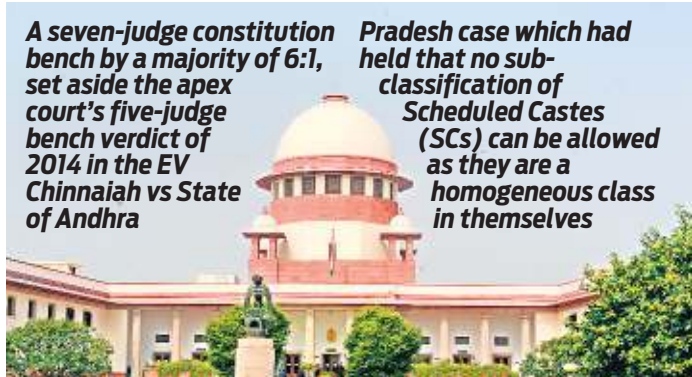
The apex court says states can sub-classify SCs to grant quota to more backward castes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and economically more backward.

A seven-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, by a majority of 6:1, set aside the apex court's five-judge bench verdict of 2014 in the EV Chinniah vs State of Andhra Pradesh case which had held that no sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) can be allowed as they are a homogeneous class in themselves.

"The State in exercise of its power under Articles 15 (non-discrimination



A seven-judge constitution bench by a majority of 6:1, set aside the apex court's five-judge bench verdict of 2014 in the EV Chinniah vs State of Andhra

Pradesh case which had held that no sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) can be allowed as they are a homogeneous class in themselves

against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth) and 16 (equality of opportunity in public employment) of the Constitution is free to identify the different degrees of social backwardness and provide special provisions (such as reservation) to achieve the specific degree of harm identified," held the CJI in his 140-page judgement. **Continued on Page 2**

States must identify creamy layer, deny them quotas: Justice Gavai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

States must evolve a policy for identifying the creamy layer even among the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) and deny them the benefit of reservation, Supreme Court judge Justice B R Gavai said on Thursday.



NAIDU HAILS VERDICT

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has welcomed the Supreme Court's ruling on SC classification. He emphasised that social justice should be proportionate to the population, aligning with the TDP's core ideology. Naidu highlighted his previous initiatives, including

the introduction of the ABCD classification system, and reiterated that social justice should be reflected in ticket allotments as well. "The TDP-led NDA government is inclusive and will continue to serve everyone," Naidu stated.

State Revenue, Registrations, and Stamps Minister Agani Sathya

Prasad also expressed support for the Supreme Court's decision on SC and ST classification. He noted that the TDP's mission is to ensure equal social justice for all societal sections. Prasad recalled that Chandrababu Naidu had implemented SC classification 30 years ago, leading to numerous employment opportunities in united

Andhra Pradesh. He affirmed that SC classification was a key election promise, and the TDP remains committed to it.

Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar tweeted, "I wholeheartedly welcome the Supreme Court's verdict on SC and ST classification. My goal is for people from all social classes to thrive economically and politically. The Telugu Desam Party is dedicated to social justice and leads in promoting the welfare and development of Dalits."



IIT experts to visit Amaravati for structural evaluation

Engineers to assess strength and technical aspects of incomplete buildings over next two days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Experts from the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) will visit Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, today to evaluate the strength and technical aspects of buildings that were left incomplete. Construction on some structures commenced before 2019 but was halted midway, with others remaining at the foundation stage.

According to a release from the Minister of Municipal and Urban Development's office, the IIT engineers will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the incomplete projects. Their evaluation will focus on how to proceed with these structures and address any existing issues.

The previous TDP government initiated the construction of the high court building, iconic towers, and secretariat towers, along with other key structures, but work stopped at the foundation stage.

2

CM vows to propel AP to top spot in India

PNS ■ SRISAILAM

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, on Thursday, pledged to elevate Andhra Pradesh to the number one position in the country. During an interaction with the representatives of the Water Users Association of Sunnipeta in the Nandyal district, the Chief Minister also committed to transforming Srisaillam into a renowned pilgrimage centre. "It is my responsibility to promote Srisaillam as a divine centre," Chandrababu Naidu stated.

The Chief Minister emphasised that adequate water supply can create wealth, generating significant revenue for the government. This, he added, will ultimately contribute to eradicating poverty. He stressed the need to create a poverty-free society and promised to develop the State. "We will generate revenue for the State and distribute the wealth to the poor, extending all kinds of welfare to all sections of people," the CM assured. He pledged to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth generated by his government to the underprivileged.

Highlighting the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government's commitment to social justice, the Chief Minister remarked, "I am here to raise awareness that water availability leads to wealth generation. Without water, the State will turn into a desert. Generating wealth is key to alleviating poverty," he added.

The Chief Minister expressed his aspiration for the youth from every corner of the State, including Srisaillam, to work in global cities like



New York. Reflecting on the development of Hyderabad as a global city, Chandrababu Naidu noted that he, along with Deputy Chief Minister, Pawan Kalyan, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are committed to propelling the nation to the top position in the world and the State to the leading position in the country.

Referring to the Supreme Court's favourable order on Thursday regard-

ing the categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Chandrababu Naidu reiterated that social justice is a cornerstone policy of the NDA. "I introduced the SC categorization into A, B, C, and D categories after forming the Ramachandra Rao Commission in 1996-97," he said.

The event was attended by several notable figures, including Minister for Minorities Welfare, N Md Farooq, Minister for Roads and Buildings, BC

'Creamy layer' may not go down well with SCs, STs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

While delivering its historic judgment on SC/ST sub-classification, the Supreme Court has made a significant observation that the creamy layer principle should be applied in the implementation of the rule of reservation for these sections to provide enough room for the most backward among these communities to enjoy the fruits of the Constitutional provision.

The theoretical and altruistic justification of the apex court in recommending the creamy layer notwithstanding, the verdict may stir up a hornet's nest in terms of a backlash from SC/ST communities who claim that reservations were granted to them basis of their social affliction rather than on economic backwardness.

In India, the 'creamy layer' refers to the relatively affluent and better-educated members of the marginalized section who are

excluded from reservation benefits in government jobs and educational institutions. This ensures that reservations benefit the genuinely underprivileged sections.

Justice BR Gavai urged the states to develop a policy to identify and exclude the 'creamy layer' among Scheduled Castes and Tribes from affirmative action benefits. He argued that this step is essential for achieving genuine equality as envisioned in the Constitution. He stated that children of individuals who have benefited from reservations should not be equated with those who have not.



Speaking to The Pioneer, Senior Andhra Pradesh High Court advocate Jada Sravan Kumar said that the creamy layer should not be made applicable to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities based on financial strength.

Justice Vikram Nath supported Justice Gavai's view, asserting that the 'creamy layer' principle applicable to OBCs should also apply to SCs and STs, though with different criteria.

Justice Pankaj Mithal argued that reservations should be limited to the first generation.

Continued on Page 2



MPs Magunta, CM Ramesh, Balashowry appointed to PAC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, BJP MP CM Ramesh, and Jana Sena MP V. Balashowry have been appointed to the 15-member Union Public Accounts Committee.

The Central Government has established the Public Accounts Committee, chaired by the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi. The names of the 15 committee members were recently announced.

Three MPs from Andhra Pradesh, including Ongole MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, Machilipatnam MP V. Balashowry, and Anakapalli MP CM Ramesh, have been inducted into the committee as members.

The other members of the Public Accounts Committee are: TR Balu, Nishikant Dubey, Jagdambika Pal, Ravi Shankar Prasad, TS Rawat, Sougata Roy, Aparajita Sarangi, Amar Singh, Tejasvi Surya, Anurag Thakur, KC Venugopal, and Dharmendra Yadav.

Our govt is pro-poor: Naidu

PNS ■ MADAKASIRA

On Thursday, Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu affirmed his administration's dedication to supporting the poor and ensuring assistance for all citizens. Speaking during a pension distribution event at Gundumala in the Madakasira Assembly segment, Naidu emphasized the government's commitment to generating wealth and

redistributing it to the underprivileged.

Naidu criticized the previous YSRCP government, noting its lack of revenue and heavy debt burden. He claimed that Rayalaseema was neglected and turned into a "desert" under their rule. The former chief minister also highlighted discrepancies in funding, mentioning that while the YSRCP government failed to support farmers

with subsidies, it allocated Rs 403 crore for advertisements in a media house owned by the former chief minister.

Additionally, he criticized the previous administration for spending Rs 700 crore on painting photos on survey stones rather than investing in roads and irrigation.

2

AP's total trade with UAE: \$ 1.46 billion

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The UAE Embassy in Delhi, in collaboration with the UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) and the Government of Andhra Pradesh, convened an economic and investment roundtable co-chaired by HE Abdulnasser Alshaali PhD, the Ambassador of the UAE to India, and TG Bharath, Minister for Industries and Commerce and Food Processing of Andhra Pradesh.

UAE participants at the roundtable included Ahmed Aljneibi, Director of the UICC, as well as representatives from UAE companies, Abu Dhabi Ports, Air Arabia, Aramex, DP World, DUCAB, Emaar, Emirates Airlines, Emirates NBD, FlyDubai, the Lulu Group, and Tabreed. From the Andhra Pradesh side, 50 senior government officials and company representatives were

present at the event.

Speaking on the occasion of the roundtable, HE Dr Alshaali underlined the centrality of Andhra Pradesh within the UAE-India strategic partnership, and the need to exert all efforts to increase people-to-people, economic, and investment engagement. "It is essential to increase the level of economic and investment collaboration between the UAE and Andhra Pradesh. The participation of more than 10 major UAE compa-



The Ambassador highlighted that, it was underlined that UAE carriers could undertake up to 35 direct flights per week to Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Tirupati, which would allow for an increase in over 5,00,000 passengers per annum to AP's airports. Direct air links between the UAE and AP would not only provide increased consumer choice and economic opportunities for the people of Andhra Pradesh but also enhance the state's position as a vital regional and international aviation hub.

nies at this roundtable strongly attests to the significance of Andhra Pradesh, and the UAE's willingness to support the state government's ambitious investment and developmental agendas." The Ambassador highlighted that, it was underlined that UAE carriers

could undertake up to 35 direct flights per week to Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Tirupati, which would allow for an increase in over 5,00,000 passengers per annum to Andhra Pradesh's airports. Direct air links between the UAE and Andhra Pradesh would not only provide increased consumer choice and economic opportunities for the people of Andhra Pradesh but also enhance the state's position as a vital regional and international aviation hub.

During the roundtable, a highly interactive discussion took place between participants from both sides, with cooperation in a range of sectors canvassed, including agriculture and food processing, aviation and aerospace, biotechnology, electronics and IT, automotive, petroleum and petrochemicals, and shipping, logistics, and ports.

During his visit to Andhra Pradesh, HE Dr Alshaali met Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. During the discussions, HE Dr Alshaali congratulated Naidu on his recent appointment as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and affirmed the UAE Government's desire to expand tangible engagement with the state of Andhra Pradesh across all facets of the bilateral partnership.

Continued on Page 2



10 gates lifted as inflows rise at Srisaillam Dam

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The floodwater in the Srisaillam reservoir continued to rise on Thursday, prompting engineers to lift ten crest gates to discharge excess water to the downstream Nagarjuna Sagar project. Engineers reported that the Srisaillam reservoir is receiving 3,42,026 cusecs of water from the Jurala and Sunkesula projects. To manage the inflow, the ten crest gates have been lifted to release 3,17,940 cusecs of water down-

stream to the Nagarjuna Sagar project. Currently, the reservoir is nearly full, with water levels at 884.50 feet against a full capacity of 885 feet, and 212.91 TMC of water stored out of a maximum capacity of 215.807 TMC. Additionally, hydroelectric power generation has commenced at the right and left canal hydropower projects, utilizing 60,000 cusecs of water. Meanwhile, engineers have also released 25,000 cusecs of water to the Rayalaseema region through the Pothireddy Padu head regulator.

HYDRA poised for streamlining govt land administration

Hyderabad and its environs have long been known for their vast tracts of government land. After the end of the Nizam's rule and the merger of the erstwhile Hyderabad State into the Indian Union, Hyderabad became a land bank for setting up central and state government institutions. Over the years, successive governments have allocated thousands of acres of this extensive land to central and state public sector enterprises, military forces, research institutions, and educational establishments.

The value of land in and around Hyderabad has become more valuable than gold. Due to a lack of proper supervision, some of these government lands are often encroached upon. In the combined Andhra Pradesh, government lands in Hyderabad were encroached upon significantly, and this menace has only doubled in Telangana post bifurcation. Historical chain tanks have been obliterated, and hills have been razed to create real estate plots.

The previous government, by removing village revenue officers (VROs) and village revenue assistants (VRAs) from the Revenue Department, essentially enabled these land grabs. Those who were supposed to protect the land under GO 59 were involved in exploiting it.

Now, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the present government has focused on putting an end to the destruction of land in Hyderabad. The Chief Minister has come up with a new initiative to protect government lands and tanks for future generations. A special department, named 'Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Monitoring Protection' (HYDRA), has been established for this purpose, appointing senior police officer AV Ranganath as Commissioner.

The erstwhile Hyderabad State had 5.30 crore acres of arable land, of which 3 crore acres were government land under the Shistu system, referred to as Diwani or Khalsa, constituting about 60% of the agricultural land. Around 30% of the land was under the Jagirdari system, and the remaining 10% was the Nizam's personal property,

known as Sarf-e-Khas, meaning personal income or private expenditure. The Nizam retained around 55 lakh acres of this land for his own expenses, spread across 18 taluks and 1,443 villages. About 15 lakh farmers cultivated these lands. In Telangana, there were 508 Sarf-e-Khas villages primarily in the Atrabaldra (current Ranga Reddy district). There were also 1.50 crore acres of jagir land in Hyderabad, along with inam (Khareej Jama) and jagir lands. Additionally, there were lakhs of acres of land in the form of hills, tanks, and other areas. After the merger of Hyderabad State into the Indian Union in 1948, the Sarf-e-Khas lands were integrated

The previous government, by removing village revenue officers (VROs) and village revenue assistants (VRAs) from the Revenue Department, essentially enabled these land grabs. Those who were supposed to protect the land under GO 59 were involved in exploiting it.

into Khalsa lands by paying Rs.18 crore to the jagirdars through the Hyderabad Abolition of Jagirs Regulation Act, 1949. Thousands of acres of land were donated during the Bhoodan movement of 1951. Currently, these lands lack protection and are being encroached upon.

The Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was restructured into the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) by the then Congress government. Now, under the leadership of CM Revanth Reddy, efforts are being made to extend the GHMC jurisdiction up to the Outer Ring Road (ORR). HYDRA will include areas within the ORR, covering

about 2,000 square kilometers, 27 municipalities, and 33 panchayats, operating autonomously. HYDRA will oversee GHMC, HMDA, Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri, and Sangareddy districts, designated as the Telangana Core Urban Region (TCUR), managing disaster response and other authorities.

HYDRA aims to prevent land grabs of tanks, protect government lands, and control illegal constructions. It will enhance accountability in government departments, playing a crucial role in disaster management and protecting govern-



DR. N. YADAGIRI RAO

ment assets. The Enforcement Vigilance Disaster Management (EVDM) of GHMC will be restructured. Thousands of acres of government, tank, Waqf, endowment, park, and inam lands under GHMC and HMDA have been encroached upon. HYDRA will address these encroachments by coordinating with various departments and using satellite images and government records to survey and identify encroachments, and demolish illegal constructions.

Hyderabad once had over 2,000 tanks, but many have disappeared due to lack of supervision and rising land values. Henceforth, HYDRA will monitor construction within the Full Tank Level (FTL) and buffer zones of tanks and assign staff and CCTV surveillance. Special task forces will oversee enforcement within zones, ensuring compliance.

HYDRA will also oversee flood management, road construction, and repairs. It will ensure efficient execution of works by GHMC, Water Board, and traffic police, addressing complaints about poor execu-

tion. The department will regulate unauthorized hoardings, flex boards, drinking water pipelines, electricity supply lines, drainage, flood management, and traffic control.

CM Revanth Reddy will serve as the Chairman of the HYDRA governing board. The government's GO No. 99 outlines various aspects, stating that a Commissioner of all-India service rank or higher will head HYDRA. The board includes the municipal administration minister, revenue and disaster management minister, in-charge ministers of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Sangareddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri districts, GHMC Mayor, Chief Secretary, and Principal Secretary of municipal administration, ICCO head, and HYDRA Commissioner. A sub-committee on TCUR disaster management, chaired by the Principal Secretary of municipal administration with 14 members from various departments, will assist the governing board in policy and planning.

HYDRA will receive government budget allocations, with the Telangana govern-

ment allocating Rs. 200 crore for this financial year. Additional funds will come from GHMC, HMDA, TGS-PDCL, Water Works, MRDC, HGC, and other utilities, including local authorities. HYDRA will take coordinated and swift action against encroachments and unauthorized constructions. Responsibilities for removing unauthorized hoardings and collecting penalties will be transferred from GHMC to HYDRA. HYDRA will also oversee park protection and include town planning, revenue, police, traffic police, and other officials. HYDRA will bring together officials from disaster response, police, revenue, irrigation, surveying, town planning, forest, and registration departments on deputation.

All told, the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Authority (HYDRA) is poised to leave a lasting legacy by safeguarding government lands, tanks, responding to disasters, and checking illegal constructions.

(The writer is Additional Commissioner, GHMC)

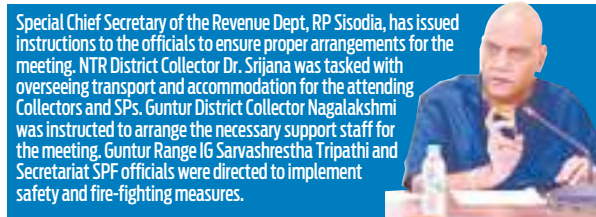
Collectors' meet on Aug 5 & 6: Sisodia

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A two-day meeting of District Collectors will be held on August 5 and 6, announced RP Sisodia, Special Chief Secretary of the State Revenue Department. He reviewed the preparatory arrangements with the officials from various departments and CCLA G Jayalakshmi at the State Secretariat on Thursday.

Sisodia detailed the schedule, noting that a joint meeting of the district collectors will take place on the first day, and a joint meeting with the collectors and SPs will be held on the second day. The inaugural session of the collectors' meeting is scheduled from 10 am to 11 am on August 5, with meetings continuing until 6 pm on both days.

Instructions were issued to ensure proper arrangements for the meeting. NTR District Collector Dr. Srijana was tasked with overseeing transport and



Special Chief Secretary of the Revenue Dept. RP Sisodia, has issued instructions to the officials to ensure proper arrangements for the meeting. NTR District Collector Dr. Srijana was tasked with overseeing transport and accommodation for the attending Collectors and SPs. Guntur District Collector Nagalakshmi was instructed to arrange the necessary support staff for the meeting. Guntur Range IG Sarvashrestha Tripathi and Secretariat SPF officials were directed to implement safety and fire-fighting measures.

accommodation for the attending Collectors and SPs. Guntur District Collector Nagalakshmi was instructed to arrange the necessary support staff for the meeting. Guntur Range IG Sarvashrestha Tripathi and Secretariat SPF officials were directed to implement safety and fire-fighting measures.

The General Administration Department is responsible for sending invitations to the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, Ministers, Chief Secretary, Special Chief Secretaries, and Heads of Departments. Officials from the IT&C, Planning, I&PR, and CRDA Departments were

instructed to arrange for PowerPoint presentations, audio-visual systems, media coverage, and recording of minutes.

Attendees at the preparatory meeting included CCLA G Jayalakshmi, Additional CCLA N Prabhakar Reddy, Guntur Range IG Sarvashrestha Tripathi, Guntur District Collector Nagalakshmi, NTR District Collector Srijana, Planning Department Director R Rambabu, Protocol Director Bala Subramaniam Reddy, CRDA Additional Secretary Sivarama Krishna, GAD Deputy Secretary Ramasubbiah, and other officials.

Classification augurs well for SCs: Adimulapu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) remains steadfast in its commitment to the uplift of marginalised communities. Former minister Adimulapu Suresh highlighted the party's dedication to empowering these groups politically, socially, and economically through various initiatives both during its five-year rule and as an ongoing political force.

Addressing the media at the party central office on Thursday, Suresh noted that the allocation of ministerial positions, the appointment of nominees, the implementation of various schemes, and the establishment of new corporations under Chief

Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration underscore YSRCP's commitment to marginalised communities.

Suresh stressed that the YSRCP views all sub-castes within marginalized communities with equal importance, ensuring balanced attention and support. He expressed hope that the recent Supreme Court judgment on SC categorization aligns with the YSRCP's goals and will be used to genuinely advance the welfare of Scheduled Castes. Suresh emphasised the need for the judgment to be applied in a manner that strengthens these communities and serves justice comprehensively, in keeping with the spirit of the verdict.

AP Chambers urges continuation of fire gazette notifications

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation from the Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers), led by president Potluri Bhaskara Rao, met with the Director General of Fire Services, Madireddy Pratap, in Vijayawada. The delegation requested the continuation of the fire gazette notifications issued in September and October 2022, which have streamlined procedures as part of the Ease of Doing Business initiative without compromising fire safety in enterprises.

AP Chambers highlighted that the notifications were well-received by associations and businesses across Andhra

Pradesh for their practicality and effectiveness. "The Fire Norms outlined in the Gazette Orders (GOs) are more efficient and cost-effective for achieving fire safety than conventional methods. They also permit the use of alternative fire suppression systems in certain premises where traditional sprinkler systems are not feasible or effective, allowing enterprises to choose the most appropriate fire suppression system for their needs and reducing the risk of fires," the representation stated.

The delegation emphasised that various industries, educational institutions, hospitals, and other establishments have adopted these methods and obtained NOCs for five years

or more following the notifications. Revoking these notifications would require significant modifications to existing buildings to comply with older regulations, leading to substantial financial losses and hardships.

AP Chambers also provided detailed inputs and suggestions, urging the Director General to incorporate them into the Fire Policy. The delegation requested consideration of their concerns and the continuation of the Gazette Notifications in the interest of transparency and Ease of Doing Business for enterprises in the state. The meeting also included P. Koti Rao, Chairman of the AP Textile Mills Association.

AP's total trade with...

Continued from Page 1

During an interaction with The Pioneer, HE Dr Alshaali said that UAS is interested in various sectors in Andhra Pradesh. Apart from flight services, UAE companies have a strong interest in expanding investments in a range of sectors in Andhra Pradesh, including Aviation and Aerospace, Infrastructure Development, Agriculture and Food Security, Logistics, Real Estate Development and Hospitality, Energy and Mining.

Dr Alshaali said that Andhra Pradesh is emerging as a key economic center with developed

infrastructure in sea and airports, roads, and railways, which are critical for expanding economic investment and trade relations. Sectors highlighted for UAE's interest in Andhra Pradesh include ship manufacturing, aeronautics, machinery, electrical equipment, and processed foods.

The UAE Ambassador emphasises the strategic importance of Andhra Pradesh in the UAE-India economic partnership. The UAE is keen to invest in multiple sectors within the state and increase air connectivity between the UAE and Andhra Pradesh to strengthen both cultural and economic ties.

IIT experts to...

Continued from Page 1

IIT Madras has been tasked with assessing the foundation strength of these buildings, while IIT Hyderabad will evaluate the strength and quality of IAS officers' quarters, Ministers' quarters, and MLAs and MLCs quarters.

On August 2 (Friday), two teams of engineers from IIT Madras and IIT Hyderabad will arrive in Amaravati. Over the next two days, they will inspect the buildings, assess their quality and strength, and meet separately with CRDA officials to discuss their findings.

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

In a stark illustration of institutional failure, tribal farmers in the erstwhile Srikakulam district are left at the mercy of middlemen due to ongoing neglect by the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC). Established to assist tribal communities by procuring their agricultural produce — such as tamarind, millets, cashews, turmeric, and pulses — at fair prices, the GCC has fallen woefully short of its mission.

Operating out of its district office in Sitampeta and overseeing 36 depots across mandals including Palakonda, Veeragattam, and Pathapatnam, the GCC was designed to streamline the sale of tribal produce in the open market. However, the corporation's effectiveness has been severely under-

mined by persistent staff shortages, inadequate storage facilities, and various systemic failures.

Plans to set up essential infrastructure such as storage godowns and cold storage units have languished on paper, leaving the GCC incapable of managing and marketing tribal produce properly.

This failure has forced many tribal farmers into the exploitative clutches of middlemen, who often offer them prices significantly below market value.

The GCC's mandate also included facilitating access to nominal interest loans for crop cultivation, a promise partially fulfilled during the previous TDP government (2014-2019). The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, however, has neglected to continue these financial supports, leaving many tribal farmers

without crucial funding. Efforts by the district administration to alleviate the issue by providing retail spaces at Rythu Bazar for the direct sale of forest produce by tribals have also been neglected. This further exacerbates the challenges faced by tribal farmers in accessing fair market opportunities.

The GCC's ongoing neglect and ineffectiveness have dire implications for tribal communities, who find themselves ensnared in a cycle of dependency and exploitation.

Immediate and decisive action is required to address these deficiencies and restore the GCC's capacity to support and uplift these vulnerable communities. Without such intervention, the economic disadvantages and exploitation faced by tribal farmers will only worsen.

SC upholds Madigas' demand...

Continued from Page 1

"Historical and empirical evidence demonstrates that the SCs are a socially heterogeneous class. Thus, the state in exercise of the power under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) can further classify the SCs if (a) there is a rational principle for differentiation; and (b) the rational principle has a nexus with the purpose of sub-classification," the CJ held. The six judgements, running into 565 pages, were penned on the contentious issue by the CJ, who wrote for himself and Justice Manoj Misra, and Justices BR Gavai, Vikram Nath, Pankaj Mishal, Satish Chandra Mishra and Justice Bela M Trivedi.

Except for Justice Trivedi, the other five judges concurred with the findings of the CJ. Justice Trivedi, in her 85-page dissenting judgement, said it is only Parliament which can include a caste in the SC list or exclude it, and states are not empowered to tinker with it.

The SCs, she ruled, are a "homogeneous class" incapable of being sub-classified further.

"The States have no legislative competence to enact the law for providing reservation or giving preferential treatment to a particular caste/castes by dividing/sub-dividing/sub-classifying or regrouping the castes, races or tribes enumerated as the 'SCs' in the notification under Article 341," Justice Trivedi wrote.

The CJ, in the majority verdict, held, "If the SCs are not similarly situated for the purposes of the law (or the specific harm identified), there is nothing in Articles 15, 16 and 341 (President's power to classify SCs) which prevents the State from applying the principle of sub-classification to the class."

"Thus, the SCs can be further classified if: (a) there is a rational principle for differentiation; and (b) if the rational principle has a nexus with the purpose of sub-classification," Justice

Chandrachud said.

The CJ made it clear that any decision to sub-classify SCs to grant more quota benefits to a particular caste inside the category can be reviewed judicially.

He held that the states, for a valid exercise of power to sub-classify under Article 16(4), are required to collect "quantifiable data with respect to the inadequacy of representation of the sub-categories in the services". "The inadequacy of representation is an indicator of backwardness and thus, to use the cadre as a unit to determine representation alters the purpose of the indicator itself. The state while deciding if the class is adequately represented must calculate adequacy based on effective and not quantitative representation," it said.

He said Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution permits sub-classification of a class which is not similarly situated for the purpose of the law.

States must identify creamy...

Continued from Page 1

Justice Gavai penned a separate but concurring judgement in which the top court by a majority verdict said states are empowered to make sub-classifications of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for granting quotas within the reserved category to uplift those who belong to the more underprivileged castes. A seven-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud held by a 6:1 majority that further sub-classification of SCs and STs by states can be permitted to ensure quotas for castes that are more backward among them.

Four out of the six judges who agreed that states are empowered to make sub-classifications wrote in their separate judgments that those in the creamy layer must be excluded from enjoying the benefits of reservation.

Justice Gavai, who wrote a 281-page separate but concurring verdict, said it is the duty of the State to give preferential treatment to the backward class of citizens who are not adequately represented in government jobs. "The State must evolve a policy for identifying the creamy layer even from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes so as to exclude them from the benefit of affirmative action. In my view, only this and this alone can achieve the real equality as enshrined under the Constitution," Justice Gavai said.

'Creamy layer'

Continued from Page 1

Once a member of the first generation attains a higher status through reservations, the subsequent generation should not be entitled to the same benefits. The apex court judgement has garnered mixed reactions from the SC/ST communities. Some hailed the judgement, while others from the marginalised section opposed the implementation of the creamy layer concept.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Senior Andhra Pradesh High Court advocate Jada Sravan Kumar said that the creamy layer should not be made applicable to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities based on financial strength. He emphasised that Articles 341 and 342 clearly state that reservation is accorded to the SCs/STs based on the discrimination and humiliation they face in society. Financial strength, he argued, cannot wipe out the discrimination and humiliation the marginalised sections face in society. Sravan Kumar further stated that the creamy layer concept cannot be made applicable to SC/ST as per the Constitution of India.

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Chintalapudi LI scheme in 2-3 years

Mallavalli industrial area will get past glory: Minister Parthasarathy



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Housing and I&PR Minister Kolu Parthasarathy has said that the Chintalapudi lift irrigation scheme will be completed soon, which is happy news for the farmers in Nuzvid area. The Minister conducted door-to-door visits and distributed NTR Bharosa pensions in Katrenipadu village of Musunur mandal on Thursday.

On the occasion, Minister Parthasarathy said the previous government destroyed the State with its negligence on irrigation projects and said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has given utmost priority to irrigation projects. He said that the CM has decided to complete five major irrigation projects in the State, Chintalapudi lift irrigation being one of them. The Minister said that the works of Chintalapudi lift irrigation will be restarted and since the

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canals are connected to Nagarjunasagar in Nuzvid area, the irrigation water problem will be permanently solved. He said that big companies

like Ashok Leyland had set up their units in Mallavalli during their government's rule, but due to the neglect of the previous YSRCP government, they left AP. The Minister said that with the initiative of CM Chandrababu Naidu, industries are showing interest in setting up units in Mallavalli, which will provide more job opportunities to the youth of this region. He alleged that no development has taken place in the State in the past five years.

He said that the previous government did not pay the bills of those who had granted houses to the poor in the past and did not even complete the construction of houses which were in the initial stage. When this issue was brought to the attention of the Chief Minister, he promised to pay the house bills and grant new houses to those whose houses are in the initial stage of construction.

The Minister said that NTR Bharosa pensions have been increased from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 and everyone who is eligible will be identified and pension will be provided soon. He said that NTR Bharosa pensions have increased the self-esteem of the elderly and the poor.

On the occasion, the Minister directed the officials to resolve the problems of electricity cables in the oil palm plantations and the issues regarding the electricity bills. He assured of connectivity of roads in the mandal, internal roads and drainage in SC Colony.

Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy, RDO Y Bhavani Shankari, Tehsildar Emily Kumari, Divisional Panchayat Officer Sundari, MPDO Padmavathi, EO PRDSV Srinivasa Rao, RWSA E Sathyaprasad, Sarpanch G Suhasini, ZPTC Pratap and Prabhrutu were present.

Make elaborate arrangements for 78th I-Day celebrations: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad has directed the officials to make elaborate arrangements for the 78th Independence Day celebrations to be held at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium, Vijayawada, on August 15. He has instructed that all the arrangements should be made in terms of the respective departments. Similarly, appropriate arrangements should also be made regarding the At Home programme to be held at Raj Bhavan on the same evening. The CS directed that all the arrangements should be monitored by the Protocol Department, NTR District Collector and the Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner by coordinating with the departments concerned.

Neerabh Kumar Prasad directed the officials to organise special tableau performances by the respective departments to create awareness among the public on the various development and welfare schemes being implemented by the State government. In view of the Independence Day celebrations, Raj Bhavan, High Court, Assembly, Secretariat and other offices and historical buildings should be decorated with electric lights. Since it is the rainy season, it is advised to make suitable arrangements in such a way that there will be no trouble to the guests.

State General Administration (Political) Principal Secretary S Suresh Kumar said that the 78th Independence Day celebrations will be held at the Indira

At Home in the evening at Raj Bhavan



Gandhi Municipal Stadium in Vijayawada from 9 am to 10.30 am. He said that instructions have been issued that the Independence Day celebrations will be followed by 'At Home' programme to be held at Raj Bhavan at 5 pm. He said that instructions are being issued to the respective departments to make appropriate arrangements for both the programmes. Later, he explained the arrangements to be undertaken by different departments through a PowerPoint presentation.

IG (Law and Order) Srikanth briefed virtually that extensive security arrangements will be made for the Independence Day celebrations. Similarly, he said that other measures will be taken to control traffic in the city. On the occasion of Independence Day, various police contingents will conduct a ceremonial parade and other necessary measures will be made.

NTR District Collector Srijana said that arrangements have already been started for the Independence Day celebrations. She said that the stadium will be ready by August 5, so that the rehearsals can be held. Painting of the stadium has already been started by the Municipal Corporation, which will also take care of sanitation works and drinking water facilities.

State Protocol Director Bala Subrahmanyam Reddy said that steps will be taken to ensure that the invitation cards for the Independence Day celebrations and At Home programme are delivered to all the dignitaries and departments on time as per the protocol.

Joint Director I&PR P Kiran Kumar said that during the Independence Day celebrations, tableaux by various departments on relevant welfare schemes will be organised to create awareness among the people about the development and welfare schemes being implemented in the State. A live broadcast through various media will also be arranged.

Director of State Fire Department Murali said that necessary fire engines and other equipment will be made available at the venue.

Officers of NCC Group Commander, DG Sainik Welfare and other departments virtually briefed the CS about the arrangements.

Ex-director of Mines Dept suspended; ACB probe ordered

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has issued an order suspending the former Director of the Mines Department and former VCMD of APMDV VG Venkata Reddy. The government has said that there are charges against Venkata Reddy for illegal activities in mining and sand mining. It has been clarified that there are charges against Venkata Reddy for violating the provisions of sand tenders and agreements. Chief Secretary to Government Neerabh Kumar Prasad issued GOMS: 61 suspending

Venkata Reddy for committing various acts of commissions, omissions and violations in operations of sand mining and in the related provisions of tenders/agreements, APMMC rules and illegal mining of sand, violations of orders of NGT/Hon Supreme Court, caused heavy loss to state exchequer and gains to private parties etc. It is ordered that during the period in which this order remains in force, the headquarters of Venkata Reddy, shall be Amaravati and he shall not leave the headquarters without obtaining prior permission of the competent

authority. It may be recalled that Venkata Reddy, Senior Civilian Staff Officer (Trg.), belongs to the Coast Guards and worked in AP on deputation. Hence Chief Secretary to AP Government wrote a letter to the Director General, Coast Guard Headquarters, New Delhi about the suspension orders and about the initiation of the disciplinary action. Further, CS Neerabh Kumar Prasad issued orders to the Director General, Anti Corruption Bureau, to conduct a thorough investigation against the illegalities of Venkata Reddy.



'Improved infrastructure essential for tribals'

Stresses need for timely completion of Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum

PNS ■ PADERU

Underscoring the pressing need for improved infrastructure in tribal regions, Kanna Babu, Principal Secretary of the Tribal Welfare Department, on Thursday called for acceleration of road construction projects there. During a comprehensive review meeting held at the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) conference hall, Babu highlighted the numerous challenges faced by tribal communities due to poor connectivity, including the arduous task of transporting sick patients on makeshift stretchers. He urged officials to expedite the process of submitting proposals for new road construction and expansion initiatives, emphasising the crucial role of efficient transportation in the overall development of tribal areas.

In addition to road infrastructure, Babu stressed the importance of constructing bridges and culverts to ensure uninterrupted connectivity, especially during the monsoon season. He also expressed keen interest in the progress of the Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum (TFFM) at Tajangi and emphasised the need for its timely completion.

The Principal Secretary conducted a thorough review of hostel facilities, assessing the availability of basic amenities and the academic performance of students. He underscored the significance of uninterrupted power supply through UPS systems in hostels to create a conducive learning environment.

ITDA Project Officer V. Abhishek presented a detailed overview of various development schemes implemented in the region, including initiatives related to coffee and

turmeric cultivation, road construction, check dam construction, Forest Rights Act, Jal Jeevan Mission, and healthcare services. The successful implementation of Mission Connect in Paderu, which includes sickle cell anaemia screening and civil service coaching, was also highlighted.

Later in the day, Kannababu visited the Guthulu Puttu Government Tribal Welfare Girls Ashram School, where he interacted with Class X students undergoing special training. He emphasised the transformative power of education and encouraged students to strive for excellence in their academic pursuits. Identifying 10 exceptional students as role models, he motivated them to aim high and achieve their full potential. The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Tribal Welfare, Health, and other relevant departments.

MP urges immediate release of funds for Andhra University

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

MP M Sribharat has intensified his push for the development of Andhra University by urging the Central government to expedite the release of Rs. 150 crore for the first phase and an additional Rs. 400 crore for the subsequent phase of the university's expansion. During his parliamentary speech on Thursday, Sribharat underscored the critical importance of these funds in elevating Andhra University to new heights of academic excellence.



Beyond Andhra University, Sribharat also championed the cause of central universities in Andhra Pradesh, emphasising the need for special financial assistance under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. He highlighted the instrumental role of Andhra Pradesh Central University and Central Tribal University in fostering regional and tribal development through education. Sribharat expressed deep concern over the inadequate infrastructure at Central Tribal University and proposed relocating it to Relli village, a move he believes would significantly enhance the university's accessibility and potential for

growth through collaborations with industries and research institutions in Visakhapatnam.

While appreciating the government's increased allocation to the education sector, Sribharat pointed out the absence of specific provisions for tribal universities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana within the budget. He underscored the necessity of dedicated funding for these institutions to address their unique challenges and fulfil their mandate of providing quality education to marginalised communities.

Sribharat's fervent appeal underscores the urgent need for substantial investments in higher education in Andhra Pradesh.

CCTV surveillance mandatory for ICSE, ISC exams: CISCE

Footage must be preserved until results are declared

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has issued a directive mandating CCTV surveillance for ICSE and ISC examinees and the personnel conducting the exams. This decision, aimed at ensuring transparency and security, requires exam centres to comply with the new guidelines by August 16. According to the circular issued by CISCE, all examinations must be conducted in a single hall rather than multiple classrooms to facilitate comprehensive monitoring. The directive states, "The candidates taking the examination and the personnel conducting the examination in the hall should be under CCTV surveillance during the entire duration of the examination. The centres that do not have CCTV cameras at the required locations should make provision for the same latest by 16th August 2024."



A specific focus is placed on the security of the steel cupboard in the head of the examination centre's room, where confidential materials, including examination stationery, are stored. This area, too, must be under constant CCTV surveillance during the examination period. Any failure to comply with these requirements could lead to the cancellation of the examination centre's approval.

The stringent measures come in the wake of disruptions during the 2024 ISC examinations, where the chemistry paper was abruptly cancelled due to "unforeseen circumstances", and the Psychology exam was postponed after a question paper packet was lost at one of the centres. These incidents have underscored the need for heightened security measures. School principals are already gearing up to meet these new requirements. Dr. (Sr) Shyji,

Principal of St. Joseph's Girls High School, highlighted the importance of proper camera placement to cover all students in the examination hall, which typically accommodates 150 to 200 students. Similarly, Christobel Stevenson, Principal of Timpany School, mentioned the need to extend the storage duration for CCTV recordings from the usual 15 days to at least three months.

Looking ahead, conveners for the 2025 ICSE and ISC examinations will be responsible for inspecting all exam centres to ensure compliance with these new arrangements. They are required to send a compliance report to the CISCE, affirming that the necessary measures have been implemented. With these robust steps, the CISCE aims to uphold the sanctity and fairness of its examination process, ensuring that all candidates are evaluated in a secure and transparent environment.

PHC docs must adhere to schedules: Collector

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector Harendhira Prasad has mandated that doctors working in primary and urban health centres must adhere strictly to their schedules, remaining on site from 9 AM to 5 PM. The directive was issued during a meeting with several healthcare professionals here on Thursday. Collector Prasad underscored the significance of time management in healthcare delivery. He highlighted that increasing outpatient visits at

They should be available from 9 AM to 5 PM

primary and urban health centres will significantly alleviate congestion at King George Hospital (KGH).

"Ensuring the availability of doctors will lead to a higher number of patients opting for government hospitals," the Collector stated. He also emphasised the need for more deliveries to take place in government hospitals rather than private ones, setting a target of at least five deliveries per



month in each Primary Health Centre (PHC).

Further, the Collector called for the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) scheme to reach a broader audience and stressed the importance of vaccinations for all.

He urged that the adult BCG vaccination process be expedited for individuals over 60 years of age, with the cooperation of various depart-

ments. In addition, the Collector emphasised the need for public awareness about diseases such as malaria and dengue, advocating for the observance of dry days to prevent mosquito breeding.

During the meeting, District Medical and Health Officer Dr P Jagadeeswara Rao stressed the importance of diligence in duty performance. District Immunisation Officer Dr Jeevan Rani, Dr Purnendra Babu, Dr B. Uma Vathi, and other officials and doctors were also present.

SC CATEGORISATION

Pawan, Lokesh welcome apex court verdict

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy CM K Pawan Kalyan has said that the struggles of the Madiga community have borne fruit with the Supreme Court delivering its judgment in favour of Scheduled Caste categorisation.



In February this year, the central government informed the Supreme Court that social justice is possible through categorization and that the goal of providing equal opportunities to all will be achieved.

categorical decision to provide equal opportunities to all, unlike vote bank politics, when he was the Chief Minister of the United AP?

Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Nara Lokesh welcomed the Supreme Court's verdict on SC classification. He recalled that it was Chandrababu who implemented social justice 30 years ago.

TD's agenda is the economic and political development of all social classes, and that they are committed to the classification promise given in the election.

Union Minister Bhopathiraju Srinivasa Varma and BJP AP President Daggubati Purandeswari said that they welcome the historic judgment given by the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court in favour of SC categorisation.

97.48% pensions disbursed on first day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The distribution of NTR Bharosa pensions across AP was almost near completion on the first day. The authorities have distributed 97.48 per cent pensions across the state.

CM Chandrababu Naidu took part in the NTR Bharosa pensions distribution programme and distributed pensions to the beneficiaries at Gundumala village Madakasira mandal in Satya Sai district on Thursday.

The CM visited the houses of the beneficiaries and distributed pensions at their doorstep.

Officials revealed that 97.48 per cent of pensions have been distributed by 9 pm. Secretariat employees are trying to distribute the remaining pensions.



Govt committed to fulfilling all assurances: Minister

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy has reiterated that the government is committed to fulfilling all the assurances which have been given to the people by Chandrababu Naidu.

The Minister participated in the disbursement of social security pensions on Thursday at Pakala village in Singarayakonda mandal.

He handed over the pension amount to some of the beneficiaries by going to their houses.

Addressing a meeting organised on the occasion, Bala Veeranjanya Swamy said that as per the assurances given by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu before the elections, the social security pension was enhanced to

Rs 4,000 from Rs 3,000. On July 1, Rs 7,000 was disbursed to the beneficiaries, adding the previous month's dues also. The beneficiaries were very happy with the disbursement of enhanced pensions, he claimed.

"When NT Rama Rao was the Chief Minister, he introduced a social security pension by paying Rs 35 per month. Later the then Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu enhanced it to Rs 75. On June 8, 2014, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu immediately after taking oath announced hiking of social security pension to Rs 1,000," the Minister recalled.

The Opposition YSRCP misled people by spreading false information that pensions would not be disbursed in time if the TDP was voted to power, he slammed, adding that 95 per cent of pensions

disbursement had been completed on the first day on July 1 and 99 per cent achieved on July 2.

As per the assurance, free bus travel facility would be provided to the women in the state soon, he announced. The Anna canteens are being reopened across the state; he said, adding that the TDP-BJP-JSP alliance is working as per the aspirations of the people.

Later the Minister visited primary school and Anganwadi School at Singarayakonda. The YSRCP destroyed the development, he alleged, asserting that the alliance-led government is developing the State. The Minister questioned what the achievement of the previous YSRCP government was under the 'Nadu-Nedu scheme' as the schools across the state lacked basic amenities.

Six kg of cannabis, 4,500 intoxicating tablets seized



PNS ■ KAKINADA

The police seized six and a half kg of cannabis, 4,500 intoxicating tablets and 48 bottles of hash oil on Thursday and arrested three drug peddlers.

DSP K Hanumanta Rao told the media here on Thursday on a tip-off, a police conducted a raid and arrested a member

drug peddlers gang.

The police seized six and a half kg of ganja, 48 hash oil bottles and 4,500 Nitrazepam tablets. The DSP said that the drug peddlers including Sk. Ismail, Sl. Moulali and J Kondababu purchased the ganja intoxicating pills and hash oil from a person belonging to Bihar state to sell here.

Ex gratia disbursed to kin of three victims of electrocution

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Ex gratia payment of Rs 5 lakh to the families of three electrocuted victims was handed over at Ponugodu village in Addanki mandal on Thursday.

Three youths, Sheik Nazeer Khan, Veeramachi Gowtham Kumar and Balaji were electrocuted on July 23 after they came into contact with a high-

tension wire which got snapped and fell across the road. The three youths were going on a motorcycle when the incident took place.

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravikumar assured of extending ex gratia to the bereaved families. Minister Ugranarasimha Reddy handed over the ex gratia cheques to the bereaved families today.

Seven get 2-day jail for drunken driving

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The Third Special Judicial Second Class Magistrate Court sentenced seven drivers to two-day imprisonment each for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Third special judicial second class magistrate V Narasimha Rao handed down the two-day jail term to the seven accused. The court also imposed a Rs 10,000 fine each on 15 other

accused drivers. The cases were registered by the city traffic police inspectors Chaitanya Krishna and Ramesh in the special drive launched against drunken driving on Wednesday night. The traffic inspectors told the media that the special drive would continue under the instructions from Superintendent of Police Vikrant Patil as a part of the programme to curb road accidents in the district.

'AP, TG govts must not start hiring till categorisation of SC/ST quota is over'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Expressing happiness over the Supreme Court verdict on the categorisation of SC, ST reservations, the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi's (MRPS) Founder President, Manda Krishna Madiga, appealed to the governments of the Telugu States not to conduct recruitments till the categorisation of SC/ST reservations is over.

Speaking to the media after the Supreme Court's verdict on the SC's premises on Thursday, Manda

Krishna Madiga said the SC made it clear that states have the authority to categorise SC/ST reservations. He said that many MRPS activists lost their lives during the movement that has been going on for the last 30 years. He said that MRPS fought to correct the injustice meted out to the Madiga community. Manda Krishna said that they are dedicating the Supreme Court verdict to the MRPS leaders who sacrificed their lives for the movement.

"I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for taking the initiative for the speedy process. I said on November 5, 2004, that 'Dharma' can be on any day. 'Adharma' is temporary and 'Dharma' will win in the end. Special thanks to the judges who gave a verdict in favour of us. Chandrababu did categorization of SC Reservation in United Andhra Pradesh. Now too Chandrababu is the CM of AP at the time when the verdict came in favour of us. Special thanks to Chandrababu for categorising SC reservations.



KAZAKHSTAN MEDICAL COLLEGE

Students return after 'fraudulent admissions'

Lodged police complaint against Gangadhar Harish, who runs GGN International office

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

At least eight medical students from Srikakulam and Vizianagaram have been forced to return to India from Kazakhstan, after allegedly being duped by an agent from Karimnagar, Telangana. The students have lodged a police complaint against Gangadhar Harish, who runs the GGN International office near Polytechnic College.

According to the complaint, Gangadhar collected the entire course fee from the students, over Rs 2 crore, but reportedly only paid for the first year's tuition. The students, unable to pay the second-year fee, were subsequently removed from the medical college. This deceit has left them stranded and financially burdened.

The affected families have revealed that they paid for the full MBBS course, including

hostel accommodation and other charges. Among them, D Durga Rao from Eicherla disclosed that he had taken loans to the tune of Rs 45 lakh for his two children, but Gangadhar had only paid Rs 3.60 lakh as the first-year fee. Similarly, other parents reported significant losses: B Appaji from Polaki mandal paid Rs 28.5 lakh, A Nanaji Rao of Srikakulam contributed Rs 25 lakh, Ramana of Rajam mandal

also paid Rs 28.5 lakh, and P Appala Suryanarayana from Eicherla mandal spent Rs 25 lakh. K. Appala Naidu, a farmer from Vizianagaram, expressed his distress, stating that Gangadhar had promised the entire course for Rs 25 lakh, while it would have cost Rs 1 crore in India. The amount was paid in installments in 2022, but his son had to return home after the agent failed to pay the fee. Srikakulam SP K Maheswar

Reddy confirmed that multiple complaints have been received from affected families. He added that the victims had provided agreement papers from the accused and highlighted that payments were made through bank transactions and online transfers, which could assist in the investigation. The Srikakulam district police have initiated a probe into the matter, as the accused allegedly has a history of similar offenses.



Speaker lays stone for construction of CC road

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Speaker of Legislative Assembly Chintakayal Ayyannapratudu laid the foundation stone for the construction of a 5 km CC road

in Jaggampeta on Thursday. The Speaker flanked by Jaggampeta MLA Jyotula Nehru laid the stone for the construction of a 5-km-long road for 3.85 crore. Later, the Speaker and the MLA wor-

shipped Lord Venkateswara in the temple and the priests blessed the leaders.

Later the Speaker and MLA participated in social security pension disbursement.



GMR Hyd Airport launches sunflower drive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The GMR Hyderabad International Airport launched the Sunflower programme on Thursday to assist travellers with hidden disabilities. This initiative highlights GHIAL's commitment to inclusivity and enhanced passenger services. Hidden disabilities include low vision, autism, dementia, intellectual disability, or hearing loss. According to GHIAL, this program uses sunflower lanyards to secretly signal that a passenger may need extra assistance.

AIG, ISB tie up to integrate healthcare innovation with AI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian School of Business (ISB) on Thursday announced a collaboration with AIG Hospitals, one of the world's top-ranked gastroenterology institutions and India's largest super-specialty tertiary care hospital, for an initiative that redefines healthcare by merging the capabilities of AI with clinical experience of doctors in India.

Designed as the 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Healthcare Programme', it aims to foster a new era of innovation and excellence in healthcare delivery and most importantly enhance patient experience. The initiative stresses the significant challenge of clinician involvement in tech innovation. The Max Institute of Healthcare Management

(MIHM), an inter-disciplinary research institute at ISB, will be the principal knowledge partner in this collaboration which aims to create an unparalleled platform for healthcare innovation in India. The programme is being co-developed by researchers at MIHM, ISB and clinicians from AIG Hospitals to empower healthcare leaders with advanced AI skills and understand AI's implementation in clinical practices which will potentially elevate patient outcomes in both diagnostic as well as therapeutic aspects.

Guided by industry experts, academic visionaries and international experts, the programme will be led by Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals, Prof Sarang Deo, Deputy Dean, Faculty and Research and Executive



(L to R): Prof Sarang Deo, Deputy Dean - Faculty & Research, Executive Director - MIHM, ISB, Sujatha Kumaraswamy, Executive Director, Executive Education & Digital Learning, ISB and Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals

Director, Max Institute of Healthcare Management, Dr Prateek Sharma, President, American Society of GI Endoscopy, & AIG, Dr Rakesh

Kalapala, Director, Endoscopy (Centre for Obesity & Metabolic Therapy) and Kinjal Saxena, CTO, AIG Hospitals.

Action taken against malls collecting parking fee: GHMC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner Amrapali Kata warned that strict action has been initiated against malls and multiplexes within GHMC limits for illegally collecting parking fees.

She noted that many malls,

multiplexes and cinema theatres in the city are charging parking fees against the rules. Special teams conducted checks and found that malls were collecting parking fees from customers despite regulations stating that parking should be free with a purchase receipt. Additionally, a theatre registered as a single screen was dis-

covered to be showing movies on multiple screens, Amrapali added. She also said that inspections of food stalls revealed that some places were selling low-quality food items. Following the Commissioner's directions, upon inspection, notices have been issued to the malls concerned and multiplexes for these irregularities.

ACROSS THE STATES

We support development, not expansionism: PM Modi



Modi with Vietnamese PM Pham Minh Chinh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The two sides signed six memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and finalised three other documents to broaden cooperation in a range of areas following wide-ranging talks between Modi and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh

India and Vietnam on Thursday adopted an action plan to expand their strategic ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowing to work jointly for a rules-based Indo-Pacific and asserting that New Delhi supports development and "not expansionism" in remarks that came amid concerns over China's military posturing in the region.

The two sides signed six memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and finalised three other documents to broaden cooperation in a range of areas following wide-ranging talks between Modi and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

It was also decided that India will provide USD 300 million credit line to Vietnam primarily to strengthen the Southeast

Asian nation's maritime security.

An agreement was sealed between the central banks of the two countries for rolling out digital payment connectivity. Chinh arrived in Delhi on Tuesday night on a three-day visit that is aimed at further expanding the comprehensive strategic ties between the two

countries. "In our Act East policy and our Indo-Pacific vision, Vietnam is our important partner... We support development, not expansionism (Hum vistarbad nahi, vikasvad ka samarthan karte hai)," Modi said in Hindi in his media statement. "We will continue our cooperation for a free, open, rules-based and prosperous Indo-Pacific," he said.

Modi said that both sides decided that cooperation will be strengthened to deal with terrorism and cyber security issues. "We believe that 'Developed India 2047' and Vietnam's 'Vision 2045' have accelerated development in both countries. This is opening up many new areas of mutual cooperation," Modi said. "And therefore, to further strengthen our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, today we have adopted a new plan of

action," he said.

Modi said new steps have been taken for cooperation in the field of defence and security. The two prime ministers also remotely inaugurated an Army Software Park at Telecommunications University Nha Trang. It has been built with New Delhi's development assistance.

"The agreed USD 300 million credit line will strengthen Vietnam's maritime security," Modi said. "We agree that, to realise the mutual trade potential, the review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement should be concluded as early as possible," he said.

Vietnam is a key member of 10-nation ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

"We have decided to focus on the areas of green economy and new emerging technologies. Each other's capabilities in energy and port development will be harnessed for mutual benefit," Modi said.

The prime minister also invited people from Vietnam to the Buddhist circuit in India. "And we want the youth of Vietnam to also take advantage of Nalanda University."

In his remarks, Modi said India-Vietnam relations have both "expanded and deepened" over the past decade. "In the last 10 years, we have transformed our relations into a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Our bilateral trade has increased by more than 85 percent," he said. "Mutual cooperation has expanded in energy, technology, and development partnership."



'How can someone be appointed without proper verification of documents'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

How could someone be appointed to a government job without proper checking and verification of documents, the Supreme Court asked on Thursday while expressing surprise over the appointment of some employees in the Railways on the basis of forged documents.

The apex court said such instances in the Railways, one of India's largest employers, ought to be checked.

A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Sanjay Karol was dealing with a matter concerning termination of services of some employees who were appointed on compassionate grounds in the Eastern Railway.

The top court noted they were sacked as their appointments were found to be based on forged and bogus documents.

"Before parting with the matter, however, in the facts of this case, we express our surprise towards the actions of the appellant-employer who appointed the respondent-employees on the basis of questionable documentation,

which was later found to be forged, fabricated and bogus," the bench said in its verdict.

"How could someone be appointed to a government job without proper checking and verification of documents? The Railways are regarded to be one of the largest employers in the country and yet such incidents falling through the cracks ought to be checked," it said.

The bench was dealing with the Centre's appeals challenging the Calcutta High Court's August 2012 verdict which had reversed the order passed by the Central Administrative Tribunal, Calcutta bench.

These employees had approached the tribunal against the termination order.

The tribunal had dismissed their applications after which they moved the high court.

The apex court noted that the Railways had issued show cause notices to these employees asking why their appointment on compassionate grounds should not be terminated as they were secured using forged and fabricated documents with respect to the employment of their respective fathers.



Bridges in Srinagar being fenced to prevent suicides

In order to prevent attempts to die by suicide, authorities in Srinagar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday started fencing work on the sides of major bridges in the city.

The move comes after several persons made attempts to die by suicide by jumping into river Jhelum from the bridges in the city. "The process for fencing the sides of various bridges in Srinagar city has been started to save precious human lives," deputy commissioner Srinagar Bilal Mohi-ud-din Bhat said.

Bhat said detailed a project report regarding fencing has been formulated and Rs 19 lakh each has been earmarked for fencing the sides of Nawa Kadal and Fateh Kadal bridges.

Similarly, a detailed project report (DPR) of Rs 9 lakh has been prepared for Gow Kadal bridge and Rs 29 lakh for Safa Kadal bridge, he added. Bhat said fencing the sides of Noor Jahan Bridge over river Jhelum at Qamarwari will be completed at a cost of Rs 11 lakh to avoid any further mishap or any suicide incident.



Delhi Police bans flying of aerial platforms till Aug 16

Delhi Police has prohibited the flying of sub-conventional aerial platforms like paragliders, hang-gliders and hot air balloons in the national capital from August 2 to August 16 for security reasons, officials said. An order to this effect was issued by Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora ahead of the Independence Day celebrations on August 15.

It has been reported that certain criminal, anti-social elements or terrorists inimical to India may pose a threat to the safety of the general public, dignitaries and vital installations by the use of "sub-conventional aerial platforms" like paragliders, paramotors, hang-gliders, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), remotely piloted aircraft, hot air balloons, small sized powered aircraft, or by para-jumping from aircraft etc., the order stated. Therefore, the Delhi Police commissioner has prohibited flying of such aerial platforms over the jurisdiction of the national capital on the occasion of Independence Day and doing so shall be punishable under section 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), it said.



12 more airports ready to implement DigiYatra facility

Twelve more airports are ready to implement DigiYatra facility that will provide passengers seamless and contactless movement at various checkpoints through facial recognition system, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said on Thursday. Currently, the DigiYatra facility is available at 15 airports of the country. Naidu told the Lok Sabha that 12 more airports are ready to implement DigiYatra, while 11 airports are preparing to have the facility. Responding to supplementaries during the Question Hour, the minister emphasised that the passenger data shared through DigiYatra App is not stored in any centralised system, saying the government is committed to protecting data privacy. While the DigiYatra app is slowly gaining traction, there have been concerns expressed in various quarters about privacy of passenger data.



'Kumaraswamy will be part of padyatra'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday placated its miffed ally Janata Dal (Secular) into joining its 'padyatra' against the alleged MUDA scam in Karnataka and asserted that the JD(S) leader and Union minister H D Kumaraswamy will be part of the march starting from Bengaluru on August 3.

The development comes a day after the JD(S) on Wednesday pulled out of the proposed foot march against the alleged irregularities in the distribution of sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), including to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife.

Speaking to reporters, Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra, Union minister Pralhad Joshi and BJP general secretary Radha Mohan Das Agrawal, who is in charge of the party's affairs in the state, played down Kumaraswamy's earlier announcement of keeping out of the yatra.

Kumaraswamy had expressed anger over the mention of BJP leader Preetham Gowda, who was instrumental in exposing the alleged sex scandal involving the JD(S) leader's nephew Prajwal Revanna, as a key organiser of the foot march.

Senior BJP leaders, including the three who held the press conference, met Kumaraswamy earlier in the day to placate him, sources said.

Agrawal later projected a picture of unity in the ruling National Democratic Alliance in the state, and said both the BJP and the JD(S) are organising the foot march from Bengaluru to Mysuru from August 3 to August 10 to protest the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites by MUDA.

Asked about the JD(S) leader's unhappiness with the presence of Gowda, Agrawal said the yatra is a programme of the party's organisation and individuals are not invited. Vijayendra said the BJP's president in Karnataka and Kumaraswamy as his party's face in the state will be the key figures in the programme, he claimed.

Kumaraswamy is very much part of the yatra and will be there on August 3, he said.

MP CM announces Rs 250 aid as Rakhi gift for Ladli Behna beneficiaries

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Beneficiaries of the Madhya Pradesh government's Ladli Behna Yojana will get additional Rs 250 for Raksha Bandhan apart from the regular aid of Rs 1,250 on August 10, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Thursday.

Addressing a function in Chitrakoot in Satna district, he said his government will celebrate festivals during the month of 'Savan' underway. "Though Rakhi festival is on August 19, Ladli Behnas (beneficiaries) will get Rs 1250 along with additional Rs 250 for celebrating Rakhi festival on August 10," Yadav said. Beneficiaries of the scheme tied a 30-foot long 'rakhi' to Yadav on the occasion.

He also said Ladli Behna and Ujjwala Gas scheme beneficiaries will get a subsidy of Rs 450 per cylinder.

Yadav said an investors meet will be organized in Rewa soon to attract investment in the region and generate employment.



Landslides in Wayanad a national disaster: LOP Rahul

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi along with sister Priyanka visited landslide-hit areas of Wayanad on Thursday and said he was "deeply pained" to see people who have lost family members and homes in the tragedy, calling it a "national disaster" and demanded an urgent comprehensive action plan.

Gandhi, a former Congress MP from Wayanad, said it was a "terrible tragedy for Wayanad, Kerala, and the nation."

"We have come here to see the situation. It is quite a painful experience to see that people lost their family members and houses. It's very dif-

ficult to speak to people in these circumstances because you really don't know what to say to them. It's been quite a difficult day for me, but we are going to try and help make sure that the survivors get what is due," he told reporters.

"To me, this is a national disaster for sure, but let's see what the government says," he said in response to reporters' queries.

Both Gandhi and his sister, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, visited the landslide-hit Chooralmala area of Wayanad. Vadra spoke along similar lines, saying the pain people in the area were experiencing was unimaginable.

"We are here to help them and to give as much support and comfort as we can."



Toll at 177, nearly 200 missing

Rescuers raced against time under harsh conditions to search for survivors trapped in collapsed buildings, two days after massive landslides struck Kerala's Wayanad district with the death toll climbing to 177 on Thursday. With nearly 200 people missing, the death toll is expected to rise. While some unconfirmed reports suggested 276 fatalities, Wayanad district authorities, in the latest bulletin, said the landslides have killed at least 177 people.

12 dead after torrential overnight rain in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Twelve people, including three of a family, were killed and six injured in heavy overnight rains that triggered flooding and house collapse as several rivers swelled in Uttarakhand, officials said on Thursday.

Most parts of the state did not receive fresh rains till Thursday afternoon.

Six deaths were reported in Haridwar, three in Tehri, two in Dehradun and one in Chamoli.

A seven-year-old child, who was swept away in a swollen stream in Haldwani in Nainital district is still missing, the



Disaster Control Room here said.

Two people -- Sundar Singh and Arjun Singh Rana -- were swept away by the waters of an overflowing seasonal canal near the Ordnance Factory in Dehradun's Raipur area, Dehradun SSP Ajai Singh said,

adding that their bodies have been recovered.

Water gushed into many homes in Dehradun besides leaving the roads heavily waterlogged at various places in the city. The MeT office here said over the past 24 hours, 172 mm of rainfall was recorded in Dehradun alone.

Haridwar's Roshanabad recorded the highest rainfall of 210 mm, Raiwala recorded 163 mm of rain while it was 140 mm in Haldwani, 112 mm in Roorkee, 107 mm in Narendra Nagar, 98 mm in Dhanolti, 92 mm in Chakrata and 89 mm in Nainital, it said.

K'taka govt urges Governor to withdraw 'notice' to CM

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Thursday "strongly advised" the Governor Thaaarchand Gehlot to withdraw his "show-cause notice" to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam' and alleged a concerted effort to destabilise the Congress regime.

The Council of Ministers discussed the show-cause notice, and alleged "gross misuse of the Constitutional Office" of the Governor and said a concerted effort is being made to destabilise a lawfully

elected majority government in Karnataka for political considerations.

Based on a petition filed by advocate-activist T J Abraham, the Governor issued the notice on July 26 directing the Chief Minister to submit his reply to the allegations against him within seven days as to why permission for prosecution should not be granted against him.

"...Hence, the request of the petitioner needs to be processed as per provisions of section 17(A) and 19 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and section 218 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023...", the Governor had said in his notice to the Chief Minister.



109 women judges in higher judiciary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 109 women judges are serving in the higher judiciary, including three in the Supreme Court, the government informed the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said in a written reply that at present, three women judges were working in the Supreme Court and 106 in the various high courts. He also said the Constitution did not provide for reservation for any caste or class of persons.

Researchers call for addressing them early

'Bad' cholesterol among new risk factors of dementia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Loss of vision and high "bad" cholesterol levels have been added to risk factors for dementia, according to a new report by Lancet Commission.

Researchers said addressing risk factors childhood onwards and monitoring them throughout life could help stave off or delay onset of the mental condition, even in people having a high genetic risk.

Quality education for children and reduced exposure to air pollution have been suggested to reduce the risk of the disease, the 2024 Lancet



Quality education for children and reduced exposure to air pollution have been suggested to reduce the risk of the disease, the 2024 Lancet Commission for dementia said.

The international team of authors, led by those at the

University College London, UK, found that about nine per cent of global dementia cases

could be attributed to the newly added risk factors, with seven per cent and two per cent being attributable to high "bad" cholesterol in mid-life starting at 40 years of age and untreated vision loss in later life, respectively.

Lower education levels in early life and social isolation in later life were other risk factors, each attributable to five per cent of global dementia cases, the authors found. Dementia impairs thinking, memory and decision-making, thereby, impacting one's daily activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Squabbling overshadows tragedy

The Wayanad landslide tragedy serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of ignoring environmental warnings

In India, we've developed a bad habit of politicising everything, from festivities to tragedies, using every opportunity for one-upmanship against opponents. Indeed, the tragic landslide in Wayanad, Kerala, that claimed life of more than 170 people is being used as a slingshot to score brownie points. It has triggered a heated political exchange between State and Central Government leaders. The tragedy, which resulted in significant loss of life and property, has brought to the forefront the critical issue of disaster preparedness and environmental stewardship. Following the landslide, Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the State had received an early warning but failed to take necessary preventive measures. He criticised the State Government for the negligence, suggesting that more lives could have been saved with timely action. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan quickly refuted Shah's claims, asserting that the State Government had acted on all available warnings and had undertaken necessary measures to mitigate the impact.



Vijayan emphasised that the unprecedented intensity of the landslide was beyond what the early warnings had predicted and that the state's disaster response teams had worked tirelessly to manage the situation. This spat achieved nothing; neither relief for the people injured nor a plan of action to stop such incidents in the future. But yes, both the Central and State Governments gave themselves a clean chit, and that was the end of it.

This incident highlights challenges in disaster management and the need for coordinated efforts between State and Central Governments. The

Wayanad tragedy has also opened a broader discussion on environmental conservation and the risks of taking nature for granted. The Kerala Government must take the blame for unrestricted development in the Western Ghats, one of the most fragile ecosystems in the country. Despite frequent disasters, the Kerala Government continues unsustainable activities in the name of development. The thick tree cover is gone due to changed land use. This has turned many perennial streams and rivers into seasonal ones and increased the risk of flooding in the monsoon season. The Wayanad landslide is a stark reminder of the consequences of ignoring environmental signals. Human activities such as deforestation and unplanned construction have exacerbated the vulnerability of regions like Wayanad to natural disasters. The Wayanad landslide underscores the importance of accountability and proactive measures in disaster management. More importantly, it highlights the critical need to respect and care for our environment. Forests, for instance, play a crucial role in stabilising soil and regulating water cycles. Deforestation disrupts ecosystems, making landslides more likely. The Wayanad tragedy is a call to action for governments, communities, and individuals to prioritise environmental conservation for our collective survival.

PICTALK



Asian Openbill storks perch on a tree, in Kolkata

The evolution of learning

Learning is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers. It needs judgement, sensitivity, foresight and a strong will to absorb new ideas



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The real world can be tricky to negotiate. This is because a lot of early childhood learning needs substantive modification when it comes to real life. Illustratively, a child is taught many principles which are simply impracticable as he grows up. Typically, a child will be told never to do something without informing their parents, whereas in real life this is neither feasible nor practicable.

The truth is, that childhood learning is about basics; one learns to modify or calibrate it as one goes along. It has to do with a child's mind and establishing certain principles that life experiences may define or modify. Consider the case of teaching a child about parallel lines. The child is taught that parallel lines are lines that never meet. That's good enough for his purposes. As one matures and gains a few years, the child transitioning into adulthood learns that parallel lines do meet, but they meet at 'infinity'. Similar examples can be cited elsewhere. However, more to the point is a simple proposition, namely that learning has to do with the capacity and capability of the learner. The same principle can undergo several modifications or even alterations. As one emerges into adulthood, one learns many other intricacies about life, and several of them can only be re-learned only through experience. Here is the need to sharpen a person's capacity for continuous learning and absorption. Typically, the adult, as he goes through life, meets different types of people, and there is a clear need to coexist with several others. One's judgment becomes a crucible for deciding what the truth is and where one has to steer clear or walk through it. This is what adult learning is about, and it is a lifelong necessity that is felt at each stage. Sometimes strange situations can occur, especially if one learns through aphorisms/proverbs/ folk sayings, and even the wisdom of



elders. An illustration of this could make the point clear. In Sanskrit, there is a saying "Satyam brooyat, priyam brooyat, na brooyat satyama priyam". "Broadly translated, it means, speak the truth, but speak it pleasantly. If a truth is bitter, it need not be spoken". Whether this is desirable or not is a moot point. What is more, is that other sayings can be found to be very different than the one quoted above. For example, there is another Sanskrit statement "Satyameva jayate" "A free translation into English would be that "truth alone triumphs". The two statements are clearly in two different contexts and mean two different things. There is an element of contradiction between the two. It is here that adult learning acquires a special veneer of its own. What that special something is a matter of experience and exposure. Some people who repeatedly emphasised in their childhood that they must always tell the truth get so much in the habit of only telling the truth that they become offensive in conversations. This is not because of their



AS ONE EMERGES INTO ADULTHOOD, ONE LEARNS MANY OTHER INTRICACIES ABOUT LIFE, AND SEVERAL OF THEM CAN ONLY BE RE-LEARNED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

ill intention, but their style itself became 'offensive'. Such offensive behaviour can have a heavy price. After all, tact is something that is not an optional extra, it is essential to life. Being tactful does not end up lying or being untruthful. It only trains a person to be sensitive to another person's feelings and sentiments.

It also raises the importance of recognizing that all inputs contribute to better and improved behaviour. Creating a situation in which everyone gains and a better environment is established is essential. If bluntness causes hurt rather than improvement, it could lead to deterioration of quality of life, which cannot be the objective of any action. The obvious conclusion is that learning is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers. It needs judgement sensitivity, and foresight. In the absence of any of the above relationships, they can become compromised. After all, if the relationship itself is lost, one might ask: what is the input about? This issue is fundamental to the act of living. This is so because man is a gregarious animal, and the act of living

requires a collective experience. Learning therefore is a lifelong exercise requiring continuous involvement and the capability to evolve. External inputs to learning are of course critical, but internalization of the same is the core. Unfortunately, whereas much attention has been paid to teaching, an equal amount of attention is due to the ways of the learning process. There are indeed definite limits to the capacity to learn and methods of learning. This is something that needs to be more widely recognized than before, especially since it does not seem to be integrated into the larger theories of learning. Indeed, one needs to pay attention to also when and how a revision of the learning process becomes seminal. To sum up, it is important to recognize the continuous nature of learning and one's central role in keeping that learning alive. A teacher can only help the process but cannot substitute a learner's learning.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ALL QUIET IN BANGLADESH

Madam — After the recent mind-boggling violence in Bangladesh, things seem to be stabilising for now. Hopefully, peace will not be compromised again, as Dhaka is an important neighbor for New Delhi. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's support for those who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh, led by her late father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is well known and reasonable. In the past, Hasina's firm and decisive action against the offenders of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War earned her praise, but her indecision and leniency towards extremism were criticized by moderates and liberals.

Her recent decision to reserve fifty-six percent of jobs for the descendants of the liberation movement was undoubtedly aimed at certain sections of the country's vote bank. Although the Bangladesh Supreme Court struck down the order and reduced the reservation to five percent, Hasina must be feeling the setback. Some short-sighted remarks by Hasina during the students' protests further fueled emotions. It's time for the longest-serving Prime Minister of Bangladesh to get her act together and display the statesmanship expected of her.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

THE LEGACY OF JRD TATA

Madam — The 29th of July 2024 marked 120 years since the birth of JRD Tata, fondly called Jeh by those close to him. Words cannot do justice to his modesty, philanthropy, achievements, awe-inspiring firsts, patriotism, and staunch belief in the three guiding tenets of Zoroastrianism: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, without professing either belief or disbelief in God. Jeh was India's first commercial pilot license holder and the first to fly a commercial plane from Karachi to Madras. He was also the first Indian businessman who refused to bribe politicians and the first to establish Asia's first cancer care hospital, the Tata Memorial Centre in

Remembering APJ Abdul Kalam



Throughout his life Abdul Kalam professed the scientific, academic as well as spiritual development of the students. He made

numerous speeches and wrote many books addressing the youth; which are listened and read even today by students even across the world. Choosing his birth day as the 'World's Student's Day' was an appropriate decision honoring his works as a scientist and the millions of youths that he inspired and still inspires through his works, achievements, speeches, lectures and books.

Students deserve better education standards and we hope it is time to inculcate the best education to students so that they may not wish to go to other countries for education purposes. He believed that students are the future of a nation and they can bring considerable change if well nurtured and educated. He professed education as the only weapon to fight back the demons of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition etc.

Anandambal Subbu | Mumbai

Bombay. Furthermore, he was a pioneer in advocating for workers' rights, introducing an eight-hour working day, free medical facilities, and more. As stated at the outset, it is impossible to fully capture the essence of JRD Tata, whose life itself was his message.

Tata passed away in Geneva, Switzerland, from a kidney infection on 29 November 1993, at the age of 89. A few days before his death, he remarked, "Comme c'est doux de mourir" ("How gentle it is to die"). Upon his death, the Indian Parliament was adjourned in his memory, an honor rarely given to those who are not members of parliament. He was buried at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Pages from JRD Tata's life ought to be made compulsory reading in our parliament and legislative assemblies. It might lead to some introspection and, perhaps, inspire some of our elected representatives to mend their ways. Politics in India being what it is, I know this is just daydreaming on my part.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

LACKADAISICAL APPROACH OF MCD

Madam — This refers to the editorial, Enough is enough (July 29) vide which the bitter truth was elaborated that the inaction of municipal authorities and the lack of accountability have resulted in yet another tragedy. The tragic death of three students at the illegal Rao IAS Coaching Centre in Old Rajendra Nagar area of Delhi is a shameful tale of gross and unpardonable negligence at the administrative level. This illegal business is flourishing with the connivance of MCD officials. The basement meant for commercial storage was illegally converted into a coaching centre. There was no emergency exit and no technical scientific arrangements for drainage. The issuance of NOC for building usage and security lapses reflected lackadaisical approach of the MCD officials. Harsh punitive measures must be taken against the people responsible.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Age and capability: Rethinking retirement and leadership

Why is it that in the corporate world, age is a barrier to employment, while in public service, older individuals often hold the highest offices?

In May 2020, close on the heels of the covid outbreak, my husband lost his job. It was an unexpected knock to take barely a month after he was awarded the best employee. The company that he was serving for the past many years attributed the pink slip to the pandemic, and following it, it was near impossible for him to find another job. In most cases, it seemed as if he was deemed over-age. In the traditional sense, it must be true that 58 years is the time to hang one's boots, but taking superannuation was far from his mind. His mental and physical abilities had not dimmed a wee bit and he had many more years of active work life left in him. But it was hard to convince a work culture that was transitioning to a younger demographic about his worthiness. He was soon forced to stop looking for a job and start something of his own. Three years on, it is a decision we don't regret taking. But there is one thing that I have not been able to decipher. If a company considers a person to be too old to seek employment at that age, what makes older doyens eligible to



seek fresh terms as heads of state? This question is more relevant now after John Biden was forced to step aside following doubts over his diminishing cognitive abilities on various platforms. Biden's dropping out in no way suggests that his opponent (who is younger by only three years) is more eligible to be the boss at the White House if age is a major criterion for holding responsible positions. Yet, in public service, it is par for the course for older men and women to push it till economic and social policies allow or they are naturally indisposed. Why is 80 a wholesome number to be at the helm of a state and 60 an age to retire for employees?

There is no doubt that the age gap between the highest and lowest denominators at a workplace has widened significantly. There are concerns about an agile, IT-driven young generation unable to work alongside an older brigade that follows old clunky ways. On this side things, it is still a huge challenge for those used to archaic practices of functioning to adopt digital modes overnight. But experience is something we still cannot discount. On the other hand, we also need a lot of young blood to keep our workplaces vibrant. People age differently. Their biological age may not be commensurate with their chronological age. In a

recent interview on CNN, Anthony Fauci, former chief medical advisor to the President of the United States looked and sounded many times more agile and vigorous at 81 than Biden does. My mother at 77 is much less healthy than a few other relations in their 90s. So to determine people's capabilities based on the number of summers they have seen is a faulty method. Our cognitive age and ability to handle the responsibilities - be it to serve the nation, run a company or a household. John Biden must have eventually realised that cracks are showing up in his public image and faculties and that stepping aside is the most gracious thing to do, both for his self-esteem and for the sake of his country. Although it had to come after much persuasion, he made the call. Congratulations to him for being rational and accepting 'it is what it is'.

(The author is a Dubai-based author and columnist; views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR





FIRST COLUMN INDIA NAVIGATES DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE

Despite the US unease, India charts its own course;
QUAD Tokyo conference is a case in point



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

In a balancing act of sorts, the Government of India is trying to address US and European concerns regarding PM Modi's meeting with President Putin last month, when many of the leaders were in a huddle in Washington for the NATO summit. President Putin went an extra step to welcome PM Modi in Moscow, signalling a strong message to the US, regarding the long-standing partnership with India. Senior officials in the US expressed deep concern with the optics involved in PM Modi's Moscow visit while reiterating that nothing significant was achieved.

Russia bilateral is a tightrope, that India has managed to carefully tread on, despite its growing engagement with the US in the past decades. Therefore, this week's QUAD foreign minister's conference in Tokyo where External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his US counterpart Anthony Blinken was significant. The joint statement in unequivocal terms condemned Russia's action in Ukraine, perhaps for the first time joining in such a multilateral official communication. The joint statement read "We express our deepest concern over the war raging in Ukraine including its terrible and tragic humanitarian consequences. We reiterate the need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in line with international law, consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity."

PM Modi had also in his bilateral meetings with President Putin and public messages subsequently, mentioned the need for finding lasting solutions to the Ukraine crisis away from the battleground while condemning the attack by Russia killing nearly 41 persons including at a children's hospital.

PM Modi said "Whether it is war, conflict or a terrorist attack, any person who believes in humanity, is pained when there is loss of lives. But even in that, when innocent children are killed, the heart bleeds and that pain is very terrifying." Ukraine President Zelensky has condemned PM Modi's visit to Russia. Government officials now indicate that the PM is likely to travel to Ukraine in August to balance the geopolitical dynamics and reset India and Europe's relationship. Meanwhile, the QUAD for-



eight ministers meeting continued to focus on the Gaza crisis, and its spillover in the Red Sea zone, impacting lives and raising freight costs. The foreign ministers jointly communicated "We urge all parties to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, as applicable. We welcome UNSC Resolution S/RES/2735 (2024) and strongly urge all parties concerned to work immediately and steadily toward the release of all hostages and an immediate ceasefire. We call on all parties to take every feasible step to protect the lives of civilians including aid workers, and facilitate the rapid transportation of humanitarian relief. We also encourage other countries, including those in the Indo-Pacific, to increase their efforts to address the dire humanitarian need on the ground. We underscore that the future recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip should be supported by the international community. We remain committed to a sovereign, viable and independent Palestinian state taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns as part of a two-state solution that enables both Israelis and Palestinians to live in a just, lasting, and secure peace."

India would be the host for the QUAD leaders summit scheduled this year, however, the crucial US presidential elections in November would be a key determinant of the time. President Biden who has mostly shaped the Quad narrative in the past, would like to leave a lasting impression on this group of four.

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

Union budget prioritises employment and skilling



DINESH SOOD

To empower youth, the Government has announced three transformative schemes aimed at promoting skilling across various sectors



One of the top nine priorities of the Union Budget is employment and skilling. In line with this, three schemes have been announced to promote skilling. The first scheme involves increasing the maximum loan amount for high-end skilling courses under the revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme from Rs 1.5 lakhs to Rs 7.5 lakhs, with an interest rate of 1.5% per annum. This scheme is expected to empower the youth by providing easy access to advanced-level skill courses, potentially removing significant financial barriers for many deserving students and candidates to gain futuristic and in-demand industry skills, thus creating a future-ready and empowered workforce. Recognising the significant role played by non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and micro-finance institutions in the skill loan market, the Ministry of Skill Development and Employment (MSDE) has made pivotal modifications to the scheme. This includes the inclusion of NBFCs, Micro Finance Institutions, and Small Finance Banks to extend loans backed by a guarantee against default up to 75% of the loan disbursed through the instrument of collateral-free loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh to facilitate 25,000 aspirants every year. Without a vibrant skill loan market, many youths leave aspiring candidates without the necessary financial support to pursue their skill training. To ensure uninterrupted credit flow in the skilling sector and to provide low-income youths with access to affordable finance for specialized skill courses, the MSDE initially launched the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Skill Development in July 2015, resulting in below expectations. The low fund utilisation under the scheme over the past decade was due to the low ticket size of loans up to Rs 1.5 lakh, even as course costs and fees rose due to inflation, leaving many high-cost



THIS FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND SCHEME, AIMING TO COVER ONE CRORE YOUTH IN 5 YEARS, HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE A GAME CHANGER IN TACKLING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

courses out of the scheme. Secondly, private banks still need to be more willing to finance government-sponsored schemes. As of March 31, 2024, loans amounting to Rs 115.75 crore had been extended to just 10,077 borrowers over the past decade. However, the government's unwavering commitment to addressing this issue is evident in the new model skill loan scheme, which aims to meet the challenges of a highly skilled workforce emerging from paced technological changes. Relevant skills are in demand, and the cost of acquiring specialised skills is higher.

Only 5% of the so-called skilled workforce is formally trained, creating a significant skill gap that needs to be urgently addressed. While 26.5 crore children enrol in school each year, by the time they reach higher education, their numbers have dwindled to 4.3 crores. To align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandate, an additional five crore children who pass school need to be included in higher education and to make skill training accessible to every individual, especially the large number of students from rural India.

The Model Skill Loan Scheme is not just a solution but a necessary and urgent step in bridging this gap. The skill economy is increasingly market-led, integrating new-age learning into the skill development ecosystem. The youth from urban and semi-urban areas recognise the opportunities for skilling and livelihood improvement. An initiative like the Model Skill Loan Scheme opens doors to many skill courses in sectors such as healthcare,

beauty-wellness, IT, AI-data science, cloud applications, digital marketing, hospitality, animation, gaming, graphic designing, and drone technology.

These courses, driven by changing industry dynamics, offer substantial placement opportunities and the potential for global mobility, providing a promising future for the youth and opening doors to international career prospects.

The second scheme aimed at skilling 20 lakh youth over five years. The scheme, with a total outlay of Rs 60,000 crore, aims at fulfilling this objective by upgrading 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the hub and spoke arrangements with outcome orientation. It's an ambitious scheme that aims to make youth more employable by imparting industry-specific skills. The course content and design will be upgraded to reflect the skill needs of the industry. For instance, emerging IT sector needs could include cyber security or data analytics skills. The third scheme introduced in the Budget for Skilling Youth is a comprehensive scheme that provides the youth with internship opportunities in 500 top companies.

This first-of-its-kind scheme, aiming to cover one crore youth in 5 years, has the potential to be a game changer in tackling youth unemployment. This internship scheme's innovative approach and potential impact make it a beacon of hope for young people's future employment, promising a significant reduction in youth unemployment rates.

Moreover, landing an internship is difficult, leading to a vicious

cycle of frustration and disappointment. Students with professional degrees like MBA, engineering, etc., may still find landing jobs or internships easier after graduation. However, the scenario could be more precise for unemployable humanities graduates with no ready-made market-appropriate skill set.

Thus, such a scheme providing young graduates across disciplines with internship opportunities at leading companies can be a game-changer if implemented properly and effectively. Perhaps, in the future, the government could consider widening the scope of this scheme by making it mandatory for companies above a specific size (the government could come up with a set of specifications to decide this) to take in a fixed number of interns every year and fund the training program through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. These funds are a company's initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on environmental and social well-being. Most importantly, the internship opportunities provided under this new scheme could significantly boost the employability quotient of youth. With concrete experience, they will be more likely to land a job. However, implementation, effectiveness, and accountability are crucial to fostering employable skill sets.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Network Member of India International Skill Centres; Views expressed are personal)

Transforming bone fracture treatment with the magnesium implants invention

This innovative solution promises to alleviate the long-term suffering of bone-fractured patients caused by traditional metal implants

An age-old adage "necessity is the mother of invention" still holds now. This aforementioned adage is duly proven by the fact that Nitin Pratap Varma Senior Scientist and highly esteemed research scholar from Dhanbad-based IIT-ISM and currently working as Senior Scientist for Shahjahanpur (UP) based company G Surgiwear Limited, felt the necessity of resorbable implant that could be fully absorbed in the bodies of accident victims as part of treating their fractured bones. Understanding this need of the hour, Varma held meetings with members-scientists of his research team. Many brainstorming ses-



GYAN BHADRA

sions with experiments ensued. Eventually, the team led by Varma zeroed in on the final product and invented the "magnesium implant" for the first time in the world. Shedding light on factual aspects of his invention, Varma says: "For many years, I have been observing the predicaments and troubles being suffered by bone-fractured patients due to inserted implants comprising plates and screws made

up of stainless steel and titanium metals. Since those plates and screws remained embedded in the body, patients had to undergo painful sufferings for a long period. To remove those metallic plates from the body, the patients have to undergo surgery which is physically tormenting as patients have to bear the brunt of risk aspects of surgery. And to add insult to injury, patients bear the huge expenses of surgery. Keeping in mind the troubles faced by patients, Varma convened a series of meetings with his fellow scientists and team members to discuss the use of plates made up of resorbable metals in place of stainless steel-made plates



After having a long discussion, we reached to the scientific conclusion that implant of resorbable metals gets fully absorbed in the body within 3-5 years of insertion. It is no hyperbole on my part if I say it vanishes into the

body. Thus through continuous research and experiments, we invented and zeroed in on magnesium implant due to its path-breaking resorbable quality in the human body. Patients do not feel any physical inconvenience

afterwards, Varma explains matter-of-factly. Analysing his bone treatment-related achievement in an in-depth manner, Varma explains that there are three kinds of metals that are resorbable and biologically safe: magnesium, zinc and iron. Undoubtedly, these metals have their pluses and minuses. Varma and his colleagues have been experimenting with resorbable metals to gain knowledge of their utilities and qualities.

For this very purpose, the team of scientists also visited the Jamshedpur-based National Institute of Metallurgy institution to seek intricate technical knowledge of metals. Expressing optimism over the utility and quality of

magnesium implants, Varma avers that the invented product has reached the final stage; since the product has already been implanted in animals for testing its efficacy. Also, to be well-versed with different clinical parameters related to experimental procedures, the animals have been kept under observation for six months. Results from animal testing are very encouraging. After successfully experimenting with this product in animals, Varma has plans to test this product in human bodies. For this, he has decided to seek permission from the Drug Controller General of India. Having successfully tested this product in human bodies, it will be put in the

public domain, Varma explains.

Eventually, it is no exaggeration to say that the invention of the magnesium implant is slated to bring revolutionary changes in the treatment of bone fractures and other bone diseases. This is more so because as per a research report, scores of scientists are engaged in experimental procedures of implants in laboratories the world over. And in this context, thousands of research papers have been inked and published. But to this date, those scientists have yet to make in-roads to reach the level of realistic utility of implants.

(The writer is a freelancer; views expressed are personal)

MONEY MATTERS



Gold jumps Rs 550; silver rallies Rs 600

Gold prices rallied Rs 550 to Rs 72,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday on higher domestic demand and positive global trends. The yellow metal rose for the third day in a row, recovering from sharp losses due to the government's budget announcement of a customs duty cut on gold and silver. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 71,950 per 10 grams. Silver prices also jumped Rs 600 to Rs 86,200 per kg from Rs 85,600 per kg in the previous session, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also bounced by Rs 550 to Rs 72,150 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 71,600 per 10 grams. "The risk of a further escalation of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East pushes the safe-haven commodity to a...high during the Asian session on Thursday," Rahul Kalantri, Vice President of Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Globally, Comex gold is trading higher at USD 2,490 per ounce, up by USD 17 per ounce from the previous close.

The facility for deposit and/or exchange of the Rs 2000 banknotes was available at all bank branches in the country till October 7, 2023. The facility for the exchange of the Rs 2000 banknotes has been available at the 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank since May 19, 2023.



RS 2000 BANKNOTES

97.92 pc returned; Rs 7,409 cr worth notes still with public

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said 97.92 per cent of the Rs 2000 denomination banknotes have returned to the banking system, and only Rs 7,409 crore worth of the withdrawn notes are still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of Rs 2000 denomination banknotes from circulation. The total value of Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation, which was

Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, when the withdrawal was announced, has declined to Rs 7,409 crore at the close of business on July 31, 2024. "Thus, 97.92 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been returned," the central bank said in a statement. The facility for deposit and/or exchange of the Rs 2000 banknotes was available at all bank branches in the country till October 7, 2023. The facility for the exchange

of the Rs 2000 banknotes has been available at the 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank since May 19, 2023. From October 9, 2023, RBI issue offices are also accepting Rs 2000 banknotes from individuals and entities for deposit into their bank accounts. The 19 RBI offices depositing/exchanging the banknotes are in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Belapur, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jammu, Kanpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, New Delhi, Patna and Thiruvananthapuram. The Rs 2000 banknotes were introduced in November 2016, following the demonetisation of the then-prevailing Rs 1000 and Rs 500 banknotes.

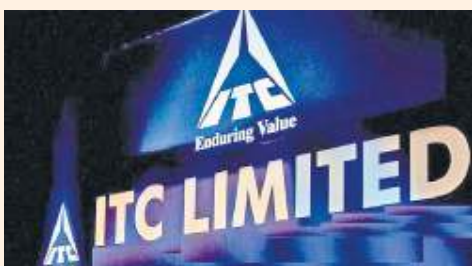
Govt nod for export of essential commodities from Kandla, Vizag ports to Maldives



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday said it has permitted the export of essential commodities, which are under the prohibited or restricted category, to the Maldives from Kandla and Vishakhapatnam seaports during the financial year. "With the addition of these two ports, the number of ports permitted for exports to the Maldives has gone to six. "Kandla and Vishakhapatnam Customs Sea ports have been added to the list of ports allowed for export of essential commodities, which are under the prohibited/restricted category, to the Maldives for the fiscal year 2024-25," the Directorate

General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification. The bilateral trade between India and the Maldives increased marginally to USD 978.56 million in 2023-24 from USD 973.37 million in 2022-23. India's exports have risen to USD 892 million in the last fiscal from USD 476.75 million in 2022-23. Indian imports from the Maldives primarily comprise scrap metals while Indian exports include a variety of engineering and industrial products like drugs and pharmaceuticals, radar apparatus, rock boulders, aggregates, cement and agricultural produce like rice, spices, fruits, vegetables and poultry produce.



ITC first-quarter net profit remains flat at Rs 4,917.45 cr

Diversified conglomerate ITC on Thursday reported a standalone net profit of Rs 4,917.45 crore in the first quarter of the current 2024-25 fiscal, marginally up from Rs 4,902.74 crore in the year-ago period. The total income of the company during the April-June period of FY25 stood higher at Rs 18,921.01 crore as against Rs 17,704.23 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last financial year. Profit before tax also increased marginally to Rs 6,551.70 crore during the first quarter of FY25 as compared to Rs 6,545.59 crore in the similar period of the previous year, the company said in a regulatory filing. ITC said in a statement that the FMCG business (non-cigarettes) displayed resilient growth amidst muted demand conditions and extreme heat waves in parts of the country. The FMCG (cigarettes) net segment revenue increased seven per cent year-on-year. The business continued its focus on market interventions and offering differentiated and premium products to customers. The hotel segment revenue in the first quarter was higher by 10.9 per cent year-on-year.



Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai sales drop due to weak demand

Leading carmakers Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai on Thursday reported a dip in wholesales in July as companies reduced vehicle dispatches to dealers amid moderation in demand. Maruti Suzuki India said its total domestic passenger vehicle sales stood at 1,37,463 units in July against 1,52,126 units in the year-ago month, down 9.64 per cent. The company's sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, were higher at 9,960 units last month compared to 9,590 units in the year-ago period. However, sales of compact cars consisting of Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift and WagonR were lower at 58,682 units compared to 67,102 units in July 2023. Similarly, utility vehicles Brezza, Ertiga, Fronx, Grand Vitara, Invicto, Jimny, and XL6 also clocked lower sales at 56,302 last month against 62,049 units in the same period last year, the company said. Rival Hyundai Motor India said its domestic dispatch of vehicles to dealers saw a dip of 3 per cent to 49,013 units last month from 50,701 units in the year-ago period. Similarly, Tata Motors said its total domestic sales dipped 11 per cent and stood at 70,161 units last month as against 78,844 units in the year-ago period.

Aditya Birla Cap net profit rises 17 pc to Rs 759 cr



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Non-bank lender Aditya Birla Capital on Thursday reported a 17 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit in June 2024 quarter at Rs 759 crore. The city-headquartered firm, which houses all the financial services businesses of the Aditya Birla Group, had reported a net profit of Rs 649 crore in the year-ago period. The consolidated revenue grew 26 per cent to Rs 10,258 crore during the reporting quarter, according to a statement. The overall lending portfolio grew 27 per cent to Rs 1.27 lakh crore, while the total assets under management of the asset management, life insurance and health insurance businesses grew 20 per cent to Rs 4.62 lakh crore. The total premium of the life insurance and health insurance business grew 30 per cent to Rs 5,027 crore, it said. The profit before tax of the non-bank finance company grew 21 per cent to Rs 833 crore, while the operating profit for the housing finance arm was at Rs 85 crore, the statement said, adding the asset management arm's PBT grew 27 per cent to Rs 305 crore.

GST collections at third-highest-ever in Jul; rise 10.3 pc to Rs 1.82 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections in July rose 10.3 per cent to over Rs 1.82 lakh crore, mainly driven by domestic transactions in goods and services, according to official data released on Thursday. This is the third-highest-ever monthly collection recorded since the indirect tax regime was rolled out 7 years ago on July 1, 2017. According to the data, total refunds stood at Rs 16,283 crore in July. The net Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection after



adjusting refunds was over Rs 1.66 lakh crore, a growth of 14.4 per cent. The Gross GST revenue stood at Rs 1,82,075 crore, which includes Central GST of Rs 32,386 crore, State GST of Rs 40,289 crore, and Integrated GST of Rs 96,447 crore. The compensation cess mop-up was Rs 12,953 crore. The revenues were driven by taxes from domestic activities, which grew 8.9 per cent to Rs 1.34 lakh crore in July. The revenue from imports jumped 14.2 per cent to Rs 48,039 crore.

India's new EV policy not suitable for JLR at present

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Thursday said its British arm Jaguar Land Rover has no plans at present to leverage India's new electric vehicle policy that offers import duty concessions to firms setting up manufacturing units in the country, as it is not suitable for the company. In March this year, the government announced the new electric vehicle policy to attract major global players like Tesla, allowing them to import a limited number of cars at lower customs/import duty of 15 per cent on vehicles costing USD 35,000 and above for a period of five years from the date of issuance



of the approval letter by the government. "At this point in time that specific policy is not something that is suitable for us. So, we don't intend to leverage it at this point in time," Tata Motors Group CFO PB Balaji said at the earn-

ings conference. He was responding to a query on whether Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) has any plans to leverage India's new EV policy with an eye on future mass production of electric vehicles in the country. Balaji said that currently, JLR's business in India is "on a very good wicket, growing very strongly." "We have just localised the manufacturing of Range Rover and Range Rover Sport, and we are seeing huge pickups in order in that front. As volumes pick up, we would like to keep localising to the extent possible, and if the policy environment we are able to leverage upon, we will definitely consider it," he added.

BOND DUE ON AUGUST 10

MTNL has less funds to pay interest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-run MTNL has insufficient funds to pay interest for 7.78 per cent MTNL Bond Serie VII-C which was raised against Sovereign Guaranteed Bonds and is due on August 10, the company said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. As per the structured payment mechanism of the tripartite agreement signed among MTNL, Department of Telecommunications and Beacon Trusteeship, the state-run telecom firm has to fund the semi-annual interest into the escrow account with ade-



quate amount 10 days before the due date. "...it is informed that due to insufficient funds, MTNL could not fund the ESCROW account with the adequate amount," MTNL filing said. According to the filing, the sovereign guarantee will be invoked by the debenture

trustee in case of any default made by MTNL in payment of principal and interest on the bonds and the government of India is obliged to make the payment to MTNL for the same. A government source said that the Department of Telecom has cleared payment of Rs 64 crore for the interest of the bond due on August 1. Minister of State for Communications, Pemasani Chandra Sekhar has informed Rajya Sabha that MTNL has sought Rs 1,151.65 crore for payment of interest arising out of sovereign guarantee bonds in the current fiscal.

Sensex rises 388 points, Nifty breaches record 25,000-mark



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex jumped 388 points to breach the 82,000-level for the first time while broader Nifty spurted 108 points to hit the record 25,000-mark in early trade on Thursday after the US Federal Reserve indicated a rate cut by September. The 30-share BSE Sensex soared 388.15 points, or 0.47 per cent, to hit an all-time intra-day high of 82,129.49 in early trade. The broader Nifty of NSE scaled the record 25,000 level for the first time, rising 127.15 points, or 0.50 per cent, to 25,078.30. Among Sensex shares, Maruti rose 2.93 per cent following its stellar June quarter results. Adani Ports, Power Grid, JSW Steel, and Tata Steel were also among major gainers. Gains in index heavyweights

HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, and ICICI Bank shot the index to record high levels. On the other hand, M&M, Sun Pharma, ITC, Infosys and TCS were among the losers, capping index gains. "The Fed chief signalling a possible rate cut in September is positive for global equity markets. More important, his comments that the US economy is normalising is a shot in the arm for bulls," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. Indicating a rate cut by September, US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said that progress has been made in reducing inflation to the 2 per cent target which is a sign that the Fed is moving closer toward reducing the key interest rate for the first time in four years.

Domestic food market expected to grow at 47%

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The domestic food market was expected to grow by over 47 per cent between 2022 and 2027 and expected to touch USD 1,274 billion, a top industry official said. Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Foodpro Expo 2024 Chairman B Thiagarajan said the food processing sector was growing at an average annual growth rate of 5.35 per cent

between 2015-16 to 2022-23. "In 2022-23, the sector accounted for 7.66 per cent of the GVA (Gross Value Added) in manufacturing at 2011-12 prices," Thiagarajan, also the Managing Director of air-conditioners and commercial refrigerators maker Blue Star Ltd said in a press release on Thursday. "In terms of employment, the sector employs almost 2 million workers in nearly



41,500 registered units. With a market size of USD 866 billion in 2022, the food industry will play a vital role in the economy's growth. CII Tamil Nadu Chairman Srivats Ram said currently India is the largest producer of milk, pulses, banana, mango, pomegranate, papaya, lemon, non-food crops like cotton and jute. During 2023-24, India produced 304.4 million tonnes of

cereals, 296 million tonnes of pulses, 351.9 million tonnes of horticulture, 230.6 million tonne of milk and 138.4 billion eggs, Ram also the Managing Director of steel wheels manufacturer Wheels India Ltd said. Thiagarajan and Ram were here to announce the 15th edition of biennial event Foodpro scheduled to be held from August 9 at Chennai Trade Centre, here.

what's brewing?

Abhishek Banerjee reflects on fulfilling his father's lifetime dream in *Stree 2*

Renowned actor Abhishek Banerjee has recently opened up about a deeply personal yet ironically funny connection to his latest character in the highly anticipated film *Stree 2*. Abhishek Banerjee, who portrays the character of Jana, an IAS aspirant. In real life, much before the cinema's big hit *Abhishek*, his father desired his son to become an IAS officer, but interestingly and sweetly, destiny has something else lined up for Abhishek. Abhishek's father always aspired for him to become an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. Now Abhishek looks at this situation so sweetly and comically that his father's wishes are being realized, if not by his real person but by a reel character that he is essaying. Now, as he steps into the shoes of an IAS aspirant again in *Stree 2*, he finds a unique way to honor his father's dream.

Reflecting on this connection, Abhishek said, "My father always wanted me to pursue a career as an IAS officer. While my heart was always set on acting, this role in *Stree 2* feels like my father's dream has never left my side. Playing Jana, who aspires to be what my father wished for me, is genuinely sweet yet funny. My father and I still laugh about the fact that, being his son, I found unique ways to realise his dreams, if not in reality, at least on screen." Abhishek Banerjee also humorously remarked on his character's chances of success, adding, "Seeing Jana's struggles with the IAS exam preparation makes me doubtful that he would have ever cracked it in his life. But I'm glad I could at least embody that ambition in a film."



'MOM YELLED AT ME FOR CUTTING MY HAIR DURING DHADAK'

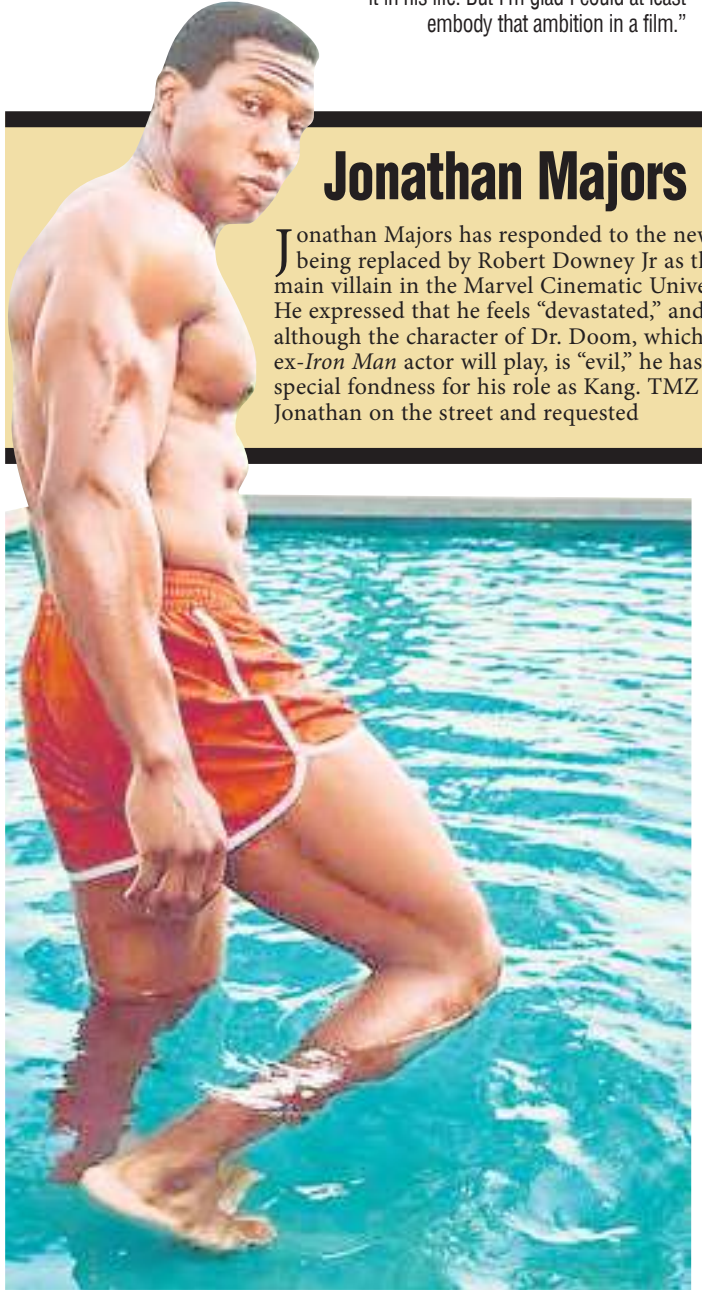
Janhvi Kapoor and Roshan Mathew recently appeared on the IMDb exclusive segment 'On the Scene' to discuss their film *Uljah*. Directed by Sudhanshu Saria, the movie narrates a gripping story of love, sacrifice, and resilience in the face of overwhelming odds.

When asked what one thing she would never do for a role, Kapoor mentioned that she would not go bald, even if it was a life-changing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. She said, "They can just put a bald cap on or use VFX. I have dislocated my shoulder, I've bled and broken bones, and I've put myself through all kinds of trauma and torture, but going bald is something I refuse to do. Even for my character in *Uljah*, Sudhanshu wanted me to cut my hair short and it was my biggest fight with him. Because I remember during *Dhadak* when I cut my hair, my mom yelled at me a lot, and she was like, 'How could you? Do not cut your hair for any role.' Every third or fourth day, she used to put oil in my hair and massage my head. She was very proud of my hair. So I will not cut my hair."



Jonathan Majors is 'heartbroken' with Robert Downey replacing him

Jonathan Majors has responded to the news of being replaced by Robert Downey Jr as the main villain in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. He expressed that he feels "devastated," and although the character of Dr. Doom, which the ex-*Iron Man* actor will play, is "evil," he has a special fondness for his role as Kang. TMZ caught Jonathan on the street and requested



his response to Robert taking over as the new MCU villain. "Yeah, heartbroken. Of course. I love Kang. Doctor Doom is wicked, though," he said. When asked if he feels it's fair that Robert gets another chance by Marvel after his 1996 arrest for possession of heroin, cocaine and an unloaded gun, Jonathan responded, "I think it's fair that

Mr. Downey is being and has been greeted with patience, curiosity and love and being allowed to work his art and be creative at that level." "Hell yeah! I love him. I love Kang. If that's what the fans want and that's what Marvel wants, then let's roll. Hell yeah," he added when asked, if given the opportunity, would he be interested in playing Kang again in the MCU?

STANDALONE

A captivating display of elegance and glamour capped off India Couture Week 2024, as Bollywood celebrities Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna attended the runway as show stoppers for famous designer pair Falguni Shane Peacock. The event, which took place in Delhi on July 31, the last day of this prestigious fashion week, was a monument to the timeless appeal of traditional Indian craftsmanship combined with modern design sensibility.



Jisoo and Park Jung Min in a zombie apocalypse

BLACKPINK member Jisoo is ready to explore the realm of zombies in her upcoming K-drama *Newtopia* (formerly known as *Influenza*). Coupang Play's confirmation of the announcement has fans thrilled, particularly with the participation of Han Jin-won, the Oscar-winning writer of *Parasite*. Jisoo and Park Jung Min, known for their roles in *Hellbound* and *Smugglers*, will appear together on screen. *Newtopia* recounts the tale of soldier Jae Yoon (played by Jung Min) and his girlfriend, Young Joo (portrayed by Jisoo), as they journey through a zombie-filled Seoul to find each other again. In recently unveiled images, Jae Yoon is depicted struggling to breathe, appearing stunned as he comes across the sudden spread of the outbreak while serving in the military. In *Ho*, played

by Im Sung Jae, shows an even greater sense of terror. Another picture depicts Young Joo standing in a tranquil alleyway. On August 1, Coupang Play officially announced the impressive lineup for the 2025 series, including new images showcasing Jisoo and Jung Min. The story focuses on a contagious disease outbreak that transforms individuals into undead creatures, as the main protagonists urgently attempt to reunite in the midst of disorder in the city center of Seoul. In case you missed it: Jung Min has been cast as Lee Jae Joon, an older soldier who enlisted in the military after his peers and worries about what's to come. Jisoo will play the role of Kang Young Ju, who is eagerly anticipating Jae Joon's return from the military as his girlfriend. She is a fascinating person, having been a popular student in engineering school and now landing a job. Yoon Sung Hyun is the director of the series, which has finished filming, as reported. The K-drama is scheduled to debut in 2025.



FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24

NANCY

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

GINGER MEGGS

SUDOKU

Rules

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

ACROSS

- A surgeon's knives
- Egg centres
- Water vapour
- Required
- Burn black by being too close to heat
- Rescue
- Paddle these boats
- Below
- Living
- A very large hill

DOWN

- Find the solution to
- Reply
- Shove
- A flat kind of worm that sucks blood

SOLUTION

D	I	A	M	O	N	S	W
E	B	E	E	M	T		
L	O	O	S	L	E	I	G
I	N	G	S	L	I	E	
H	P	E	R	E			
T	R	A	I	N	U	D	D
E	D	S	R	R	N		
D	E	S	E	R	T		
W	U	W	T				
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'Climbing ancient fortress Sigiriya was a highlight'

ACTRESS CHAHAT VIG, BEYOND HER ACTING PROWESS, IS ALSO AN AVID TRAVELLER, WHO KEEPS HER FANS UPDATED WITH HER TRAVEL STORIES EVERY NOW AND THEN. THE PIONEER GETS IN A CHAT WITH HER, BRINGING TO YOU HER TRAVEL EXPERIENCES FROM HER LATEST TRIP TO SRI LANKA AND MORE

TRAVELOGUE



TEJAL SINHA

Travel knows no limit in a world where it brings you a new and unique experience. Travelling has been more than just seeing and exploring the world. Well, certainly yes, because travelling for actress Chahat Vig has been all about being a 'soul food'.

She grew up in a family that really values experiencing different cultures and gaining fresh perspectives. Travelling for work, she does make a point to explore a new place every couple of months, something that she always looks forward to and that enriches her life.

Most recently, the Gumraah actress was seen having a gala time in Sri Lanka between the tranquillity and spiritual richness of its southern hill country. The trip, which she describes as an incredible one, "I loved exploring the lush tea plantations in the hill country and relaxing on the beautiful beaches," shares the avid traveller. "The cultural experiences were fantastic too—seeing ancient temples and wandering through lively markets was a highlight. Plus, the warm hospitality of the locals really made the trip special."

So what was the culturally rich stuff that she got to experience, you wonder? Well, she says, "In Sri Lanka, I had some fantastic cultural experiences.

Climbing Sigiriya was definitely a highlight—it's an ancient fortress with breathtaking views. I also visited the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy and explored local markets, where I tasted traditional dishes and saw colorful crafts. The locals were incredibly friendly and shared fascinating stories about their customs."

Not just this, she also explored some great coastal spots in Sri Lanka. The beaches, according to the 36 Days actress, were fantastic, with places like Unawatuna and Mirissa offering perfect waves and clear waters.

"Bali and Phuket have been my favorite ocean destinations so far. Bali's serene surf spots and lively culture are always a highlight, while Phuket's vibrant atmosphere and beautiful beaches are hard to beat."

India is certainly known for its diversity and its culture, which every state has of its own. But the one place in India that really stands out as truly unique, according to Chahat, is Himachal Pradesh. "It's unlike anywhere else, with its stunning Himalayan scenery, charming villages, and peaceful environment. What's really special is the sense of spirituality you feel there—it's a place where nature and tradition blend seamlessly, offering a sense of calm and connection that's hard to find elsewhere."

Choosing the right property during a vacation is as important as exploring the place, because sometimes choosing the right hotel feels like a staycation in itself. Well, she couldn't agree much with us as she shares, "My husband and I also spend a lot of time choosing our hotels because the right place can make a huge difference, turning a trip into a rejuvenating vacation. In Sri Lanka, the hotels were fantastic—ranging from luxurious five-star resorts to stylish boutique luxury options. The 'hotel hues' were stunning, with each place offering its own unique style and ambiance."

There always comes a time, maybe during our busy schedule, when we think, 'Now is the time to consider rejuvenation again.' We ask Chahat about it and name a place she loves to visit when under intense pressure. With great zest, she shares, "Whenever I'm really stressed, I love escaping to the Bath Spa in England. The peaceful atmosphere and thermal waters are so relaxing, and it's just an hour away from London. The place has a historic charm and a calm pace that helps me unwind, plus the food options are fantastic. When I'm in India, I head to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for scuba diving. There's nothing like a dive to clear my mind and refresh my spirit."

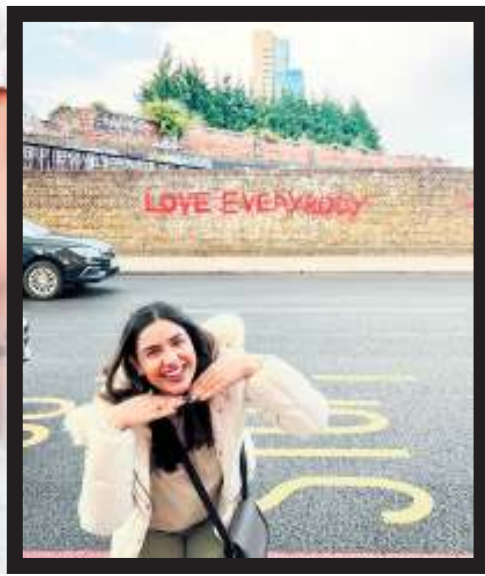
She further goes on to share with us that she's



someone who usually sets intentions for each trip, as every travel experience is unique. Sometimes, she says, her priority is rejuvenation and so she focuses on relaxing and unwinding. Other times, the goal is exploration, "Where I dive into new cultures, sights, and activities. I also make it a point to immerse myself in local experiences and interact with the people, which adds depth to the journey. Whether it's enjoying a peaceful retreat or embarking on an adventurous discovery, each trip is about making the most of the moment and creating lasting memories."

A solo traveller or travelling with both, we ask, and she enthuses, "I'm actually both. I love travelling with my whole family, my husband, and friends—those trips are full of shared experiences and memories. At the same time, I really enjoy the enriching experience of solo travel. It depends on my mood and everyone's availability, so I go with what feels right at the time."

So what's next on the bucket list? Well, she's looking forward to her next adventure in Morocco. Why Morocco specifically? "I'm excited to dive into its rich history and vibrant markets, and I can't wait to check out the surfing there. Morocco is known for its great surf spots, so I'm eager to experience them firsthand."



'Yeh bhi theek nahi hai,' Robin gone too soon!

AARTI SREENATH

In the labyrinthine chaos of Mirzapur, where every corner hides a new twist, Priyanshu Painyuli's portrayal of Robin stands out as a role of complexity and charm. Robin, with his quiet resolve and nuanced depth, has woven himself into the very fabric of the series. His character, both enigmatic and endearing, offers viewers a glimpse into a world where loyalty and love are constantly tested. With each episode, Priyanshu breathes life into Robin, making him not just a character but a memorable journey through the shadows of Mirzapur. His portrayal brings a delightful blend of sophistication and vulnerability.

When asked if he knew about Robin's fate, Priyanshu shared that he was aware of his character's death, emphasising that it wasn't a shock to him. "Yes, yes, of course, I knew he was going to be killed. It would have been a big shocker for me if I didn't know. They don't usually keep a big surprise or shock from me. I would have been like, 'Kill Robin like that,' or 'Kill him like this.' I knew it and had loads of discussions with the director and Guru," he explained.

Besides, Priyanshu described how the news of Robin's death was delivered during a Zoom call with the show's creators. He recalled, "Guru told me what was going to happen this season. Of course, it was a shock and a surprise for me—like, why did you have to kill him? Why Robin? But overall, it made sense. The structural changes this season were very interesting and brave. The creators took the show to another level, which people were not expecting."

He reflected on the audience's reaction, noting the mixed feelings and attachment people had towards Robin. "A lot of people came to me and said, 'Yeh theek nahi hai.' It was nice to see that people were so deeply attached to that character, probably so much that they didn't want him to die," he said. Painyuli added that despite Robin not being a central figure in the power struggle, his character's intriguing and mysterious nature left a significant impact.

He found Robin to be one of the finest characters written in the OTT space. He highlighted the character's complexity and ambiguity, stating, "The first time I read about his character, I realised this guy is one of the finest characters written across web series. You don't know the background of the character, his intentions, his past, or what he's looking forward to." He praised Guru, the show's creator, for allowing him the freedom to explore and interpret Robin's character.

"Guru is such a sweetheart; he's so amazing that you cannot stop exploring your character on that day. He'd say, 'You decide,' and that gave me the freedom to play Robin differently in every scene. Sometimes he's truthful; sometimes he's not. He knows how to talk, and that's his weapon—his words and his understanding of other people's weaknesses," he shared.

He also elaborated on Robin's unique traits, including his colourful wardrobe and enigmatic presence. He mentioned that Guru left much of Robin's character development up to him, allowing him to shape the role with his creativity. "Robin definitely knew how to talk and that was his weapon. Knowing the

other person's weakness becomes your strength. In Mirzapur, most of the characters are after money, but Robin had a different angle," he noted.

Throwback on the impact of playing Robin, Priyanshu expressed a deep connection with the character. He shared, "Personally, it's been like finding a family. Even though I knew Ali Fazal and Shweta Tripathi from theater, it felt like we had all grown together through this journey." In addition, he praised Gurmeet Singh, the director, for his genuine and consistent nature, both on and off set.

Soul Mates fame also humorously recounted the joke between him and Gurmeet: "The joke between us was that he killed me there but gave me another

show, Paan Parda Zarda, where I'm leading. Working with Gurmeet spoils you as a person because of the relationship and environment he creates on set."

He fondly recalled the camaraderie and shared memories on set, highlighting the consistent crew and the emotional connections formed. "The wonderful character of Robin and the emotional death scene were memorable. That night was also my birthday and we celebrated with a cake cutting, making it a bittersweet moment," he reminisced.

In discussing his process for getting into character, he emphasised the importance of understanding the director's vision while adding his personal touch. "I try to see what world the director is trying to bring and then add my personal touch. It's about conveying the character's essence, not just following the script," he explained.

He shared how the transformation into Robin involved embracing the character's vibrant style, including colourful printed shirts and unique hairstyles. He noted that these elements helped him embody Robin, stating, "Half of my characters are built when you put me into a get-up I've never been in. The colourful printed shirts, big glasses and haircut all contributed to Robin's identity."

He was additionally touched by the audience's response to Robin's character and death. He shared heartfelt messages and comments from fans, expressing gratitude for their support. "People were sending me messages, saying it was unnecessary and unjust to Robin. Comments like, 'Ek hi toh family man tha Mirzapur mein, usko bhi maar diya, were heartwarming,' he said.

He also acknowledged the impact of Robin's catchphrase, 'Yeh bhi theek hai,' which became popular among fans. "People started making T-shirts with the phrase and it became a part of the meme culture. It's interesting how such small elements can leave a lasting impression," he noted.

Shehar Lakhot fame, concluded by reflecting on the character's depth and the broader message of the show. "Robin wasn't fighting for power; he was looking for love and family. That was his journey. In Mirzapur's world, plotting, killing and power struggles are common, but Robin's story reminded us that there is more to life than being powerful. Family and love matter more," he expressed.

Looking ahead, The Pippa fame hinted at his excitement for future projects, including Paan Parda Zarda, where he is working with Gurmeet Singh again. He shared his enthusiasm for continuing to explore diverse roles and characters, eager to push the boundaries of his craft.



Navigating economic uncertainty: Tips for business owners

Business owners face unique challenges in times of economic uncertainty. These challenges normally affect the bottom line of such businesses and their long-term success. It takes strategic approaches and capacities for resilience to lead one's business through such uncertain times. Here are some tips to help you weather the storm and thrive amidst economic turbulence.

Diversify your revenue streams: The risk to your business, with its dependence on one stream of income, is too high. Come up with new streams of revenue, or expand on products that reach a wider audience to mitigate the risks.

Keep close watch over your cash flow: Managing cash flow is always important, but during times of uncertainty, it becomes even more significant. Be very vigilant about your expenses, and try to centralize your spending on key expenses while finding ways to enhance collections to maintain good cash flow.

Strengthen relations: Develop relations with your suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders. Open communication and cooperation might enable working through problems as a team and can deliver win-win solutions.

Stay agile: The economic scenario is changing fast; hence, one needs to be agile. Be prepared to adjust to the market trend, consumer behavior, and industry shift. Flexibility in operations and decisions will help respond to any unforeseen change that may arise appropriately.

Invest in technology: Leverage digital tools and technologies to scale up the operations of any

business house. This also streamlines the processes involved and improves efficiency. Consider investing in online platforms, e-commerce solutions, and automation to stay competitive in today's digital age.

Seek professional help: If one senses uncertainty in the economy, it is imperative to take advice from financial advisors, business consultants, or industry experts. A new perspective from professionals shall bring clarity to decisions about the future of your business.

Customer experience: Keep the focus on customers during tumultuous times. Make sure to personalize experiences, provide great service, and respond promptly to customer inquiries or concerns. Happy customers will find a way to continue supporting your business through harsh times.

Plan for long term: While one is surviving the present, he should not forget to work on the long-term viability of his business. A strategic plan with obtainable goals that reassesses all strategies and modifies them from time to time to keep pace with the ever-changing world must be ensured.

By using these tips and strategies, you will be able to stay on the path to stability and growth within the context of uncertainty. Remember, more so now than ever before, it is a requirement to have resilience, adaptability, and strategic planning in order to overcome adversity and excel in today's fast-moving business environment.

(By Prithvi Mohan and Pratyaksh Agarwal, The International School of Bengaluru.)



INDIANS DISAPPOINT IN 20KM RACE WALK AT OLYMPICS

PTI ■ PARIS

National record holder Priyanka Goswami finished a poor 41st in the women's 20km competition while Vikash Singh and Paramjeet Singh ended at lowly 30th and 37th positions respectively in the men's event as Indian race walkers produced a disappointing performance at the Paris Olympics here on Thursday.

The 28-year-old Priyanka, who has a personal best of 1:28:45, has been based in Australia since early this year after the Mission Olympic Cell approved her high-altitude training last December. Reigning Asian Games champion Yang Jiayu of China won gold with a time of 1:25:54 while world champion Maria Perez (1:26:19) of Spain and Commonwealth gold medalist Jemima Montag (1:26:25) of Australia took the silver and bronze respectively. The competitions were held under warm and humid conditions. When the women's event ended, the temperature rose to nearly 25 degree Celsius while humidity was more than 85 per cent

throughout. Athletics competition of the Paris Olympics began on Thursday. In the men's corresponding event, which started 30 minutes late due to rain, Vikash clocked 1 hour, 22 minutes and 36 seconds while Paramjeet crossed the finish line in 1:23:48sec in the race won by Brian Daniel Pintado (1:18:55) of Ecuador. Caio Bonfim (1:19:09) of Brazil and reigning world champion Alvaro Martin (1:19:11) of Spain took the silver and bronze medals respectively while Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Massimo Stano (1:19:12) of Italy was fourth. National record holder Akshdeep Singh pulled out

after the 6km mark and he was seen in discomfort, holding his abdomen while bending down forward. A team coach told PTI that Akshdeep was having fever for the last two days due to Urinary Tract Infection (UTI). "He was having fever from 30th onwards because of UTI. However, he recovered from fever yesterday," the coach said. India was among the countries which had three full quota of athletes in the men's event but all of them could not match their personal best. The best performance by an Indian in the Olympics was the 10th-place finish by KT Irfan in the 2012 London Games with a timing of 1:20:21.

Nikhat's Olympic campaign ends with shocking loss to China's Yu



PTI ■ PARIS

In one of the biggest upsets of the Olympic Games boxing competition, two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen (50kg) bowed out after a 0-5 loss to Asian Games gold-medallist Wu Yu, completely outmaneuvered by the Chinese in a stunningly lopsided bout here on Thursday. Nikhat was unseeded for the Games as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which is holding the boxing competition, doesn't recognise the International Boxing Association (IBA), which conducts the world championship. One of India's strongest medal contenders, Nikhat was put under pressure by the top-seeded reigning flyweight (52kg) world champion in the opening round itself. Yu was quick off the blocks and

though Nikhat tried to counter-attack, she wasn't able to connect. The reason being, Yu's brilliant footwork, which allowed her to consistently switch her stance to avoid the blows. Trailing 1-4, Nikhat found a bit more success in the second round as she landed a few straights but Yu managed to connect some telling hooks on the Indian's face. Nikhat ended the round with a few body shots. Not much changed in the third round as Nikhat desperately tried to connect but continued to fail due to Yu's nimble movements. Despite this loss, Nikhat remains one of the most consistent Indian boxers, having won back-to-back gold medals at the world championships and the 2022 Commonwealth Games besides a bronze in the Asian Games last year.



Biggest, most diverse fleet in Olympic sailing gets ready to hit water

AP ■ MARSEILLE (FRANCE)

The biggest and most diverse fleet of the 2024 Olympics' sailing events, the one-person dinghy, is scheduled to hit the water Thursday in sweltering Marseille. The small, white-sailed boats - formerly known as lasers, now called ILCA 6 for women and ILCA 7 for men - go slower, sail deeper into the water and have a less spectacular design than many other vessels in the Olympic marina. But, to the sailors who race them, they are the purest form of the sport. "It's very pure and it's very close - you've got to work for every inch," said Matt Wearn, 28, of Australia. "You're not looking to win by a mile, you're looking to win by a meter."

Wearn is seeking to defend the gold he won in the event in the Tokyo Games - and so is Anne-Marie Rindom of Denmark, 33, who in addition to gold from Tokyo has a bronze from Rio de Janeiro and first competed in the London Games in 2012. "It's all about the sailor in the boat," said Rindom, whose parents first took her sailing when she was two weeks old. She competed in her first regatta at age nine. In this class, boats are provided to Olympians only about a week before the Games, leveling the playing field. That makes consistently nailing the smallest tactical detail - an inch of advantage at the starting line, catching a sudden wave to surf ahead, balancing for the additional weight of branding stickers on the sail - the key to medal. "All these little accuracies make a huge difference," said Micky Beckett, 29, of Britain. "Being on top of your mental game is absolutely everything." That's also because the boats are so versatile and "basically unsinkable," in Beckett's words, that they can - and do - sail in any weather, for hour-long regattas. Not that physical strength is negligible. In big swells, with spray coming straight at the athletes' bodies, races can be "quite battering, like being thrown into a washing machine and spat out the other side," Wearn said.

AP ■ PARIS

US men fall to 0-2 in 3x3 basketball pool play at Olympics with 19-17 loss to Poland

The U.S. Men's 3x3 basketball team fell to 0-2 in pool play in the Paris Olympics with a 19-17 loss to Poland Wednesday night. Jimmer Fredette cut the lead to 1 with about 90 seconds left before Michal Sokolowski made a free throw a few seconds later to extend the lead to 19-17. The U.S. Had a chance to tie it late, but Fredette's 2-point attempt came up short. Fredette, who was brought in to boost the team after the U.S. Failed to qualify for Tokyo, appeared to sustain an injury with about three minutes left. He looked to be in pain as he was tended to by a trainer but soon returned to the game. He did not speak to reporters after the game and a team spokesman said he was receiving treatment but did not provide any specifics on an injury. The U.S. Team remains confident despite the tough start to the Paris Games. "I don't think we're concerned," Kareem Maddox said. "We just know we have some adjustments to make." The U.S. Was down by 1 after

a basket by Canyon Barry with about six minutes left before Poland used a 6-1 run to make it 15-9 with four minutes to go. Poland was up by 5 with about 2 1/2 minutes to go when Barry made three free throws to cut the lead to 17-15. Barry shoots free throws underhanded like his father, NBA Hall of Famer Rick Barry. A basket by Adrian Bogucki pushed Poland's lead to 3 and Dylan Travis made a shot for the U.S. Before Fredette's last bucket got team within 18-17. Bogucki had seven points and five rebounds for Poland, which lost to France on Tuesday. Barry and Travis led the U.S. With six points each. Fredette, who is the only player with NBA experience in the 3x3 competition, added three. The U.S. Struggled from long-range, making just 2 of 15 attempts. "We're just not making shots,"



Barry said. "That's what it comes down to. We had a lot of good looks and they just didn't fall tonight." FRANCE 21, LITHUANIA 19: Timothé Vergiat scored eight points and his basket with three seconds remaining lifted France to a win over Lithuania and a 2-0 start in pool play. France led by 5 after two free

throws by Lucas Dussoulier with about two minutes left. Lithuania then scored the next five points, with the last three from Evaldas Dziaugys to tie it with less than a minute to play. Lithuania had the ball with 12 seconds left, but Gintautas Matulis turned it over to set up Vergiat's game-winner. Jules Rambaut had nine points with five rebounds for France,

which beat Poland on Tuesday. Lithuania got seven points each from Aurelijus Pukelis and Dziaugys. LATVIA 21, NETHERLANDS 12: Karlis Lasmanis scored eight points to lead defending champion Latvia over the Netherlands. Nauris Miezijs added five points and six rebounds in the win after Latvia opened the tournament by beating Lithuania. Worthy de Jong made a basket followed by a free throw to get the Netherlands within 1 point with about four minutes to go. Latvia then scored the next nine points, with two 2-pointers by Lasmanis and one from Miezijs to extend the lead to 19-9. Arvin Slagter scored the first points for the Netherlands in more than two minutes on a 2-pointer after that and De Jong made a basket with less than a minute to go to cut the

lead to 19-12. But Lasmanis made a 2-pointer to end it on the next possession. The Netherlands, which beat China in its opener, was led by De Jong's seven points. CHINA 21, SERBIA 15: Zhang Ning scored 11 points and added four rebounds to help China beat Serbia. A basket by Mihailo Vasic put Serbia up 9-7 with about six minutes remaining. China took over after that, going on a 10-1 run to take a 17-10 lead. China made three 2-pointers in that stretch to pull away. Marko Brankovic and Dejan Majstorovic made consecutive 2-pointers for Serbia to cut the lead to 19-15 with about two minutes to go. Zhao Jiaren closed it out by making two free throws with 2:05 remaining. Majstorovic had seven points and Brankovic added five for Serbia, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal winner.

OTHER SPORTS

India eager to settle Rahul vs Pant debate in ODIs against SL

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Gautam Gambhir-led Indian team management has an opportunity to decide who among KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant will be India's long-term first-choice wicketkeeper-batter in ODIs when the side takes on Sri Lanka in a three-match series beginning here on Friday. There will be clamour around the first sighting of veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli as well, after the recent T20 World Cup triumph. But the think-tank will look to shut out that outside noise, focusing on sorting out the combination in a season that has some marquee one-day events including the Champions Trophy. In that context, the Rahul vs Pant conundrum is certain to get priority treatment in this series. Rahul is the incumbent wicketkeeper-batter and has been assigned to that role by the previous set-up under Rahul Dravid since last year's Asia Cup, a tournament in which he made his comeback from a long injury-forced layoff. Since then, Rahul has done full justice to his duty both in front and behind the wicket. Since the continental showpiece last year, Rahul has made 834 runs from 21 matches at a fine average of 69.50 with two hundreds. Besides, Rahul also captained India in the ODI series against South Africa earlier this year. As a stumper too, the 32-year-old has been pretty good. But will Gambhir follow the same route since Pant is back in the reckoning? Pant's return to India fold through a clutch of T20Is after that horrific accident in 2022



has been heartwarming but he has not set the field ablaze with his outings. There have been encouraging sparks during the last month or so. But is that enough to convince the powers that be to pick him ahead of Rahul? If Gambhir and skipper Rohit decide to keep both Rahul and Pant in the 11, then they will have to think as to how to accommodate Shreyas Iyer, another formidable player in the 50-over version. In his last ODI outing, Iyer made a 52 against South Africa at Johannesburg, and his record in 2023 is also impressive - 846 runs from 20 matches at an average of 53 with three hundreds. So, it could be a three-way tie between Rahul, Pant and Iyer for two batting slots because if India go ahead with all three of them, then they will have to play with five bowlers. India might not want to walk that rigid path particularly with Hardik Pandya missing this series because of personal reasons. Hence, India might just want to give a run to either Shivam Dube or Riyan Parag at No. 6.

However, the management entrusting Parag with bowling duties in the just-concluded T20Is could be a precursor to the larger role he might get in the ODI series. That Parag can shift between off-spin and leg-spin effectively too brightens his chance, something he was not able to showcase much in the IPL, courtesy the Impact Player rule. But the Assam player has a fairly noticeable body of work in the domestic 50-over competition - the Deodhar Trophy. He took 11 wickets last season to be placed sixth behind Vidwath Kaverappa (13), Shams Mulani (12), Mayank Yadav (12), Shabbaz Ahmed (12) and R Sai Kishore (11) at a good economy of 4.8. In contrast, Dube, who appeared in an ODI five years ago, played only one match in the series against Sri Lanka and was not summoned to bowl. Amid all this, Gambhir will also keep an eye on the outings of Rohit and Kohli, whom he said will have a major part to play going forward. This will also be the first ODI for the duo after that deflating defeat against Australia in last year's World Cup final at Ahmedabad, and they will be eager to mark the return to 50-over format with a special outing. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka, a mixture of young and experienced names, will want to avoid a batting collapse that led them to their doom in the T20I series despite enjoying periods of dominance. However, they will not have the services of pacers Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madushanka, who have been ruled out of the series with injuries.

Injured SL pacers Pathirana, Madushanka ruled out of ODIs against India

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka suffered a massive blow ahead of the three-match ODI series against India as pacers Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madushanka were ruled out with respective injuries. The first one-dayer will be played at the RPS Stadium here on Friday. "Madushanka suffered a Grade 2 hamstring injury on his left leg during the team's fielding practice" the Sri Lanka Cricket announced in a statement on Thursday.



"Pathirana has suffered a mild sprain on his right shoulder while diving to take a catch during the Third T20 match vs. India," the statement added. Pathirana did not bowl in the thirds T20I at Pallekele on Tuesday. The hosts have brought in Mohammed Shiraz and Eshan Malinga as replacements for the injured players. Meanwhile, Kusal Janith, Pramod Madushan and Jeffrey Vandersay have been added to the squad as standbys.

My favourite bowler is Bumrah: Dhoni

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni picked Jasprit Bumrah as his favourite bowler, but the multiple World Cup-winning former Indian skipper refrained from selecting between Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma as batsman of his choice. Bumrah played a vital role in India's recent T20 World Cup triumph in the Americas, picking up 15 wickets from eight matches at an economy rate of 4.17, best among the regular bowlers in the ICC showpiece. The effort earned Bumrah the player of the tournament award. "It's easy to pick my favourite bowler because Bumrah is there. It's difficult to pick a batsman because we have many good batsmen. But that doesn't mean bowlers aren't good," said Dhoni during a promotional event here.



Bumrah has been given a rest post the World Cup, and he is not playing the ongoing away white ball series against Sri Lanka. Dhoni said it is tough to pick one batsman as his favourite because several batters churn

out excellent knocks. "It's difficult to pick one among batters as whenever I see batting, he looks the best. But when I see someone else he also looks great. "But as long as Team India is winning, I don't want to pick a

batter (as my favourite). I hope they will keep scoring runs for the team," Dhoni said. The 43-year-old Dhoni did not reveal his IPL future when a fan posed a question about his plans for the 2025 edition. "There is a lot of time for it. We have to see what decision they take on player retention etc. Right now, the ball is not in our court. "So, once the rules and regulations get formalised, I will take a call, but needs to be in the best interest of the team," he added. At present, the IPL teams are a divided house over a host of issues ranging from the mega auction rules to the 'Impact Player' rule. The BCCI secretary Jay Shah said he had a "constructive dialogue" with the IPL team owners on a variety of subjects, which would then be taken before the IPL Governing Council led by Arun Dhumal for further deliberation.

Brinda: Deadly twist on faith

AARTI SREENATH

Plot:

A wave of vicious and seemingly arbitrary killings has instilled fear in the city of Hyderabad. SI Brinda (played by Trisha) and her team are tasked with uncovering the truth. As they delve deeper into the case, they discover an eerie pattern linking the killings. The investigation uncovers a series of startling, chilling revelations that lead to a jaw-dropping twist, significantly changing their investigation and challenging their core beliefs.

Highlights:

Brinda is not your run-of-the-mill crime thriller. It seamlessly integrates social commentary with a compelling narrative, set against the bustling, vibrant backdrop of Hyderabad. This setting not only grounds the series in reality but also makes it highly relatable for viewers familiar with the city's unique blend of chaos and charm. The series tackles themes of blind faith and superstition, challenging deep-seated societal norms and beliefs.

What sets *Brinda* apart from typical crime thrillers is its profound exploration of superstition and blind faith. The initial episodes focus on meticulous character development, essential for the narrative's progression.

Drawbacks:

The series' deliberate pacing in the beginning may deter fans of fast-paced thrillers, though this pacing is crucial for building a cohesive and compelling narrative. Some scenes may appear predictable to viewers adept at piecing together clues, but these are minor quibbles in an otherwise engaging series.

Performances:

Trisha's performance is a revelation. Known for her roles in lighter, more traditional fare, she steps into the shoes of an intense, determined



cop with remarkable ease. Her portrayal of Brinda is multifaceted—capturing confusion, determination, vulnerability, and strength in equal measure. Trisha's physique, nuanced expressions and body language bring a rare authenticity to the character, making her journey and struggles deeply compelling.

Ravindra Vijay's portrayal of Sarathi stands out as a masterclass in understated brilliance. He inhabits the role with natural ease, portraying the challenges faced by an SI with remarkable realism. Sarathi's feminist stance and

unwavering moral compass add significant depth to his character, making him an indispensable part of the narrative. His expressions and body language are so convincing that viewers may often forget he is acting. Anand Sami delivers a stellar performance, perfectly blending elements of fear and empathy.

The supporting cast, including Indrajith Sukumaran, Rakendu Mouli, Aamani, and Jaya Prakash, contribute significantly to the series, enhancing the intricate web of characters with their strong performances.

Technical aspects:

Cinematographer Dinesh K Babu's work is nothing short of breathtaking. Each frame is meticulously crafted, with the lighting perfectly complementing the series' atmospheric tone. The cinematography transports viewers into the heart of Hyderabad, with naturalistic shots that add authenticity and depth. The visual storytelling elevates the suspense, making every twist feel palpable. The opening and closing sequences are particularly striking, framing the narrative with a visual style that enhances the story's tension and emotional impact.

Verdict:

Brinda is a cinematic triumph for crime thriller aficionados and those intrigued by the theme of blind faith. It deftly balances conventional storytelling with innovative approaches to social issues, offering a richly textured viewing experience. Director Surya Manoj Vangala's masterful blend of technical prowess and emotional depth ensures that *Brinda* lingers in the viewer's mind long after the credits roll. The series not only entertains but also provokes thought, urging viewers to question the world around them.

Directed by: Surya Manoj Vangala

Produced by: Kolla Ashish
Cinematography: Dinesh K Babu

Cast: Trisha Krishnan, Indrajith Sukumaran, Jaya Prakash, Aamani, Ravindra Vijay, Anand Sami, Rakendu Mouli

Streaming on: SonyLiv

Rating: 3/5

#WayanadDisaster: Suriya, Jyotika, Karthi, Rashmika make generous donations

The Wayanad Disaster has shook the nation once again. The disaster took the lives of many people and left many homeless. Rescue operations are going on and people are still overcoming the shock and trauma they had to undergo.

In such a situation, some of our beloved film celebrities have come forward to help the Kerala government and its people by making generous donations.

While actors Suriya, Jyotika and Karthi together made a collective donation of Rs 50 lakh, national crush Rashmika Mandanna made a donation of Rs 10 lakhs to the CMO Kerala relief fund for the Wayanad Disaster. Chiyaan Vikram donated a sum of Rs 20 lakh to the Chief Minister Distress Fund to help the victims.

Malayalam actors, including Mohanlal, Mammooty, Manju Warrier, Asif Ali, Tovino Thomas, Nikhila Vimal, Basil Joseph and Malavika Mohanan among others, appealed to people to help the victims in whatever way possible.

Such donations by renowned celebrities come as a testament to their commitment to giving back to society and supporting those in need during times of crisis. This substantial contribution underscores their dedication to making a positive impact beyond her cinematic achievements and reinforces their reputation as a compassionate and socially responsible individual.

Ramesh Taurani addresses rumours about Sreeleela's role in his next

In response to recent media rumors regarding Telugu actress Sreeleela's involvement in Varun Dhawan's upcoming comedy film, Ramesh Taurani, producer at Tips Films, has issued a formal statement to clear the air.

Reports have circulated suggesting that Sreeleela has exited the film, directed by David Dhawan and produced by Tips Films. It has also been claimed that the first schedule of the film has been completed without her.

Addressing these speculations, Taurani clarified, "We have not yet approached anyone for the role. The casting process is still ongoing, and the first schedule has just been completed. We will make an official announcement once the cast is finalised. We request the public and media to refrain from believing or spreading unfounded rumors." The producer's statement aims to set the record straight and assures that no final decisions have been made regarding the cast. Fans and industry watchers are advised to await further official updates from Tips Films.



BALAKRISHNA, PRAGYA JAISWAL REUNITE FOR NBK 109

In an exciting announcement for Telugu cinema enthusiasts, Pragya Jaiswal has been confirmed as the lead actress in the highly anticipated film *NBK 109*. She will reunite with the iconic Nandamuri Balakrishna, marking their comeback together after their successful collaboration on *Akhanda*. Directed by Bobby Kolli and produced by Naga Vamsi, this Telugu action drama will also feature Bollywood star Bobby Deol as the antagonist. Pragya Jaiswal's casting in *NBK 109* is a notable addition to her impressive career. Known for her performances in blockbuster hits such as *Akhanda* and *Kanche*, Pragya has established herself as a prominent name in Telugu cinema. Her role in *Akhanda* not only brought her critical acclaim but also contributed to the film becoming one of her career's biggest successes. Sharing her excitement about reuniting with Nandamuri Balakrishna, Pragya Jaiswal said, "I am thrilled to be working again with Nandamuri Balakrishna sir and under the direction of Bobby Kolli. *NBK 109* is shaping up to be a fantastic project with a talented cast, including Bobby Deol. I'm eager for the audience to experience what we've created." In addition to *NBK 109*, Pragya Jaiswal is expanding her career with several upcoming projects. She will appear alongside Akshay Kumar in the Bollywood film *Khel Khel Mein* and has more exciting ventures on the horizon. With her versatility and track record of working with top stars, Pragya is poised to continue making a significant impact across the film industry.



Ashwin Babu's birthday: Special poster released from his next film

Celebrating Ashwin Babu's birthday on Thursday, Arunasree Entertainments unveiled a special poster for their highly anticipated third production. The film, a medico-thriller directed by Mamidala M.R. Krishna and produced by T. Ganapathi Reddy, is generating considerable buzz as it gears up for release.

The new poster, revealed on the actor's birthday, has quickly gone viral, stirring excitement among fans and adding to the film's growing anticipation.

Starring alongside Ashwin Babu is Riya Suman, with Ayesha Khan, Murali Sharma, Sachin Khedekar, Ajay, VTV Ganesh, Yashna Chaudhary, Sudarshan, Sakalaka Shankar and Raghava playing pivotal roles.

The film has already completed 75% of its shooting across various locations, including Hyderabad, Vizag and the picturesque Kodaikanal region. It is set to hit theaters by the end of this year.

The project boasts a talented team of technicians: Gaura Hari is composing the music, M.N. Bal Reddy is handling cinematography, Viplav Naishadam is the editor, and Suresh (Baby Suresh) is the art director. With such a strong team and the recent promotional success, the film is poised for a strong release.

EXPECT EXTRAORDINARY WITH ANANYA AS 'BUJJAMMA'

To celebrate Ananya Nagalla's birthday, the makers of the film *Pottel* have released a special poster. Directed by Saihith Mothkurri, *Pottel* features a fresh and honest narrative set against a rural backdrop, with youthful Chandrashekar and Ananya Nagalla in the lead roles. The film has already garnered excellent responses to the content released so far, with the four songs unveiled to date becoming chart-topping hits.

The newly released poster showcases Ananya in a traditional rural look, presenting a natural and appealing image. Her role in the film promises to offer significant scope for performance, with her character, Bujjamma, expected to be extraordinary. In the movie, Ajay plays a powerful role that is anticipated to be truly impressive.

The film is produced by Nishank Reddy Kudi and Suresh Kumar Sadiage, with music composed by Shekar Chandra. The cinematography is handled by Monish Bhoopathi Raju, editing by Karthik Srinivas and art direction by Narmi Srinivas.

The makers are preparing for the film's release in theaters soon.



Salaar: Part 1 – Ceasefire releases BGM with stunning visuals

In a distinctive move reminiscent of Hollywood trends, *Salaar: Part 1 – Ceasefire* has released its background music (BGM) accompanied by spectacular visuals from the film. This innovative approach has been widely embraced, generating considerable excitement among audiences. The film's impact is significantly amplified by its gripping BGM, which enhances the high-octane action sequences and contributes to the overall intensity of the movie. Directed by Prashanth Neel and featuring the action superstar Prabhas, the film sets a new benchmark for how BGM should elevate the cinematic experience. The release of the BGM has been met with enthusiasm, as it highlights the adrenaline-pumping soundtrack that complements the film's intense scenes. The film's immersive world of Khansaar has captivated global audiences, setting the stage for high anticipation for the sequel, *Salaar Part 2: Shouryanga Parvam*. With the success of Part 1, the stage is set for an even more exhilarating continuation.