



the pioneer

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Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

There is no 'kick' in the Assembly without KCR. There would have been fun if KCR had attended the session. BRS leaders have become motherless children due to the absence of the Leader of the Opposition (LOP). Harish Rao is a senior BRS leader but they will not give him the LOP post. The party will be 'destroyed' if the LOP post is given to Harish Rao or KTR. KCR is the decision maker and he has answers for everything.

- Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy, P4
Munugode MLA TG



'Only Centre can validate facts related to it'



'NOW, I WANT TO DO SOMETHING ROMANTIC ON CELLULOID'



Tharun Bhascker's new film ANNOUNCED



DON'T MISS...

CM for revamp of paddy...

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has called for major reforms in the paddy collection system to ensure farmers face no inconvenience. He emphasised the importance of making essential commodities readily available to the public through the coordinated efforts of the Civil Supplies, Agriculture, and Marketing Departments. During a review meeting at the Secretariat in Velagapudi, Amravati, CM Naidu addressed various issues including the paddy collection system, the supply of ration rice, the door delivery system's...

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Centre wants to put CM...

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Friday alleged that the Centre wants to put Chief Minister Siddaramaiah behind bars and is therefore "digging out small things" against the opposition but protecting its own people who indulge in "big crimes". "They (BJP leaders) are misusing the governor, Income Tax (dept), Directorate of Enforcement only to topple the government. You know what they tried to do in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Delhi, West Bengal and Kerala," Rao told reporters...

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New record of over 7.28 crore...

Income tax returns (ITRs) touched a new record of over 7.28 crore, 7.5 per cent higher compared to previous fiscal, by the July 31 deadline, the income tax department said on Friday. The total number of ITRs for assessment year 2024-25 filed till July 31, 2024 is more than 7.28 crore, which is 7.5 per cent higher than the total ITRs for AY 2023-24 (6.77 crore) filed till July 31, 2023, the department said in a statement. "Out of the total ITRs of 7.28 crore filed for AY 2024-25, 5.27 crore have..."

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Manu qualifies for 25m sports...

Indian shooter Manu Bhaker kept herself on track for a hat-trick of Olympic medals, coming up with one of her most memorable performances in her favourite event, the 25m sports pistol, as she booked a place in the final placed second at the Chateaux shooting range here on Friday. The 22-year-old, who has already made history by becoming the first Indian athlete to win two bronze medals in one edition of the quadrennial showpiece, can add to her aura if she wins a third medal on Saturday, something...

-SPORTS

IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN & CHILD WELFARE SCHEMES

CM for result-oriented approach

Stresses strategic planning and execution for tangible outcomes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has urged officials in the Women and Child Welfare Department to implement schemes with a strategic, result-oriented approach.

During a review meeting at the Secretariat on Friday, Naidu underscored the importance of achieving tangible outcomes through meticulous planning and execution.

The CM assessed the progress of various programmes under Mission Vatsalya, including initiatives for women's empowerment, maternal and infant mortality reduction, and child protection. The review also covered schemes supporting pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as nutrition programs for children. Naidu inquired about the status of specific schemes like Balamrutham, Amrita Hastam, Gorumudda, Giri Gorumudda, and Bala Sanjeevani, all launched in 2014.

Officials reported that Andhra Pradesh has 55,607 Anganwadi centres, comprising 48,770 main centres and 6,837 mini centres, with 8,311 located in tribal areas. They noted that during the Telugu Desam Party's tenure from 2014 to 2019, efforts began to construct 12,496 centres, of which 6,119 were completed by 2019 and an additional 2,800 are still under construction.



CM happy over pension disbursement success
VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu expressed his happiness on Friday over the successful distribution of pensions to 97 per cent of beneficiaries across the state in a single day. This milestone was achieved on Thursday, August 1. "It gives me immense pleasure that 67 lakh beneficiaries received their revised pensions at their doorstep on the 1st of this month, amounting to Rs 2737 crore."

- Progress of Mission Vatsalya programmes, including women's empowerment and child protection reviewed
- CM enquires about the status of nutrition and maternal health schemes initiated in 2014.
- Construction delays in Anganwadi centres, with many lacking basic amenities noted.
- Enhancement of Anganwadi infrastructure using Central and State funds come under review.
- Need for more women's hostels across the State stressed.
- Innovative programmes to improve departmental performance stressed.
- CM calls for clear, measurable results within a year.

However, in the last five years, construction efforts have lagged. The previous YSRCP government sanctioned 2,048 new Anganwadi centres but completed only 18. Additionally, 14,597 centres lack toilets, and 8,455 are without electricity. Naidu directed officials to enhance infrastructure at Anganwadi centres using both central and state funds. He also stressed the need for more women's hostels across the state and encouraged innovative programmes to boost the department's performance. He called for a clear focus on achieving measurable results within a year, ensuring that the impact of the schemes is visible and substantial. The CM also highlighted the importance of leveraging central schemes effectively.



Prioritise nine-hour quality power for farmers: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has instructed the Energy Department to ensure farmers receive nine hours of quality electricity during the daytime. Emphasising the importance of improving feeder capacity and establishing special feeders, he urged officials to enhance power generation and supply while reducing costs. During a review meeting at the Secretariat on Friday, the CM stressed the importance of prioritising solar power generation in Andhra Pradesh. He called for comprehensive plans to set up solar units and meet the state's electricity requirements efficiently. Naidu highlighted the need to maximise the benefits of Central government subsidies in power generation. He discussed with officials the current status of electricity generation and supply, the costs associated with producing a unit of electricity, and the expenses incurred when purchasing power from other grids to address shortages. The review also covered various power generation projects, including thermal, hydro-electric, solar, and wind, as well as upcoming power projects.



Annuity for farmers extended

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu announced that the government has decided to extend the annuity for another five years to the farmers who offered their lands under the Land Pooling Scheme for the construction of New Capital Amaravati. The CM has clarified that Capital Region Development Authority jurisdiction for the construction and development of Amaravati Capital will be within the area of 8,352 square kilometres as per GO 207 given in 2015 and stated that the CRDA area will continue as per the previously identified area. The 36th authority meeting of CRDA was held on Friday under the chairmanship of CM Chandrababu at the Secretariat in Velagapudi in Amaravati. The CM discussed 12 issues in this meeting and the land allotments made to 130 organizations in the past and their current situation were reviewed with the officials. Further discussion was held on how many days would it take to start construction activities again by previously land-allotted organisations. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directed the officials to go ahead with the construction of the Amaravati Inner Ring Road and the expansion of Karakatta Road into four lanes.



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'Land only for entities that can make Amaravati a wealth hub'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Friday directed officials to allot lands only to those entities which can transform Amaravati's capital region into a wealth-generating hub. He also instructed officials to review past land allotments in the greenfield capital city and extend the opportunity only to those entities which are keen, an official release said. According to the CM, the Amaravati Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) will be retained in the 8,352 sq km area as per the 2015 government order (GO) number 207. During a review meeting at the Secretariat, the chief minister observed that CRDA would continue in the area designated for it earlier. Deliberating on 12 issues related to the greenfield capital city, Naidu took stock of land allocations made to 130 institutions during the 36th CRDA authority meeting. The CM discussed with officials as to how soon land allottees can restart construction.

Nine new cities planned in capital region

VIJAYAWADA: Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Ponguru Narayana, announced the development of nine new cities as part of the Amaravati capital master plan. These new cities will include a health city and a sports city. The tender process has already been completed, and jungle clearance work is set to begin in Amaravati next Monday or Wednesday. The halted Amaravati Happy Nest project is also slated for a restart. Minister Narayana mentioned that new roads would be developed to connect Amaravati's Capital to the Chennai-Kolkata Highway, in addition to the already constructed Seed Axis Road.

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HIMACHAL CLOUDBURST

Death toll up to 8, 45 missing

PNS ■ SHIMLA
Rescue operations were underway on Friday to trace over 45 people missing following flash floods triggered by cloudbursts in three districts of Himachal Pradesh, officials said on Friday. With recovery of three more bodies, the death toll due to the flash floods in Nirmand, Sainj and Malana areas in Kullu, Padhar in Mandi and Rampur in Shimla districts of Himachal Pradesh has increased to eight.



Continued on Page 2

'CHAKRAVYUH' SPEECH BACKLASH

ED 'insiders' tell me raid planned: Rahul

Waiting with open arms; 'chai and biscuits on me, says Leader of Opposition in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday claimed that an Enforcement Directorate raid is being planned against him after his 'chakravayuh' speech in Parliament. The BJP dismissed his claim saying he is creating a new narrative to distract people from asking about his accountability as the MP from Wayanad following the devastating landslide tragedy there. In a post on X early Friday, Gandhi said, "Apparently, 2 in 1 didn't like my Chakravayuh speech. ED insiders tell me a raid is being planned." "Waiting with open arms @dir_ed .Chai and biscuits on me," he said. In another development, Congress MP Manickam Tagore submitted a notice to move an adjournment motion on "the BJP government's misuse of agencies like the ED, CBI, and Income Tax for political harassment". "The opposition condemns the BJP government's misuse of agencies like the ED, CBI, and Income Tax for political harassment. Despite their reduced number from 303 to 240 seats and the reliance on alliances with TDP and JDU, the government continues to deploy these agencies to intimidate opposition leaders and force compliance, undermining democratic principles."



Continued on Page 2

He is seeking people's sympathy: BJP leader

PNS ■ NAGPUR
Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekar Bawankule on Friday said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is spreading rumours about Enforcement Directorate (ED) action against him to gain people's sympathy. Earlier in the day, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, in a post on X, claimed that an ED raid is being planned against him after his 'chakravayuh' speech in Parliament.

Continued on Page 2

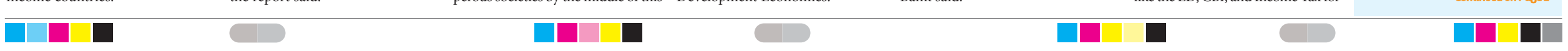
India may take 75 yrs to reach 1/4th of US income per capita

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
At the end of 2023, 108 countries were classified as middle-income, each with annual GDP per capita in the range of USD 1,136 to USD 13,845. These countries are home to six billion people - 75 per cent of the global population - and two out of every three people living in extreme poverty. The road ahead has even stiffer challenges than those seen in the past: rapidly ageing populations and burgeoning debt, fierce geopolitical and trade frictions, and the growing difficulty of speeding up economic progress without fouling the environment, it said. "Yet many middle-income countries still use a playbook from the last century, relying mainly on policies designed to expand investment. That is like driving a car just in first gear and trying to make it go faster," the report said. If they stick with the old playbook, most developing countries will lose the race to create reasonably prosperous societies by the middle of this century, said Indermit Gill, Chief Economist of the World Bank Group and Senior Vice President for Development Economics.



The road ahead has even stiffer challenges than those seen in the past: rapidly ageing populations and burgeoning debt, fierce geopolitical and trade frictions, and the growing difficulty of speeding up economic progress without fouling the environment, the World Development Report 2024: The Middle Income Trap said.

"At current trends, it will take China more than 10 years just to reach one-quarter of US income per capita, Indonesia nearly 70 years, and India 75 years," the report said. Gill also said the battle for global economic prosperity will largely be won or lost in middle-income countries. The report proposes a strategy for countries to reach high-income status. Depending on their stage of development, all countries need to adopt a sequenced and progressively more sophisticated mix of policies. Since 1990, only 34 middle-income economies have managed to shift to high-income status - and more than a third of them were either beneficiaries of integration into the European Union, or of previously undiscovered oil, the World Bank said.



CM for revamp of paddy collection

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has called for major reforms in the paddy collection system to ensure farmers face no inconvenience. He emphasised the importance of making essential commodities readily available to the public through the coordinated efforts of the Civil Supplies, Agriculture, and Marketing Departments.

During a review meeting at the Secretariat in Velagapudi, Amravati, CM Naidu addressed various issues including the paddy collection system, the supply of ration rice, the door delivery system's performance, and price control of essential commodities. He criticized the previous government for mismanaging the paddy collection system, which had left farmers in a difficult situation, and assured that such problems would not recur. He highlighted delays in the payment to farmers and complications in purchasing rain-soaked paddy as major issues.

CM Naidu pointed out that until 2019, the debts of the Civil Supplies Department stood at Rs 21,622 crores, but these had ballooned to Rs 41,550 crores under the previous YSR Congress administration, severely impacting the department's functionality. He directed officials to prioritise controlling the prices of



CM Naidu pointed out that until 2019, the debts of the Civil Supplies Department stood at Rs 21,622 crores, but these had ballooned to Rs 41,550 crores under the previous YSR Congress administration, severely impacting the department's functionality. He directed officials to prioritise controlling the prices of essential commodities in the state, asserting that effective coordination between the Agriculture, Civil Supplies, and Marketing Departments is crucial for this task.

essential commodities in the state, asserting that effective coordination between the Agriculture, Civil Supplies, and Marketing Departments is crucial for this task.

Officials reported that 2,372 counters have been set up by the Civil Supply Department to sell pulses and rice at prices significantly lower than market rates. For instance, Red gram (toor dal), priced at Rs 180 in the market, is being sold

at Rs 150 through these special counters, and rice is being sold at Rs 48 per kg.

The officials also revealed that 9,260 vehicles were purchased for Rs 1,844 crore for the door-to-door delivery of ration, but the initiative did not achieve its targets. CM Naidu urged the officials to propose solutions to these issues and explore ways to effectively utilize ration dealers.

IIT Hyd team inspects Amaravati structures

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The strength and quality inspection of Amaravati Capital structures that were halted for more than five years were inspected by a team of experts from IIT Hyderabad on Friday. Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu earlier decided to conduct a study to know the strength and technical aspects of buildings in the Amaravati capital that were incomplete.

The government asked experts of IIT Hyderabad and IIT Chennai to conduct a detailed study and to submit reports for the restarting works of Amaravati structures. Before 2019, a few buildings' constructions were started and subsequently were stopped midway, while other structures started at the foundation level and remained incomplete. The IIT engineers started a detailed study on how to proceed with the incomplete structures on Friday.

The government has assigned the responsibility of assessing the strength and quality of the structures of IAS officers, Ministers quarters, MLAs and MLCs quarters to IIT Hyderabad. On Friday, a team of IIT Hyderabad experts inspected the MLA and MLC building complexes in the capital Amaravati.

Later IIT professors Subrahmanyam and Munwar Basha spoke to the media and said that it would take some more time to determine the strength and capacity of the buildings.

They further said that the current condition of buildings, the impact of standing rainwater, and the up-to-date condition of construction materials should be assessed. They said, "We will submit a report to the government after examining them technically. It is not clear how long the report will take. We will provide it to the government and CRDA as soon as possible."

LOCAL BODIES QUOTA

YSRCP picks Botsa for MLC post

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), led by former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, has nominated former minister Botsa Satyanarayana for the upcoming MLC elections from the Visakhapatnam local bodies constituency. This decision was made after thorough discussions with senior party leaders and ex-legislators from Visakhapatnam, aiming to address the current political challenges.

On Friday, Jagan held meetings with key party members, including Gudivada Amarnath, Budi Mutyalanaidu, and MVV Satyanarayana. Despite several candidates showing interest, Jagan chose Botsa Satyanarayana, viewing this as a strategic move to tackle rival parties' political issues and challenges.

Sources say Jagan's choice of Botsa, an experienced politician from Vizianagaram, is meant to strengthen the party against the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which has been recruiting YSRCP members. Botsa's experience and resources are expected to help maintain party



unity and counter TDP's recruitment efforts. In a recent meeting, Jagan criticized TDP's tactics: "Our party holds a clear majority in the Visakhapatnam local bodies constituency. Naidu should abstain from fielding a candidate if he has any ethics. However, Naidu's past actions have demonstrated a lack of decency in such matters." He called for senior party leaders to unite against opposition attempts to weaken YSRCP's voter base.

The political situation is further complicated by recent defections of several YSRCP corporators from the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal

Corporation (GVMC) to TDP and Janasena. With the MLC elections approaching, TDP, Janasena, and BJP have increased efforts to attract YSRCP members, adding to the electoral pressure on the party. Botsa Satyanarayana, who previously lost the assembly election from Cheepurupalli in Vizianagaram and whose wife Jhansilakshmi lost in the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha elections, now faces the challenge of reestablishing his political influence.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the schedule for the MLC election in Visakhapatnam. The election notification will be issued on August 6, the last date for filing nominations is August 13, and polling will occur on August 30. This by-election follows the disqualification of Vamsikrishna Yadav, who had joined Jana Sena shortly before the Assembly elections after being elected to the council as a YSRCP nominee. Though Yadav was disqualified from the council, he was elected to the assembly as a Jana Sena candidate, prompting this by-election.

YSRCP demands announcement of IR for govt staff

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

APNGO former president and former Government Advisor N Chandrasekhar Reddy has criticised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's administration for neglecting government employees and pensioners and highlighted the TDP coalition government's failure in addressing Interim Relief and PRC issues as two months have passed, and employees are still waiting.

Speaking to the media persons at the party central office on Friday, he said while it has only been two months, some

He recalled that when former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy came to power, he promptly provided 27% interim relief (IR) to employees and pensioners as promised. He urged the CM to announce IR immediately. Additionally, there are several pending dues to be paid to employees and pensioners, including GPF, surrender leave encashment, medical reimbursement, APGLI, retirement benefits, and last PRC arrears, all of which were promised in the manifesto.

doubts have arisen in the implementation of promises to the government employees and pensioners as the Chief Minister himself is expressing doubts about whether he can fulfil the promises he made to the people. He recalled that when former chief minister YS Jagan

Mohan Reddy came to power, he promptly provided 27% interim relief (IR) to employees and pensioners as promised. He urged the CM to announce IR immediately. Additionally, there are several pending dues to be paid to employees and pensioners, including GPF, surrender

leave encashment, medical reimbursement, APGLI, retirement benefits, and last PRC arrears, all of which were promised in the manifesto.

Regarding the volunteer system, he said the manifesto stated that the honorarium would be increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 and now approximately 2.5 lakh volunteers are in a difficult situation, with no salaries paid for June and July. Also, there is ambiguity about whether the system will continue, he added.

He also urged to set up a corporation immediately for 3,80,000 pensioners as

promised and demanded clarity on whether the employees would be included in the OPS system or any other system. He said the government should take immediate action on an unemployment dole of Rs 3,000 for unemployed individuals. He said the manifesto also promised 4,00,000 jobs annually and a job calendar and urged the job calendar for this year to be released immediately. He said immediate action should be taken to stop harassment of Anganwadi workers, MEPMA employees, and field assistants and urged them to provide job security to them.

Nine new cities ...

Continued from Page 1

The CRDA authority has agreed to link roads E5, E11, E13, and E15 from Seed Capital to National Highway No. 16, connecting Vijayawada and Chennai. Tenders will soon be called, and construction will start immediately on the four-lane Karakatta road, which will feature a central divider.

Additionally, Minister Narayana announced plans for four more iconic bridges through the inner and outer ring roads in Amaravati. Currently, there are two bridges over the Krishna River, with a third one becoming available soon, bringing the total number of bridges on the Krishna River to seven.

Death toll up to 8, 45...

Continued from Page 1

"Bodies of my father-in-law and mother-in-law have been recovered but my son, my brother-in-law, his wife and their six-year-old son and two-month-old daughter are still missing," a weeping woman told PTI Videos.

"Fear of death kept us awake all night as we climbed to a mountain to stay safe," said another villager who came out after hearing screams to see houses swept in flash floods.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu along with Education Minister Rohit Thakur visited Samej on the border of Shimla and Kullu district to take stock of the situation and talk to the victims.

At the site of the Malana II power project in Manikaran area of Kullu district, 33 stranded people were rescued on Thursday night and this morning, Deputy Commissioner, Kullu, Torul S Raveesh, said on Friday.

A wall and way to a tunnel was damaged due to rains and water entered the barrage but the teams of the NDRF and home guard managed to rescue the people.

Talking to reporters outside Parliament in the national capital, BJP MP from Mandi Lok Sabha seat Kangana Ranaut expressed anguish over the loss of lives in the cloudburst incidents, and said life of people in the tough terrain is difficult and such disasters are adding to their pain every year.

"The prime minister and home minister have assured that relief would be given to the state. I am also going to different ministries in New Delhi to get help for Himachal and would visit the state soon," she added.

Personnel of the Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police, State Disaster

Response Force, police and home guards are involved in the rescue operations and the help of drones is being taken to locate the missing persons, officials added.

The maximum damage was caused in Samej area of Rampur subdivision of Shimla district as a cloudburst near Shrikhand Mahadev route on Wednesday night triggered flash floods in Sarpara, Ganvi and Kurban nallahs. The cloudburst affected both Shimla and Kullu districts.

Three people are missing and 15 families are affected, DC, Kullu, who reached Samej (Kullu side), said.

Government primary and secondary schools where about 100 students were studying have been damaged and arrangements are being made to run the school at another location, she added.

Due to flash floods triggered by cloudburst, the water in Samej Khud in Shimla district's Rampur rose, leaving two people dead and over 30 missing, Shimla Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi had told PTI.

Mutilated body parts of two persons were recovered on Thursday, he added.

"We have to search in about a 100-km area, some of which is inaccessible, and drones are being used to locate the missing people," Gandhi had told PTI on Thursday.

According to reports, over 20 houses, six shops, four main and two foot bridges were washed after the cloudburst in the state and road connectivity has been hampered in the affected areas.

So far since the onset of monsoon on June 27, 73 people have died in rain-related incidents and the state has also suffered losses to the tune of Rs 649 crore, according to the state's Emergency Operation Centre.

Dist administration unveils plan to eradicate drug trafficking

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad and Police Commissioner Sankhabrata Bhagchi have called for a unified and intensified response from all relevant authorities to combat drug and ganja trafficking. The officials outlined a robust strategy during a Narcotics Coordination Committee meeting held on Friday. The crux of their initiative is a meticulously crafted 100-day action plan designed to combat the drug crisis afflicting Visakhapatnam. Both the District Collector and the Police Commissioner emphasised the government's unwavering commitment to tackling this issue, laying out a multi-faceted approach aimed at eradicating drug-related prob-



lems within the district.

Commissioner Bhagchi outlined that the core components of the action plan involve intercepting ganja shipments coming into the city through various routes, setting up strategically positioned check posts, and carrying out thorough inspections and seizures. To improve detection efforts, sniffer dogs

trained to identify drugs and ganja will be stationed at crucial points, including railway stations, bus stands, baggage lockers, parcel offices, as well as at suspicious vehicles and shops.

Collector Prasad highlighted that the strategy includes a thorough de-addiction and rehabilitation program for those battling drug addiction.

ED 'insiders' tell me raid ...

Continued from Page 1

This misuse of state power is unacceptable and threatens the integrity of our institutions," the notice read.

Reacting to Gandhi's claim, BJP leader and former Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the former Congress chief might have been told that people are asking questions about his accountability but he has sought to create a new narrative. However, several Congress and opposition leaders rallied behind Gandhi and accused the government of "misusing" probe agencies.

Rashtriya Loktantrik Party and Nagauri MP Hanuman Ramdev Beniwal said Gandhi was right and probe agencies are being misused by the Centre.

"Two CMs were in jail and it is well known they try and shut up any person who speaks

against them. They can get an ED raid done or send CBI in order to defame a person. But if agencies are misused in this manner, the opposition is in a position of strength this time. So I don't think they will commit the mistake of sending ED against Rahul Gandhi but if they do, the consequences will not be good," he said.

Independent MP Pappu Yadav said the tendency of the government and ED is to scare people but Gandhi does not have an iota of fear in him.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the government's intention of putting ED and CBI against Gandhi could be because of him exposing the government inside Parliament.

"ED and CBI are working as agencies to throttle the voice of the opposition and bring down governments. I would tell Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he

should understand that times have changes, he has reached 240 and if he continues like this, he would reach even 24 and two," Singh told reporters.

Several Congress leaders accused the BJP of misusing government agencies and asserted that Gandhi is not the one to get scared by such tactics.

Using the 'chakravayuh' metaphor as a leitmotif, Gandhi on Monday had claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravayuh' he promised would be broken by the INDIA bloc.

Participating in the debate in the Lok Sabha on Budget 2024-25, Gandhi had said the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will ensure that a legal guarantee for MSP as well as a caste census is passed by the House.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Chaturdash: Aug 02 03:27 PM to Aug 03 03:50 PM
Amavasya: Aug 03 03:50 PM to Aug 04 04:42 PM
Nakshatram:
Punarvasu: Aug 02 10:59 AM to Aug 03 11:59 AM
Pushya: Aug 03 11:59 AM to Aug 04 01:26 PM
Rahukalam: 9:11 AM to 10:46 AM
Yamagandam: 1:57 PM to 3:33 PM
Varjyam: 08:28 PM to 10:10 PM
Gulika: 5:59 AM to 7:35 AM
Amritakalam: 09:29 AM to 11:09 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 AM to 12:47 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly cloudy
Temp: 93°
Humidity: 69%
Sunrise: 5:49 AM
Sunset: 6:38 PM
Updated: July 2, 2024 5:00 PM

CM happy over pension...

Continued from Page 1

For the first time in the State's history, pensions were distributed to 97.54 per cent of beneficiaries in a single day," Naidu shared via a message on X. He emphasised the State government's responsibility to ensure the financial security of the differently-abled, elderly, and other vulnerable groups, noting that the revised pensions offer significant assurance to the lives of the poor.

The Chief Minister extended his heartfelt congratulations to all government employees and officers for their active participation in the pension distribution program. He acknowledged the vital role that employees play in implementing welfare pro-

grams and ensuring they reach the people. "We are pleased that salaries were paid on the 1st of this month to this section, and pensions were distributed to retired government employees on the same day," he added.

Despite facing a financial crunch and other challenges, the state released Rs 5300 crore on August 1 solely for salaries and pensions, the Chief Minister noted. He highlighted the crucial role of employees and officers in rebuilding the state and assured that the Alliance Government would prioritize their welfare and ensure they are respected in all aspects.

"Let us all strive together to change the future of the state," Chandrababu Naidu said in his message.

Prioritise 9-hour quality power for ...

Continued from Page 1

The CM also directed officials to devise plans for a battery energy storage system.

Special Chief Secretary of the State Energy Department, K Vijayanand, provided an overview of the state's power generation status through a presentation.

The meeting was attended by State Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar, Secretary to CM AV Rajamouli, AP Genco MD Chakradhar Babu, AP TNSR MD Kirithi, Additional Secretary Finance J Nivas, KPMG representative Srinivas, and other officials.

Annuity for farmers...

Continued from Page 1

The CM announced that the government decided to extend the annuity payments for another five years to the farmers who have been given land under the land pooling scheme for the construction of Amaravati Capital.

Chief Minister Naidu suggested that allotment of land be done only for those who will make Amaravati a centre of wealth creation. He directed to re-examine the previous land allotments and give an opportunity to interested companies. The CM also discussed the issue of which organizations should be invited and to whom land should be allotted to make Amaravati an education hub. The Chief Minister believes that top 10 colleges, top 10 schools and top 10 hospitals of the country should be established in Amaravati.

The officials explained to the CM that many villages included in the Mangalagiri Municipal Corporation have to be brought back under the capital area. The officials explained that an in-depth review of the illegal decisions taken by the previous government will be held.

'Land only for entities that can make ...

Continued from Page 1

Further, Naidu deliberated on how to transform Amaravati into an education hub what kind of institutions should be invited and who should be offered land.

He envisioned that India's top 10 colleges, schools and hospitals should be set up in Amaravati.

Naidu gave his approval to officials to go ahead with the inner ring road construction and the expansion of the road leading to Amaravati.

Meanwhile, officials apprised the CM that some villages which were merged with the Mangalagiri civic body should be brought back to the capital city.

He is seeking people's sympathy ...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing the media after attending a meeting of the Nagpur District Planning Committee, Bawankule, a former state minister, hit out at Gandhi, saying he will not get any sympathy from people with such theatrical antics.

Asked about the Congress MP's post, Bawankule said, "Why are you afraid? Why are you spreading rumours... all this is being done to gain sympathy. Rahul Gandhi ji is doing drama to burnish his image, attract people's sympathy and set some narrative against Modi ji (Prime Minister Narendra Modi). But he will not get sympathy."

In the post, Gandhi said, "Apparently, 2 in 1 didn't like my Chakravayuh speech. ED insiders' tell me a raid is being planned." Using the 'chakravayuh' (an impenetrable war framework mentioned in the Mahabharat) metaphor as a leitmotif, Gandhi on Monday had claimed in the Lok Sabha that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravayuh' he promised would be broken by the opposition INDIA bloc.

Collector inspects I-Day arrangements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has instructed the officials to make all necessary arrangements for the 78th Independence Day celebrations at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada on August 15. She emphasised the need for all departments to work together to beautify the stadium premises.

In preparation for the Independence Day celebrations, Dr Srijana inspected the arrangements at the stadium and held a meeting with relevant department officials. During the meeting, she discussed various arrangements necessary for the successful celebration.

Dr Srijana enquired about the progress of the arrange-



NTR District Collector Dr Srijana, along with other officials, inspecting the preparations for Independence Day celebrations at the IGMC Stadium in Vijayawada on Friday

ments and urged the officials to accelerate their efforts. In her address to the officials, Dr Srijana mentioned that Governor S Abdul Nazeer and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, along with several ministers, MPs, MLAs, and MLAs, will attend the celebrations.

Furthermore, Dr Srijana stressed the importance of careful and thorough arrangements for the Independence Day celebrations. She stated that over 6,000 students will participate in the event and requested that authorities provide breakfast and drinking water for all attendees.

The Collector asked them to ensure uninterrupted power supply. Additionally, she directed the Information & Public Relations Department to take necessary steps to broadcast the celebrations. Dr. Srijana also called for collective efforts from the Health, Police, R&B, Civil Supplies,

Municipal, Revenue, and other departments to provide necessary facilities at the IGMC Stadium.

She urged the authorities to promptly report any issues that may arise. Dr. Srijana emphasised that all arrangements should be completed in time for rehearsals.

Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra, Vijayawada RDO Bhavani Sankar, DCPs Gowthamishali, ABTS Udaya Rani, K Chakravarthi, ACP K Damodara Rao, I& PR Regional Engineer CV Krishna Reddy, DEO UV Subba Rao, R&B SE VK Vijaya Sri, DRDA PD K Srinivasa Rao, DM&HO Dr M Suhasini, DIPRO U Surendranath, Horticulture Officer P Balaji Kumar, VMC EE V Srinivas, Estate Officer T Srinivas and others attended the meeting.

'Alarming' shortage of nursing staff hits King George Hospital

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

King George Hospital (KGH) is facing an alarming nursing staff shortage, severely compromising its ability to deliver quality medical care. MLAs have recently brought this pressing issue to the Health Minister's attention.

KGH, a pivotal healthcare institution with over 30 departments, caters to up to 2,000 outpatients and 1,600 inpatients daily. This means over 3,500 individuals rely on its medical services each day. However, the hospital is struggling to meet the National Medical Council's staffing norms, which require one nurse for every five beds and one for each ICU bed. By these standards, KGH needs around 1,200 staff nurses to adequately cover both ICU and general beds.

Currently, KGH has only 615 nurses filling the 712 sanctioned posts. With around 100 of these nurses on leave due to health issues and other reasons, just 515 nurses are left to



manage three shifts. This translates to a mere 172 nurses per shift, drastically below the required number. This critical shortage is hampering patient care, as nurses are essential for administering medications and following up on doctors' directives.

KGH also lacks sufficient Male Nursing Orderlies (MNO) and Female Nursing Orderlies (FNO), who perform crucial tasks such as moving patients to wards, taking them for tests, and transferring them

between departments. Of the 231 sanctioned ward boy posts, only 169 are filled, leaving 62 vacancies. Similarly, out of 150 FNO posts, about 20 are frequently on leave.

To prevent further decline in medical services, the hospital urgently needs to fill the vacant posts of both staff nurses and orderlies, and additional positions should be sanctioned. Hospital Superintendent Sivananda confirmed that this dire situation has been reported to the government.

ATM fraudster arrested in Vizag

Sanjay Ghorai stole Rs 6 lakh by tricking the victim into revealing her ATM PIN



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The city police have successfully apprehended the suspect involved in a high-profile ATM fraud case reported at the Old Gajuwaka ATM centre. The accused, Sanjay Ghorai, defrauded a victim of Rs 6 lakh on June 21, by tricking her into revealing her ATM PIN. The crime came to light when the victim, unaware of the fraud, discovered the unauthorised withdrawals from her account. The incident prompted the formation of a special crime team to address the growing issue of ATM-related crimes in the city.

Speaking to the media people on Friday, DCP (Crimes) P

Venkata Ratnam stated that through meticulous investigation, the special crime team tracked the suspect's movements across State lines to West Bengal and Orissa. Sanjay Ghorai, a 37-year-old resident of West Bengal, was apprehended at an HDFC ATM near Jharsuguda railway station in Odisha on July 31. Ghorai, who worked as a railway platform cleaner, admitted to his involvement in the crime, confessing to targeting unsuspecting individuals at ATMs, memorising their PINs, and subsequently stealing money.

Ghorai's criminal activities extend beyond Visakhapatnam, with a histo-

ry of similar offenses in multiple States. During the arrest, the police recovered Rs 1,46,800 out of the stolen amount, providing some relief to the victim.

In light of the arrest, the Visakhapatnam police have issued guidelines to safeguard citizens from ATM fraud. These guidelines emphasise the importance of protecting card details, being cautious of unsolicited assistance, and maintaining vigilance while using ATMs. The police have urged the public to report any suspicious activities immediately. The arrest of Sanjay Ghorai marks a significant step in combating ATM-related crimes in Visakhapatnam.

MP urges Centre to appoint dedicated MSME Director for State

Sribharat meets Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi in New Delhi

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a significant push to bolster the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector in Andhra Pradesh, Visakhapatnam MP M Sribharat has urged the Central government to appoint a dedicated MSME Director for the State.

During a meeting with Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi in New Delhi on Friday, Sribharat emphasised the rapid growth of the MSME sector in Andhra Pradesh and the need for focused attention to harness its full potential. Currently, the MSME operations for both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are overseen by a single Director based in Hyderabad. Sribharat argued that this arrangement is hin-

dering the efficient allocation of resources and attention required for the State's burgeoning MSME landscape.

"A dedicated MSME Director for Andhra Pradesh will enable us to implement tailored strategies and provide the necessary support to propel the State's MSME sector to new heights," Sribharat stated. The MP also highlighted the recently completed MSME building in Gajuwaka, constructed by the Central government. This modern facility is expected to significantly improve the working conditions of MSME staff, who are currently operating out of inadequate premises.

Underscoring the crucial role of the MSME sector in the State's economy, Sribharat called for increased Central government support.



Focus on providing hygienic food to devotees in Tirumala: EO

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD EO Yamala Rao has reiterated that the hotels and fast food centres in Tirumala should provide clean, quality and delicious food to the devotees who come to have darshan of Srivaru from distant places.

Speaking to media persons after the 'Dial Your EO' programme, the EO said to ensure the health safety and security of the pilgrims, the Food Safety Department will train the hotel staff soon on the hygienic habits and cooking measures to be followed in the eateries. All the hotel owners in Tirumala must obtain the Food Safety Department's certificate, which is mandatory to



run the hotel with safety standards, he asserted.

Later, he also briefed the media about the pilgrim details in July. The number of pilgrims who had darshan during the month was 22.13 lakh. Hundi

collection was Rs.125.35 crore and the number of Srivari Laddus sold was 1.04 crore. The number of devotees who had Annarasadam was 24.04 lakh and the number of tonsurings, 8.67 lakh.

Tirumala shrine received Rs 125 cr hundi offerings in July

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Officer Yamala Rao on Friday said the world-famous Sri Venkateswara temple received offerings worth Rs 125 crore in its hundi (offering box) for July.

Rao said over 22 lakh pilgrims visited the temple and 8.6 lakh devotees underwent

ritual tonsuring at the hill temple in July. The temple also sold over one crore laddus (consecrated sweets).

Meanwhile, the executive director called on all the eateries in Tirumala to provide clean and delicious food to devotees who come from distant places.

"To ensure the health safety and security of the pilgrims, the Food Safety Department

will train the hotel staff soon on hygienic habits and cooking measures to be followed in the eateries," said Rao in a release.

Further, he noted that all hotel owners in Tirumala must obtain Food Safety Department certificates, which are mandatory to run hotels with safety standards.

TTD is the official custodian of Sri Venkateswara temple.

Rising sea levels pose threat to Visakhapatnam coast

CSTEP study says the city could see significant parts of its coastline submerged by 2040

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The serene coastal city of Visakhapatnam, known for its picturesque beaches and vibrant port activities, faces an alarming threat from the relentless rise of sea levels driven by global warming. According to the latest study by the Bengaluru-based Centre for Study of Science, Technology, and Policy (CSTEP), this once thriving coastal paradise could see significant parts of its coastline submerged by 2040. The implications are dire, not only for Visakhapatnam but for many coastal cities across India.

Global warming has been a persistent driver of rising sea levels worldwide, causing the grad-

ual submergence of coastal areas. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has sounded the alarm for over three decades, and CSTEP's recent findings bring this warning closer to home. Their study reveals that 1.02 percent (6.96 sq km) of Visakhapatnam's coast is at risk of being underwater within the next two decades. The historical data underscores this trend, with sea levels rising by 2.381 cm between 1992 and 2021, averaging a rise of 0.181 cm per year. The projected increase by 2040 is even more concerning, estimated at 16.7 to 18.3 cm, potentially inundating vital coastal regions.

The comprehensive study, conducted by a team of experts including Dr. J. Anushia, M Sai



Venkataramana, MS Pradeep, and S. Vidya from CSTEP, delved into the vulnerability of India's coastal cities under the threat of 'rising sea levels and topics to coastal areas'. Their analysis identifies Mumbai as the most vulnerable, followed by Haldia and Visakhapatnam. Specifically, the coastal stretch from Visakhapatnam Port to

Mangamaripet is highly susceptible, with estimates indicating that 6.96 sq km of coastal area, encompassing agricultural land, greenery, industrial zones, urban areas, wastelands, and water resources, is at risk of submergence.

The current state of Visakhapatnam's coast already reflects significant erosion and

submersion. Year by year, the sea claims more of the city's land. Historical landmarks like Scandal Point at RK Beach now face the encroaching waters during the monsoon season, highlighting the rapid advance of the sea. Human activities coupled with accelerating global warming have exacerbated this annual rise in sea levels. The IPCC's reports clarify that no region, including Asian countries, is immune to these effects.

Visakhapatnam, after Mumbai, emerges as the second most vulnerable city to the perils of rising sea levels. The potential inundation of Mahadriggeda near the airport would devastate local flora, including trees and mangroves, and render groundwater saline.

Ashok Leyland will reopen plant at Mallavalli: MP Sivanath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ashok Leyland company, which closed its factory due to the policies of the previous YSRC government, is all set to reopen its plant at Mallavalli in Bapulapadu mandal of Krishna district. Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath wrote a letter to Dheeraj G Hinduja, chairman of Ashok Leyland Company on July 29, seeking to reopen the factory which was closed after the Jagan Mohan Reddy-led govt. came to power in 2019.

The MP through his letter explained how CM Chandrababu Naidu, after taking the reins of the State, is making efforts to develop AP industrially. If the plant is restarted, about 5,000 unemployed people will get jobs. Dheeraj G Hinduja, the chairman of the company, responded positively to MP

Kesineni Sivanath. The MP said that Ashok Leyland Company aimed to set up their bus body building unit in the Mallavalli plant. The chairman said that the State government's cooperation is needed to restart their activities in the plant and asked MP Sivanath to cooperate in this matter. He said that the management team of the company will meet Industries Minister TG Bharat. He said that he is interested in renovating the plant in Andhra Pradesh and supporting the progress of Andhra Pradesh.

On the other hand, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel replied to the question asked by Vijayawada MP K Sivanath to provide the details of the training programmes conducted for ASHA workers in the last five years in Andhra Pradesh.

VMC COMMISSIONER TO OFFICIALS Finish River Front Park works in time

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra has instructed officials to finish fencing works at the River Front Park at Kanaka Durga Varadi from Ramalingeswara Nagar to Varadhi, and to ensure that the park is open to the public. He inspected the park and provided instructions to the relevant officials. Commissioner Dhyanchandra mentioned that the VMC aims to fully open the River Front Park to the public to create a pleasant atmosphere in the city. He has given specific instructions to officials and contracting agencies to ensure the park's completion within the specified time.

Additionally, he visited the STP at Ramalingeswara Nagar



VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra inspecting the ongoing works of the River Front Park at Kanaka Durga Varadi in Vijayawada on Friday

to observe the water treatment process and instructed officials to expedite the completion of the plant and improve water treatment.

Many residents highlighted the issue of rain and used

water stagnating at the retaining wall at Krishna Lanka due to the lack of drainage. In response, the Commissioner asked engineering officials to permanently resolve the issue. Dhyanchandra was accom-

panied by VMC Additional Commissioner (Projects) KV Satyavati, Chief Engineer M Prabhakara Rao, EEs Venkateswara Reddy, G Samrajyam, and others during the visit. Following this, the Commissioner inspected the Dandamudi Raja Gopala Rao Municipal Corporation Indoor Stadium adjacent to MG Road. He enquired about the coaching facilities and coaches from the Krishna Dist. Badminton Association and introduced the players.

He expressed hope in the coaches to develop international players who can represent the Indian team in the Olympics. He assured that the VMC will provide all necessary facilities for the sport's development.

148th birth anniversary of Pingali Venkayya observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Division of the South Central Railway celebrated the 148th birth anniversary of Pingali Venkayya on Friday. P E Edwin, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infrastructure), Vijayawada Division, SCR, garlanded the statue of Pingali Venkayya, designer of the Indian national flag, at the Vijayawada railway station.

Edwin stated that today's generation can learn valuable life lessons from Pingali Venkayya's life. "His unwavering patriotism and dedication to India's Independence Movement exemplify the importance of working selflessly for a greater cause. Venkayya's innovation and creativity in designing the nation-



al flag underscore the power of visionary thinking in creating symbols of unity and identity. Despite his significant contributions, he lived a humble and challenging life, teaching us the virtue of humility and resilience in the face of adversity. His diverse career, spanning different roles, highlights the importance of versatility and lifelong learning.

'All facilities for Area Hospital'

PNS ■ RAYACHOTI

Minister for Transport M Ramprasad Reddy has said the Area hospital here would be developed and all needed facilities would be provided to the patients.

The Minister on Friday inspected the Area hospital here in Annamayya district accompanied by the officials. He went to all wards including the operation theatre and saw the medical equipment.

The Minister saw the unhygienic conditions in the hospital vicinity and expressed anger over the hospital superintendent Dr. David Kumar. The Minister also vented his anger for the poor quality of the construction of a 100-bed hospital. The new hospital building was constructed during the YSRCP regime.

"The contractor did not maintain quality. Since bills



The Minister on Friday inspected the Area hospital here in Annamayya district accompanied by the officials. He went to all wards including the operation theatre and saw the medical equipment

were not cleared, the contractor completed the hospital work hastily without maintaining quality standards in the

works. Moreover, even basic amenities were not provided to the patients in the newly constructed area hospital conse-

quently the patients are suffering," Minister Ramprasad Reddy slammed.

Underlining the need to provide all required facilities to the patients, the Minister stated that he would discuss the issue with the Chief Minister and the Health Minister to further develop the area hospital and provide all facilities. The Minister also promised to install air conditioning in the hospital with his own money.

"Rayachoti Area Hospital plays a significant role in providing medical treatment as patients from 15 mandals come to the hospital. He said that many trauma cases of road accidents are also referred to the area hospital. The area hospital will be developed on par with the private hospital in six months," Minister Ramprasad Reddy promised.

Raghuvveera thanks CM Naidu

Promise to resolve pending issues

PNS ■ AANATAPUR

Congress party senior leader and former APCC president N Raghuvveera Reddy thanked Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for his assurance to resolve pending issues of the district.

Talking to the media here on Friday, he said that Chandrababu Naidu addressed a meeting at Madakasira and assured of resolving the issues which had been pending for the last 10 years. "I thank Naidu for his clear assurance to resolve the problems which remained unresolved for the last 10 years.

Raghuvveera Reddy, who was also a former minister, welcomed the attempt of the government to organize a meeting without bringing people forcibly. A public meeting was organized at Madakasira for



which people were not brought forcibly like the previous regime, he highlighted and hailed the attempt. Nowadays there is no need to forcibly bring people to the meetings as they would watch the programmes on TV and social

media, he opined. Raghuvveera Reddy also hailed the Apex Court's verdict on the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes. "Some organizations have struggled for decades to achieve classification of Scheduled Castes.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court resolved the issues. I welcome the Supreme Court judgment. I also congratulate the leaders, including Manda Krishna Madig, who led a movement demanding classification of Scheduled Castes," Raghuvveera Reddy observed.

The former minister demanded that the NDA-led Centre immediately take up a 'caste census' to do justice to all sections of people. The caste census is imperative to provide justice as per the population ratio to the people of various sections. It is the right time to initiate steps to hold caste census, he opined, adding that there are 59 sub-castes in the SC. "Except the BJP, all political parties, including some allies of BJP, are in favour of Caste Census," Raghuvveera Reddy claimed.



246 kg of cannabis seized, 5 peddlers arrested

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

The police seized 246 kg of ganja and arrested five peddlers in two raids at Chidikada and Ravikamatham villages.

SP M Deepika told the media here on Friday that the police, on a tip conducted a raid and seized 150 kg of ganja at Chidikada village, arrested four persons and seized a four-wheeler and an auto rickshaw. They arrested four persons belonging to the ASR district, the SP said, adding that some other peddlers managed to escape in the case.

In the second raid, the police seized 96 kg of ganja at Ravikamatham and seized a bike and arrested one peddler, who belongs to Krishna district. The seized 246 KGs ganja in the two raids that is

worth over Rs 12 lakh in the market, the SP said.

SP Deepika said that vigil has been intensified in the district to curb the ganja transportation and selling. Checking of vehicles on all vulnerable routes was intensified, she said. "It was found that the peddlers are maintaining links with the local youth in transporting the cannabis through the district," she disclosed. She made it clear that there is no godown especially to preserve the seized ganja. The seized ganja is preserved in police stations, she added.

The police sought the approval of the destruction committee to destroy the seized ganja. The SP appreciated the DSP S Appala Raju and other officials for seizing huge quantities of ganja and arresting five peddlers.

'Juvvaladinne fishing harbour in 6 months'

PNS ■ NELLORE

Ministers Anam Ramanarayana Reddy and BC Janardhan Reddy have made it clear the construction of Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour will be completed in six months.

Endowment Minister Ramanarayan Reddy and R&B Minister Janardhan Reddy, accompanied by I & I Secretary Suresh Kumar, Maritime board CEO Pravin Aditya and district Collector O. Anand, inspected the works of Juvvaladinne fishing harbour on Friday. They inquired with the officials and engineers about the progress of the work.

Later talking to the media, Minister Janardhan Reddy said that Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbor works would be completed within six months and dedicated to the fishermen. The foundation stone of Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbor was laid in 2019, but due to the negligence of the previous government, the works of the project, which was supposed to be completed in three years, did not progress, he alleged.

The pending works to be undertaken in the project were discussed with the officials, he said, adding that the Collector explained the proposals for the



establishment of new industries and a decision will be taken soon. The Minister reiterated that the main objective of the government is to complete the Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbor as soon as possible and fulfil the long-standing wish of the fishermen.

Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy emphasised the completion of all the projects for which foundation stones were laid by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in the district. The government is giving priority to the completion of Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour, Ramayapatnam Port and Dagadarthi Airport, he voiced, vowing to work for the all-round development of

Nellore district.

The Endowment Minister observed that Juvvaladinne fishing harbour is a source of livelihood for several thousand people and this too was neglected by the previous government. "There are many vital projects in Nellore district like Ramayapatnam Port, Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour, Dagadarthi Airport, Krishnapatnam Port. Moreover, 3 national highways are connected to this district. If these projects are completed, many investments will come to the Nellore district," he hoped.

He asserted that he would discuss the project issues with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and take steps to expedite the works.

Later the Ministers

reviewed the works of the projects with district Collector Anand and other officials. They directed the officials to submit a report on the pending works. The Minister instructed the officials to take steps to provide fishing boats to the fishermen.

Later the Ministers also inspected the site allocated for the construction of the airport. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu during his previous tenure laid the foundation stone for the airport at Dagadarthi on January 6, 2019. However, the construction works of the airport came to a halt.

Grievances of people will be addressed: Minister Gottipati

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Stating that over 10,000 grievances have been received in 50 days, Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar said that all the grievances of the people would be resolved.

The Minister received petitions from the people on their grievances in the party office at Mangalagiri on Friday. A person Chundururu Babu told the minister that his son Krishna Teha has 90 per cent disability but a pension was not sanctioned to him. He appealed to the minister to sanction a disability pension for his son. The minister assured him to sanction a pension to the differently-abled boy.

Some AgriGold victims told



the Minister that the previous YSRP regime did not do them justice. The AgriGold victims urged Gottipati Ravikumar to do them justice.

Some AP Transco employees

who were terminated from the service appealed to the Minister to reinstate them for which the Minister assured them of speaking to the engineers concerned and do justice.

2 panchayat secretaries suspended on graft charges

PNS ■ PARVATIPURAM-MANYAM

In a swift response to allegations of corruption, District Collector A Shyam Prasad has ordered the suspension of two panchayat secretaries involved in irregularities related to the NTR Bharosa Pension scheme. The action comes after a detailed investigation into reports of illegal activities. Senapati Sunitha, Grade 4 Secretary of Kesali Panchayat in Pachipenta mandal, and Kolaka Vasu, Grade 5 village secretary, have been placed under suspension. The decision was based on substantial evidence pointing to their involvement in the misuse of



public funds.

Collector Shyam Prasad stressed the district administration's commitment to transparency and accountability. "We are determined to rebuild public trust and ensure the integrity of our welfare schemes," he said. The suspension of the officials is a clear message that corruption will not be tolerated. This decisive action underscores the administration's zero-tolerance policy towards irregularities in the distribution of welfare benefits. By taking swift action against the accused, the district aims to set a precedent for ethical governance and efficient public service delivery.

Raj Gopal says no 'kick' in the House due to KCR's absence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Munugode Congress MLA, Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, commented that there is no 'kick' in the Assembly due to the absence of BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

"Maza would have been there in the House if KCR attended. BRS leaders have become motherless children due to the absence of the Leader of the Opposition (LOP). Harish is a senior BRS

leader but they will not give him the LOP post. KCR, who took wrong decisions, would have had to answer if he was in the House. The discussion on power would have gone well if KCR had attended the House," Raj Gopal said.

He said the BRS government had destroyed the state in the last 10 years and looted it as much as possible. BRS MLAs are creating havoc in the Assembly fearing that their misdeeds will get exposed, he

added.

During a chit-chat with journalists in the lobbies on Friday, Raj Gopal said that BRS MLAs made KCR sit in the sky by praising him as 'Jaathi Pitha'. "KCR is still living in an imaginary world. They would not have changed their party if they had to resign their posts. How can they quit the party when the party is in trouble after enjoying power when the party was ruling," he said.

Handloom products from 20 States on display at Silk India Expo

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna Zilla Parishad's former chairperson, Gadde Anuradha, officially launched the six-day 'Silk India Expo 2024', a handloom exhibition organised by Desi Kala Authentic Loom at the Sessa Sai Kalyana Mandapam in Vijayawada on Friday. The expo will be held from August 2 to 7.

Following the expo's inauguration, Gadde Anuradha personally visited many stalls, enquiring about the products and their quality from the weavers. The expo showcases a variety of sarees, ornaments, and other handloom products produced by weavers from 20 different States.

During the event, Gadde Anuradha expressed pride in the country's vast experience and long history of producing



Former ZP Chairperson Gadde Anuradha inaugurating Silk India Expo-2024 at Sri Sessa Sai Kalyana Vedita in Vijayawada on Friday (Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar)

cloth. She commended the dedication and commitment of the weavers involved in the industry.

The expo organiser, Satish Kumar, mentioned that they

have gathered quality products from 50 master weavers across the country, including sarees, scarves, and various other handloom items for the exhibition.

Provide nutritional food to welfare hostel inmates: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Minister for Housing, Information, and Public Relations, KP Saradhi, has asked officials to provide quality nutritional food to the inmates of government welfare hostels, warning that strong action will be taken against those who failed to do so.

Minister Saradhi conducted a surprise inspection at the Social Welfare Girls Hostel in



Nuzvid, during which he assessed the maintenance of toilets, restrooms, and overall hostel premises, including sanitation. He also spoke with the girls and enquired about the amenities provided for them. Some students expressed con-

cerns about drinking water, toilets, sanitation, bedrooms, beds, electricity, and lunch issues. Minister Saradhi emphasised that officials must adhere to the government orders regarding the menu and warned that strict action will be taken against those who fail to comply.

He stressed the immediate provision of essential amenities by the officials, with the remaining facilities to be provided as soon as possible.



Minister flags off RTC bus to Bengaluru

PNS ■ ELURU

The APSRTC has launched two new bus services to Bengaluru from Nuzvid. Minister for Housing K Parthasarathy flagged off the service in Nuzvid.

The Nuzvid depot has started two bus services to Bengaluru. The Minister flagged off the first service on the night of Friday in Nuzvid bus station, RTC officials said.

Speaking on the occasion, Parthasarathy said that people want RTC bus services from Nuzvid to Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam and he would discuss the issue with the RTC officials. He underlined the need of APSRTC to run buses on par with the private bus

operators. He assured of taking steps to provide more facilities to the passengers in Nuzvid bus station.

For the marketing facility of mangoes, maize and horticultural crops in the Nuzvid area, steps would be taken to provide transportation facilities to distant areas where marketing facilities are available, he made it clear. Talking about the problems of RTC workers, the Minister said that he would talk to the management to resolve their issues.

Commenting on the free bus facility to the women, Parthasarathy said that the free bus travel scheme would be implemented soon as the modalities for implementing the scheme are being formulated.

Cops rescue man from sea



PNS ■ BAPATLA

The timely and swift action of police personnel saved the life of a young person at Suryalanka Beach on Friday.

Achyut Mahesh went to the Suryalanka beach along with his friends. He entered the sea for a bath. A giant wave swept him into the sea. He started drowning in the sea which was noticed by outpost police personnel.

They, with the help of expert swimmers, went to his rescue. They rescued the 32-year-old person and brought to the shore safely.

SP Tushar Doody told the media that required steps were taken to protect the lives of tourists at the Suryalanka beach.

The civil police, marine police and expert swimmers are monitoring the movements of tourists, the SP said, adding that a red flag was hoisted in the sea to indicate the depth to the tourists. The tourists are warned through the public addressing system not to venture into the sea without precautions. The SP appreciated the police personnel and the expert swimmers for saving the life of a tourist.

ASTRAM app to be used to reduce road accidents



NTR District Collector Dr Srijana and Police Commissioner Rajasekhar Babu attending the District Road Safety Committee meeting at the collector's camp office in Vijayawada on Friday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A meeting of the NTR District Road Safety Committee (DRSC), chaired by Dr. G. Srijana, the District Collector, was held at the collector's camp office in Vijayawada on Friday. The meeting was focused on discussing the 'Accessible Intelligence for Sustainable Management' (ASTRAM) app

as it is expected to be the most effective traffic system and produce positive outcomes.

The ASTRAM system is being implemented in Bengaluru and it has been giving good results in preventing road accidents. So, the NTR district administration is more interested in adapting the ASTRAM app to bring down road accidents in the district.

ACROSS THE STATES



Doctors, nurse assaulted at Thane hospital; two booked

At least four doctors and a nurse were assaulted by two female relatives of a patient at the civic-run Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital in Thane, police on Friday. The women attacked the hospital employees on Thursday afternoon accusing them of not taking care of the male patient, an official said. According to the complaint filed by a doctor from the hospital in the city's Kalwa area, two female relatives visited a patient in the male ward. They alleged that he had not been fed for three days and questioned why he had not been shifted to the ICU. The women, aged 36 and 40, beat up a male doctor when he tried to explain the situation and the treatment. They then turned to three more female doctors and a nurse who rushed to save the male doctor. The women have been booked for assault under the Bharatiya Nayaya Sanhita, and the Maharashtra Medicare Service Persons and Medicare Service Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act, said the station house officer of Kalwa police station.



Small bridge on state highway collapses in Gondia

A small bridge built on a state highway in Arjuni Morgaon taluka of Gondia district in Maharashtra has caved in, following which traffic on the route has been diverted, officials said. The bridge on the Navegaon-Kohalgaon-Keshori Road caved in late Thursday night, in which nobody was injured, they said. A passerby informed the authorities about it, following which a team of officials visited the spot and the traffic was diverted via Khairi-Sukdi village, an official said. The exact cause behind the incident was not known yet. The bridge was around five decades old and it had become weak as it was constructed as per the old method, he said. The region witnessed heavy rains in the last fortnight. "There is a small nullah on the side of this bridge. It caved in probably as a result of heavy rains and movement of vehicles might have weakened it further," Sub Divisional Officer Varunkumar Shahare said.



Govt forwards panel's report on staggered vacation for judges

The government has forwarded recommendations of a parliamentary committee on staggered vacation for judges to the secretary general of the Supreme Court and registrars general of 25 high court for "appropriate consideration". In a written reply in Lok Sabha on Friday, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said the standing committee on law and personnel had referred to the suggestion of former chief justice of India R M Lodha that instead of all judges going on vacations, all at one time, individual judges should take their leave at different times of the year so that the courts are constantly open and they are always present to hear cases. The committee was of the opinion that Justice Lodha's suggestion on court vacations should be considered by the Judiciary. "Accordingly, the recommendation of the Rajya Sabha DRPSC (department-related standing committee) in respect of the aforementioned subject was forwarded by the government to the Secretary General, Supreme Court and all Registrars General of the respective High Court for appropriate consideration," Meghwal told the House.

WAYANAD TRAGEDY

GPS coordinates, aerial drone pictures used to locate survivors

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Rescue teams used GPS coordinates from aerial drone pictures and cell phones, including the last location of people who lived in the landslides-hit areas of Wayanad on Friday to help locate survivors trapped under the debris, amidst accelerated search operations after the completion of the 190-foot-long Bailey bridge by the Army.

A family of four was rescued from an isolated house in an area near Padavetti Kunnu on the fourth day of the deadly landslides, giving hope to hundreds of rescuers, racing against time to search for survivors. With nearly 300 persons still missing, the death toll is expected to go up.

As many as 201 people have died and 264 were injured in the massive landslides that hit Wayanad district in the wee hours of July 30. Additionally, 130 body parts were also recovered, according to the Kerala Health Department.

The search and rescue operations that resumed early morning received an impetus as the Bailey bridge helped the rescue teams to move the heavy machinery, including excavators, and ambulances to the worst-affected Mundakkai and Chooralmala hamlets.

According to official sources, the extent of human loss will emerge when rescuers clear houses covered by debris and wooden logs using heavy machinery.

Authorities reported that many more body parts had been collected and genetic testing was underway to identify the remains. Earlier in the day, Kerala ADGP M R Ajith Kumar said 300 people were still missing.

Around 40 rescue teams



along with cadaver dogs are conducting search operations in six zones of the landslides-hit areas -- Attamala and Aarammala (first), Mundakkai (second), PUNCHIRIMATTAM (third), Vellarimala village (fourth), GVHSS Vellarimala (fifth), and riverbank (sixth), officials said. The joint teams include personnel from the Army, NDRF, DSG, Coast Guard and Navy. In addition to this, a three-pronged search operation has also been launched, focusing on the Chaliyar river. The eight police stations, along the 40-km stretch of the river, have joined forces with local swimming experts to search for bodies that

According to official sources, the extent of human loss will emerge when rescuers clear houses covered by debris and wooden logs using heavy machinery

may have flown downstream or trapped along the riverbanks.

Simultaneously, another search operation is being conducted using a police helicopter.

Besides this, the Coast Guard, Navy, and Forest Department also jointly conducted a search operation focusing on the riverbanks and areas where bodies may be trapped.

District Collector Meghashree D R said GPS coordinates from aerial drone pictures and cell phones, including the last location of people who lived in the landslide-hit areas, have been used to identify spots where search and rescue operations can be focused. She also said aerial pho-

Wayanad landslides a terrible tragedy, will request Delhi to treat it differently: Rahul

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday described the landslides in Wayanad district of Kerala as a "terrible tragedy" of such magnitude that the state has not seen till now in a single area, and said that it should be treated differently. The Congress MP said he is going to raise the matter in Delhi and also with Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as "this is a different level of tragedy and should be treated differently". Right now the focus is on finding the bodies and potential survivors, making sure the displaced persons are comfortable in the camps, and rehabilitating them, he said. The Congress MP said that rehabilitation is going to be very important, as a lot of the survivors told him they did not want to go back to the landslide-hit areas. "So, I think it is important that they are rehabilitated in a safe area and are not forced to go back. These are the things that

tographs taken by drones have helped identify GPS coordinates of specific search locations.

"We mapped this data and gave it to all the teams so that the search and rescue operations can proceed efficiently and speedily," she said.

State Revenue Minister K Rajan, a day ago, had said a drone-based radar from Delhi would arrive on Saturday to locate bodies buried in the mud.



Centre wants to put CM Siddaramaiah behind bars: Minister

PNS ■ MANGALURU (KARNATAKA)

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Friday alleged that the Centre wants to put Chief Minister Siddaramaiah behind bars and is therefore "digging out small things" against the opposition but protecting its own people who indulge in "big crimes". "They (BJP leaders) are misusing the governor, Income Tax (dept), Directorate of Enforcement only to topple the government. You know what they tried to do in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Delhi, West Bengal and Kerala," Rao told reporters in Dakshina Kannada district.

He was reacting to Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot's show cause notice issued to Siddaramaiah on the MUDA site allotment 'scam' in which the CM's wife Parvathi is allegedly a beneficiary.

Rao said that on a visit to any state ruled by a non-BJP government, one can see how the Centre misuses government machinery across India to topple and destabilise state governments and create confusion within the government there, by making false accusations, putting pressure on opposition leaders and getting them into trouble.

"There is an undeclared emergency in the country," Rao said, pointing out that the BJP-led Centre had jailed Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K

He was reacting to Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot's show cause notice issued to Siddaramaiah on the MUDA site allotment 'scam' in which the CM's wife Parvathi is allegedly a beneficiary

Shivakumar and former union minister P Chidambaram.

"These Central agencies do not touch the BJP leaders. Instead they (BJP leaders) are protected.

If others make a small mistake, the BJP goes after them. In Siddaramaiah's case, they want him to be jailed," he charged.

He highlighted that the governor served the show cause notice to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah within hours of getting a complaint from advocate-activist T J Abraham.

Railways experimented with baby berths for ease of travel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways provided two baby berths in Lucknow Mail on trial basis to facilitate ease of travel for mothers travelling with babies, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav informed the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

Vaishnav was responding to questions raised by BJP MP Sumer Singh Solanki, who wanted to know if the government is considering installing baby berth seats in train coaches.

"To facilitate ease of travel for mothers travelling with their babies, two baby berths were provided as attachment to two lower berths in one coach of Train No. 12229/30 Lucknow Mail on trial basis," the minister said in a written reply.

"Initial passenger feedback appreciated the effort. However, inter-alia issues of restricted luggage space below the seat and reduced knee space between the seats causing inconvenience to passengers have been observed," he added.



According to Vaishnav, modification and upgradation in passenger coaches is a continuous process for the railways

Karnataka deputy CM Shivakumar kickstarts Cong agitation against BJP

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The ruling Congress in Karnataka on Friday staged a demonstration in Bidadi in Ramanagara district against the alleged injustice done to the state by the Centre including tax divulsion and attempts to destabilise the government.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also the Congress state president, kickstarted the six-day agitation starting from Friday. He rode a pillion as the party leaders took out a motorcycle rally in the town adjacent to Bengaluru.

The agitation, which the Congress state unit has called 'Janandolana' (people's movement) is also against corruption during the BJP and JD(S) rule in Karnataka.



Shivakumar had directed all the senior leaders, ministers, MPs, MLAs, Legislative Council members, former ministers, former MLAs, Lok Sabha and Assembly, KPCC office-bearers and the district and block Congress Committee presidents and representatives of local bodies to take part in the agitation with-

out fail.

Posters and banners dotted the areas where the agitation took place in Bidadi. The protest will also be held in Ramanagara, Channarayana, Maddur, Mandya and Mysuru.

The demonstrations will take place at the locations from where the proposed BJP and the JD(S) march against the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam will pass through from August 3 to August 10.

The Congress protests also comes against the backdrop of a show-cause notice issued by the Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot against the MUDA site allotment scam in which Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi is allegedly a beneficiary.

Two die, 28 others fall ill due to 'diarrhoea outbreak' in Odisha's Ganjam

PNS ■ BERHAMPUR (ODISHA)

At least two persons died and 28 others fell sick due to a suspected diarrhoea outbreak in the last few days in Odisha's Ganjam district, officials said on Friday.

A medical team from Berhampur was sent to Adapada village in Sanakhemundi block of the district on Thursday to provide treatment to the affected peo-

ple, they said.

Of the 28 people who were taken ill, 20 were undergoing treatment at the Adapada community health centre and one of them was referred to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here as his condition was critical, said Sarojini Devi, additional district medical officer (ADMO), Ganjam.

Others were under medical observation at their residences. The deceased were identi-

fied as Kenchu Nayak and Kanchan Nayak, both above 70 years of age, another official said.

The two elderly persons, who died in the village due to suspected diarrhoeal infection, were also afflicted with some other diseases, he said.

Consumption of water from wells was suspected to be the cause of the outbreak while the area witnessed rain in the last week.



COACHING CENTRE DEATHS Students' protest enters sixth day, many seen studying at site

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Civil services aspirants protesting the Rajinder Nagar coaching centre deaths continued their agitation for the sixth day on Friday, with many seen studying at the protest site.

"We will continue our protest but studies are also important for us. So those sitting at the protest site have brought their study material here," Goutam, a civil services aspirant, said.

Goutam is also a part of the 15-member committee that was formed on Wednesday by the protesting students to decide the protest's future course of action and communicate with the authorities

concerned.

Another student said as the protest will continue till all the demands are met, other students are helping by providing daily newspapers and study material.

"Senior students are clearing doubts of the juniors at the protest site. Those who are a part of the committee are also studying when they are getting time to prepare for examinations," Harish, who is also a civil services aspirant, said.

Three students, identified as Shreya Yadav, Tanya Soni and Nevin Dalvin, died after rain water gushed inside the basement of Rajinder Nagar coaching centre on July 27 evening.

Centre spent Rs 36,397 cr on procurement of COVID vaccines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government of India has incurred an expenditure of Rs 36,397.65 crore till date towards the procurement of Covid vaccines for free supply to states and Union Territories under the National Covid Vaccination Programme, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav told the Lok Sabha on Friday.

As on July 29, 2024, a total of 220.68 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered across the country, Jadhav said in a written reply.

The allocation of vaccines to states and UTs was done on the basis of pro rata target population, the progress of vaccination there and vaccine wastage, Jadhav said.

Distribution of Covid vaccines within the states is managed by the state administration as per the need of the programme, he said. India has sent a total of 3012.465 lakh doses of Covid-19 Vaccines to 99 countries and two UN organisations under the 'Vaccine Maitri' Programme, Jadhav said.

VAISHNAV ON PIB'S FACT CHECK UNIT

'Only Centre can validate facts related to it'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is best suited to determine whether a particular fact related to it is correct or wrong, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said on Friday while making the government's stand clear on the PIB's Fact Check Unit.

He was replying to a supplementary query during the Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha related to the Supreme Court's stay on the Centre's notification on setting up a fact-checking unit.

"The amendment in the IT Intermediary Rules which has been stayed by the Supreme Court, that is still under contest but the fundamental principle is, our point is, anything related to the government of India, only the government can say whether it is a correct fact or a wrong fact. That is our stand," Vaishnav, the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, said.

The Supreme Court in March this year stayed the Centre's notification on setting up a fact-checking unit under the Press Information Bureau (PIB)



The Fact Check Unit was notified on March 20 under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, by the Ministry of Electronics and IT

to identify fake news about the Union government.

The Fact Check Unit was notified on March 20 under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, by the Ministry of Electronics and IT.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud set aside the March 11 order of the Bombay High Court which had refused to grant interim stay on setting up the FCU under the amended IT Rules to identify fake and false content on social media about the Union government.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

SC removes creamy layer

The Supreme Court's decision to approve sub-categorisation of SC/STs for reservations will pave the way for greater inclusivity

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court has declared that sub-classification within Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is permissible. Justice Pankaj Mithal emphasised that reservations should benefit only the first generation within a category and called for periodic reviews to ensure subsequent generations have reached parity with the general category. This ruling overruled the EV Chinniah case, where the Court had previously held that all castes formed a single homogeneous group that could not be subdivided. This decision has significant implications for the socio-economic upliftment and political representation of these historically marginalised communities. The judgment addresses the issue of the creamy layer within a caste. It is argued that the caste quotas are often usurped by the creamy layer within a caste as some people within a caste are uplifted and have education, means and resources to prevail upon the rest of their ilk. India's Constitution, through Articles 341 and 342, recognises certain communities as marginalised. The government is permitted to make special provisions for the upliftment of these communities which have been historically deprived. These measures include reservations in educational institutions, government jobs, and legislative bodies. Over the years, concerns have been raised regarding the unequal distribution of these benefits. Some sub-castes or sub-tribes within the broader SC/ST categories have been perceived as cornering a disproportionate share of the benefits, leaving others behind. This has led to calls for sub-classification.



The petitioners had argued that such sub-classification would undermine the unity of these communities and contradict the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution. However, the Supreme Court, in its judgment, emphasised that the primary objective of reservation policies is to ensure social and economic justice. By sub-classifying a caste, the government can design more nuanced policies that ensure benefits are equitably distributed among all sub-groups within the SC/ST categories. The decision can also lead to better political representation for sub-groups within SCs and STs. It opens the door for more inclusive policies that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of these communities. However, the Supreme Court's decision may need additional provisions to address several gaps. The concept of the "creamy layer" or privileged group, particularly regarding the second generation, is not clearly defined and is open to interpretation. This lack of clear definition of "creamy layer" makes it subjective and may lead to varying interpretations which may again be challenged in the court. The Supreme Court has left it to the states to define the "creamy layer" for exclusion. It remains to be seen how this decision will be implemented and interpreted by different governments. While the Court has set the stage for a more inclusive and equitable distribution of affirmative action benefits to SC/ST, it may take time to reach the execution stage.

PICTALK



Devotees stand in queue to offer prayers on the occasion of Shivratri, in New Delhi

Kamala emerges as front runner for US Presidency



KALYANI SHANKAR

As the first woman Vice President, Harris is now poised to break another glass ceiling by becoming the first female President of the United States

The US Vice President Kamala Harris ended the week by declaring, "I am Kamala Harris and I am running for President." This historic moment, ending the suspense after President Biden withdrew from the Presidential contest and endorsed her as the candidate, marks a new chapter in American politics. It is now official.

Many influential Democrats, including former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, fund giver George Clooney, have thrown their weight behind her candidacy. She now has the Party firmly behind her in her fight, instilling confidence in her potential to lead. It's worth noting that in its 248-year history, the US has never elected a female President. Even Hillary Clinton, who ran for President in 2008 and 2016, was unsuccessful. Kamala made history four years ago when she became the first woman Vice President.

Will she make history again by running for President? Can she win? She has to do two things. First, she needs to get the Democratic Party's nomination, and then she needs to win. Time is short, with only four months left before the election on November 5. Indian-origin Kamala Harris has several strengths and a few weaknesses. Her current position as Vice President and her qualifications to assume the role of President in an emergency are her essential advantages. Four years ago, Kamala hoped Biden would finish one term and say goodbye to the White House. However, Biden stuck to his decision and insisted on running for a second term. But he surprised everyone by recently withdrawing and endorsing his Vice President.

One significant advantage was that she could break the glass ceiling by becoming the first woman president. She must work hard to appeal to Black, Asian, and female voters and gain support from other minority groups and undecided and



younger voters. This could help her chances against Trump in swing states.

Secondly, another significant factor in Kamala Harris's favour is her strong connection to Biden's legacy, which is not entirely negative. This association could play a pivotal role in her candidacy. She could bring together moderate and conservative members of her Party and act as a unifying force. To defeat Trump, her Party must unite and support her.

Thirdly, Obama was the first Black President, and John F. Kennedy was the first Catholic President. They could be her role models, inspiring hope in the hearts of many. Fourthly, and importantly, Kamala is 59 years old, which works in her favour compared to Trump, who is 78. Her age is not a drawback, but a substantial age difference could bring about change.

She can attract undecided voters by highlighting her achievements to gain their support. Fifthly, she can have Biden's war chest of about \$100 million. She has raised \$200 million in the first week of her candidacy and signed up 17000 volunteers.



THE RACE FOR PRESIDENT BETWEEN KAMALA HARRIS AND DONALD TRUMP IS CURRENTLY TIED, ACCORDING TO A RECENT POLL BY THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. THIS TIE IS SIGNIFICANT. THE POLL SHOWS INCREASED SUPPORT FOR HARRIS AMONG NON-WHITE VOTERS

Still, she must instil confidence in other fundraisers for the enormous poll expenditure. Kamala Harris has strong ties to Silicon Valley since the beginning of her political career.

She is tapping into this support for her battle against Donald Trump. Above all, she must choose the right candidate for her running mate. The right combination should enhance the chances against the Trump-Vance team. Kamala also pledged to do "everything in my power to unite the Democratic Party and our nation, to defeat Donald Trump and his extreme Project 2025 agenda." Harris's mission is urgent and crucial. She must gain the support of those who are uncertain or critical to achieve her goal.

The race for President between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is currently tied, according to a recent poll by the Wall Street Journal. This tie is significant. The poll shows increased support for Harris among non-white voters and a substantial rise in enthusiasm for the campaign among Democrats. Harris faces challenges such as her past

unsuccessful bid for the 2020 nomination, her approval ratings, and the need to secure significant funding for her campaign.

According to a recent NBC News poll, Trump was ahead of Biden by 45% to 43%, and Trump also led Harris by the same two-point margin of 47% to 45%. But slowly, this is changing. The time is short, as the campaign has just 100 days left. Before the November election, the vice president's team should strategise how to defeat Trump. Trump's team may criticise Harris as inexperienced and risky. She should be ready to face racism from the Trump campaign and run as a Democratic nominee who is a Black and South Asian American woman. This election is a critical decision that will shape America's future. Biden's exit has energised the Democratic. It is up to Kamala to seize the moment to surge forward. Can she step in and be the natural leader in America? Her capacity to lead the next few weeks will show whether she can.

(The writer is a popular columnist, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WAYANAD TRAGEDY: FIXING THE BLAME

Madam — Apropos to "CM refutes Shah's alert claim on Wayanad tragedy" published on 1st August, here is my response. One can do very little when mountain ranges receive unexpected & torrential rain like this, as the forecast was for 64-204 mm rain but Wayanad received 372 mm rain on that fateful night. But such events turning into human tragedies can certainly be minimised and prevented.

What is really tragic is the fact that a warning given by the state disaster management authority four years ago was not heeded where 4000 families were asked to leave landslide prone areas including Mundakkai. As recently as on 23rd July Centre also warned Kerala about excessive rainfall or landslides but nothing was taken seriously. In recent past severe deluge leading to flooding caused serious damage in almost each district of the state and Kerala saw statewide floods in 2018 and 2019 but nothing seems to have been done on disaster prevention in hilly areas. Nature has warned us time and again to keep our house in order and maintain an ecological balance, but sadly we are hell bent on playing havoc with nature.

Bal Govind | Noida

HALWA POLITICS

Madam — This refers to the editorial, 'Halwa politics' (1-8-24). Parliament is a place where meaningful discussions and debates take place to decide the livelihood and the course of the country. Those who are privileged to be a member of the house are supposed to be committed to the national priorities and display their utmost respect to the house, decency and focused attention on the development of the country rather than focusing on personal agenda.

The ruling dispensation is supposed to give due respect to all the members and all the parties in the house as they are also elected representatives of the people. The leader of the opposition talks

World breast feeding week



celebrate the diverse experiences of breastfeeding mothers throughout their journeys while highlighting the crucial role families, societies, communities, and health workers play in supporting them. Despite the natural act of breastfeeding, mothers often face societal stigma, particularly when nursing in public.

This stigma affects not only men but also women who may stare or pass judgment when mothers nurse in public, discouraging them from feeding their babies when needed. This cultural barrier needs to be dismantled to empower mothers to breastfeed confidently and freely, without the necessity of designated feeding rooms. Breastfeeding is a source of pride and a vital aspect of maternal and child health. Ensuring mothers can breastfeed without shame or hindrance in any setting is essential for promoting the well-being of infants and supporting maternal health.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | Chennai

PRIORITISE ROAD SAFETY

Madam — Because it saves lives, road safety is vital. In 2022, there were 4.23 lakh injuries and 1.71 lakh fatalities from traffic accidents in India. Road accidents can be avoided by taking real safety precautions, such as proper road design, speed restriction, and sufficient visibility. How can we increase road safety becoming a subject for concern. Enforcing current standards—for example, local authorities needing qualified personnel and appropriate equipment—is one method to improve road security. Transport operators who don't adhere to safety regulations should face harsh fines. Proper data collection is another strategy to increase road safety. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways should better gather and disseminate information on vehicle registrations, safety certificates, and accident reports.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The rise and impact of political memes in the digital age

The recent surge of memes following President Biden's withdrawal from the race underscores their increasing use for expressing public sentiments

In her book "Memes in Digital Culture," Communications Professor Limor Shifman highlights the significance of political memes, noting that they play a crucial role in shaping discussions about societal norms and the future. The recent surge in memes following U.S. President Joe Biden's decision not to run for the upcoming presidential elections illustrates the increasing use of this medium for expressing public sentiments, including likes, dislikes, and frustrations. The concept of memes dates back to the late 20th century, introduced by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book "The Selfish Gene." Dawkins described memes as cultural units that spread and evolve similarly to genes. The formal introduction of "Internet Memes" occurred in 1994, thanks to Mike Godwin. These early memes, like the "Nazi comparison memes," circulated rapidly online and laid the foundation for the meme culture we know today. The creation and spread of internet memes began in



the 1990s and early 2000s on forums and imageboards like 4chan and Reddit. These platforms were among the first to host meme-like content, such as humorous images with captions and inside jokes. As the internet and social media expanded, so did the reach and diversity of memes, evolving to include various formats like GIFs, videos, and TikToks. Meme-making has become a popular form of self-expression, communication, and connection online. Some even view it as an art form, with certain memes becoming part of mainstream culture.

As the U.S. presidential elections approach, the relevance of political memes becomes increasingly significant. The digital age has revolutionized political communication, shifting it from traditional media to the dynamic realm of social media. This transformation, fueled by internet accessibility and information democratization, has empowered individuals to engage in political dialogue more freely. It is crucial to understand both the profound implications and challenges of this new landscape. Humor, especially through memes, has emerged as a potent tool in this era. Memes distill complex ideas into easily shareable and often humorous content, making them a staple of online political communication. They serve as entertainment and vehicles for critique and satire, simplifying intricate issues and making them more accessible to a broader audience. For example, AI-generated images of Donald Trump at a concert or wordplays like "Joeever" and "Kamencing" illustrate how humor is used to navigate serious political situations. The impact of this shift on political campaigns is profound. Today's political actors understand the power of social media in

shaping narratives. The rapid spread and viral potential of online content make social media a crucial battleground for political communication. In this arena, the perceptual environment created by social media often outweighs the significance of the political events themselves. A viral meme about U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris involving a coconut, once used derogatorily, now helps promote her case. Her remark during a widely watched speech, "You exist in the context of all in which you live and what came before you," encapsulates the essence of present-day social media and meme culture. Elections have always been fertile ground for PR stunts, and meme sharing. While there is little evidence to suggest that memes directly impact electoral behavior, they undeniably contribute to digital discourse. Depending on their virality, memes can become part of everyday conversations and even enter mainstream media.

(The author is a poetess, journalist and a writer; views are personal)



ARPITA CHOWDHURY



FIRST COLUMN FINDING TRUE SHELTER

The divine presence of God offers the ultimate refuge and gives true solace



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I would like to draw attention to where our thoughts normally go to, what we consider is our shelter and what it should ideally be. Where do our minds routinely take us to? The body has to be the first, because of the mind-body connection. We all know that our minds affect our bodies, and our bodies do likewise. For example, there is a fever. The mind will naturally go to it and think about dealing with it. Similarly, if one is feeling depressed, bodily changes will take place like becoming fearful. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 2.1) The next target is sense enjoyment; our senses are forever seeking their sense of objects. Mind is their leader. (15.7) Our so-called intelligence is no friend; it will justify whatever the uncontrolled mind cooks up.

Emotions are not far behind. All of us have some pronounced weakness, be it lust, greed, anger, hate, etc. If not controlled our actions will be controlled by them. And there will be consequences. The ego cannot be left behind for long. I am superior and I will prove it, though no one is big or ever can be; only God is big. The rest of us can excel in something but remain small eternally. One can become very rich, powerful, famous, etc. but will be helpless in other matters. The connected topic is what we consider our shelter to be. Is a home our shelter? In physical terms it is. A famous golfer was asked by a reporter after a famous win achieved after a great deal of physical exertion, "What will you like to do now the most?" He replied, "I will like to sleep long in my own bed in my home." Some world leaders carry their own beds with them when they travel. Their shelter is their beds. But are beds, homes, etc. our real shelters? The wife of a world leader replied, "I get very depressed sometimes." Shelter is mainly a mental issue.

Shelter of a home does not prevent mental illness. Many genuine 'sannyasis' (saintly persons) don't have a fixed home; they keep on travelling. Yes, this is not for the majority, but the idea is proper shelter. God is the real shelter. A small soul needs a very strong shelter, a very big shelter, which only God can be. Loneliness is becoming a major issue worldwide, especially in Western countries. In the USA, twenty-nine per



cent of households have single occupancy. Upwards of 40% of marriages end in divorce. And 25% plus people have some kind of mental problem. Why is it so? Because the real shelter is being ignored. We are seeking shelter in material objects like money, power, fame, etc. When we take shelter from God, He teaches us the quality of love. We begin to accept people as they are because all of us have faults; only God is perfect. Seeking perfection in a human being is a lost cause. And we can easily get God's company, as I have done. Just hang a large photo of God near your bed, and look at Him. Then, many changes will begin to happen. God is attractive beyond imagination. Unfortunately, we don't exercise this option. Did you know that God's name Krishna means one who attracts? Soon there will be attachment, because 'atmabala' (inner strength) will flow into you. This strength is the mother of all strengths, i.e. intellectual, mental, physical and even to tolerate.

As this is a spiritual practice, one will make spiritual progress. Slowly, we will begin to consider God as our own, which He is; God is waiting for us. If this practice is so great, what 'naman' (namaskar) can do? Lord Krishna has asked us to do just that in verse #18.65, "Offer obeisance to Me." Our worst enemy in taking shelter from God - the ego will get gradually controlled. We will develop the quality of humility, which will also help in our dealings with others. God will bless us as we remain in His company. We can also pray to Him anytime because in a way God considers it appropriate. Grant of our specific prayers is a tough ask but over a period of time, we will get there. So where should we direct our attention? Whose shelter should we seek?

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

Venezuela elections: Plagued by disorder and discontent



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Following Nicolás Maduro's victory over right-wing candidate Edmundo González, there is confusion and chaos in the country fanned by Western media

In Venezuela, last Sunday was more than just a day of elections; it was the 70th birth anniversary of Hugo Chávez, the transformative leader who revolutionised Venezuela's social fabric. Chávez, who died prematurely from pelvic cancer at the age of 58, left an enduring legacy that continues to shape the nation's history. Unsurprisingly, the Western media is once again engaging in its usual tactic of misleading the public regarding Venezuelan elections to serve its interests. When a leader elected through a free and fair process but who rejects the Western model is demonised as undemocratic, while a leader who aligns with Western ideals is hailed as democratic despite questionable means of coming to power, it reveals a clear bias.

This pattern was evident in the aftermath of Venezuela's recent elections, where protests, statue removals, and airport blockades dominated the news because the outcome did not align with Western expectations. Following Nicolás Maduro's victory over the right-wing candidate Edmundo González, the opposition—who had promised to accept the results only if they won—immediately denounced the election as fraudulent without presenting credible evidence. Their claims centre around alleged discrepancies between paper ballots and electronic results, which they use to suggest tampering. Venezuela's voting system aims to prevent fraud with electronic voting, ID and fingerprint verification, and paper receipts for cross-checking. Election observers from 95 countries reported a calm process, while opposition claims of having three-quarters of the paper ballots remain unsubstantiated.

Media reports, including an Edison Research exit poll showing González leading by over 30%, are questioned due to their ties to U.S. state media and the fact that exit polling is illegal in Venezuela. The opposition and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken quickly declared the election illegitimate, reflecting a pattern of U.S. interference, such as the 2019 recognition of Juan Guaidó over Maduro and past support for coups against Venezuelan leaders. The U.S. has consistently sought to control Venezuela's vast oil reserves, the largest in the world. Chávez's 1990 election disrupted the elite and foreign corporations' exploitation of these resources, redirecting oil revenue to the Venezuelan people. U.S.-backed coups in 2002 and 2019 aimed to reclaim control over Venezuela's oil. John Bolton, Trump's national security advisor, openly expressed desires for U.S. companies to dominate Venezuela's energy sector, revealing economic motives behind political actions. Chávez's anti-imperialist stance and Maduro's continuation of these policies challenged U.S. dominance in Latin America.

Venezuela's support for global South nations and opposition to U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq inspired regional progressive movements. The U.S., under the guise of humanitarian concern, enforces sanctions causing severe poverty and scarcity in Venezuela, driving migration and economic collapse. These sanctions have decimated Venezuela's oil sector and government income, exacerbating the very crises the U.S. claims to address.

The U.S. strategy of manufactured poverty and social crises is a well-worn tactic to justify regime change. The United States' obsession with overthrowing Venezuela's



government stems from multiple factors, with oil being a significant one. Venezuela holds the largest oil reserves in the world, and many U.S. companies have long desired access to these resources. Despite the U.S. being a major oil producer, the nationalisation of Venezuelan oil under Hugo Chávez and the subsequent exclusion of U.S. oil corporations have driven American interests in destabilising the Venezuelan government. This nationalisation was seen as a direct challenge to U.S. economic interests and a disruption of the global oil market that the U.S. seeks to dominate. Beyond oil, Venezuela's push for a multipolar world presents a direct challenge to U.S. hegemony.



OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, WASHINGTON HAS SPONSORED SEVERAL COUP ATTEMPTS, OFTEN VIOLENT, TO OVERTHROW VENEZUELA'S GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING TARGETING FORMER REVOLUTIONARY PRESIDENT HUGO CHÁVEZ AND HIS SUCCESSOR, NICOLÁS MADURO

Since the Bolivarian revolution led by Hugo Chávez, Venezuela has sought to forge alliances with countries such as China, Russia, and Iran. Additionally, Venezuela has been instrumental in the creation of regional organisations like CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) and ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America). These efforts are aimed at reducing dependency on the U.S. economy. This ideological shift threatens the traditional power structures maintained by U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere. In response to these obstacles, the U.S. has imposed severe sanctions and blockades on Venezuela, much like its long-standing policies against Cuba.

These measures are designed to suffocate Venezuela's economy, incite political unrest, and ultimately force a change in government. The deepening of Venezuela's relationships with major powers such as China and Russia further threatens U.S. geopolitical interests. These partnerships offer Venezuela economic and military support, making it increasingly resilient against U.S. attempts at destabilisation. The U.S. perceives these multipolar alliances as a direct affront to its global dominance and has consequently intensified its efforts to undermine the Venezuelan government. It is in this context that the U.S. government is backing yet another coup attempt in

Venezuela, after their "disappointing elections" result.

Over the past two decades, Washington has sponsored several coup attempts, often violent, to overthrow Venezuela's government, including targeting former revolutionary president Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro. In 2002, the U.S. backed a military coup that briefly overthrew Chávez, Venezuela's democratically elected president. Despite mainstream acknowledgement from sources like The Guardian that the Bush administration supported this coup, it lasted only two days as the Venezuelan people reinstated Chávez, who continued his Bolivarian revolution.

Following the presidential elections on 28 July, where Maduro was re-elected, the U.S. and its Latin American allies refused to recognise the results. Instead, violent extremists, supported by powerful figures like billionaire Elon Musk, have been burning down public institutions, government buildings, and hospitals, and destroying buses while looting offices to overthrow Maduro.

This aligns with Musk's history of supporting U.S.-backed coups in Latin America, as seen in his 2019 backing of the Bolivian coup to access lithium reserves for electric vehicles. Independent analysts have reported that the unproven claims of electoral fraud in Venezuela originate from Edison Research, a New Jersey-based firm with reported close ties to the U.S. government and the CIA. This firm works with U.S. government propaganda outlets like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, which were established by the CIA. Despite these baseless allegations, independent international electoral observers, including the National Lawyers Guild and human rights activists, have confirmed the transparency and fairness of Venezuela's electoral process. They condemned the U.S.-backed opposition's refusal to accept the results, which undermines Venezuela's democracy. Donald Trump, during his presidency, admitted the U.S. aimed to take

over Venezuela and its oil. His administration recognised right-wing opposition figure Juan Guaidó as the supposed president of Venezuela, despite his lack of electoral participation. The Trump administration's coup attempt in 2019 failed, as Guaidó never gained power. The Biden administration continues to back far-right extremists like María Corina Machado, who allegedly collaborates with oligarchs and calls for military intervention to overthrow Maduro. Historically, U.S.-backed coup attempts in Venezuela have been violent. After Chávez died in 2013 and Maduro's election, far-right extremists launched another coup attempt in 2014, burning government buildings and attacking supporters of the government. Leaders of these coup attempts, like Leopoldo López and María Corina Machado, have close ties to the U.S. government.

Despite engaging in violent coup attempts, these opponents walk free in Venezuela, which starkly contrasts with the U.S.'s portrayal of the country as a dictatorship. U.S. sanctions have severely worsened Venezuela's economic crisis. Ironically, these sanctions have led to a U.S. energy crisis, as sanctions on Iran and Russia have made affordable energy scarce for Europe. Despite the high cost and insufficiency of U.S. liquefied natural gas, Venezuelan oil remains blocked from European markets due to the sanctions. In June 2022, the U.S. pivoted its strategy by permitting the transport of Venezuelan oil to Europe to compensate for the void left by reduced Russian supplies. This strategic recalibration paved the way for the Barbados Agreement in October 2023, which initiated a gradual easing of sanctions. The elections held on 28 July were a direct result of this process. However, the U.S. encountered significant challenges in realising its typical political objectives through overt manipulation, while it continued to exert its influence through covert channels.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)

Operation Safedsagar: The Indian Air Force's triumph in the Kargil war

This operation highlighted the bravery, ingenuity, and strategic importance of the IAF, cementing its legacy in modern warfare

The Kargil War of 1999 marked a significant milestone for the Indian Air Force (IAF), which participated in large-scale combat for the first time since the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. In April 1999, around 1500 Pakistani soldiers infiltrated Indian territory in Kargil, Jammu, and Kashmir to sever the connection between Kashmir and Ladakh. The air operations in the Kargil region by IAF were named 'Operation Safedsagar'. In the 1990s, covert intruders from Pakistan stationed at high-altitude peaks made it difficult for the Indian army and IAF to carry out military operations in the challenging mountainous terrain of J&K since it was impossible to pinpoint their exact locations.



DEEPAK KUMAR PANDEY

Operation Safedsagar marked a revolutionary use of aerial capabilities in a distinct and demanding setting. The IAF's successful use of air power in the Kargil conflict is a source of pride for India. The strategic deployment of air power became essential in the War, as it effectively provided direct air support to ground troops and executed highly precise bombings on enemy targets, thereby exerting a substantial

impact on the final result of the battle. The IAF encountered notable challenges due to its operational areas' geographical and environmental factors. The Kargil region is known for its very intricate topography. Engaging in operations at high altitudes invariably presents formidable obstacles, such as the notable deterioration of both aircraft and weapon efficacy.

The delivery of a weapon to the target is significantly influenced by weather at higher altitudes. The winds are usually powerful and higher than the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) required 'minima'. Given this, manoeuvring is necessary to complete the essential launch. Despite challenging geographical and meteorological conditions, the operation exemplified exceptional bravery, persistence, and commitment. By July 23, 1999, the Indian forces successfully recaptured the Kargil Heights, a testament to their unwavering commitment and bravery that is sure to inspire.



Innovations for Technical
The IAF demonstrated exceptional ingenuity and resourcefulness during the Kargil conflict by successfully deploying several unique innovations. The IAF aimed to develop and use several weapon launch strategies. The Indian Air Force effectively used laser-

guided bombs deployed from Mirage-2000 aircraft to significantly impair the adversary's logistical routes, a testament to their innovative tactics. The laser-guided missile pods were modified to carry 1000-kilogram bombs from the World War II era, particularly for storage aboard the Ajeet aircraft. The Mirage-2000 aircraft used these bombs for the first time after making immediate modifications. The IAF reportedly chose weapon-impact zones that may trigger a domino effect leading to avalanches or landslides. To establish firing limits for rockets and weaponry at high heights, a meticulous process is needed to determine specific mountain peaks that closely resemble the height of enemy fortifications.

Performing real-time shooting trials in such conditions enables the acquisition of crucial data to enhance and improve the efficiency of these weapons. Using laser designators installed on MiG-29 aircraft to guide the ammunition released by Mirage-2000 combat fighters was an incredible achievement. By using this innovative methodology, the precision and efficiency of the impacts were significantly improved. The Mirage-2000 aircraft were outfitted with Litening pods that enhanced target detection and facilitated the precise launching of guided missiles. This was the first-ever deployment of cutting-edge targeting technology by the IAF in combat operations. During air operations in the

Kargil War, the capabilities of precision strikes helped the IAF reduce the amount of collateral damage and neutralise hostile positions. The efficient use of air power has averted more casualties considerably reduced the duration of the Indian Army has achieved substantial progress on the battlefield. An in-depth understanding of the Kargil operations is crucial for appreciating India's changing alignment in aerospace power. This battle serves as an exceptional case study for analysing the use of airpower in joint engagements in extremely mountainous regions.

(The writer is Retd Group Captain, IAF and Senior Fellow, Centre for Air Power Studies; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Apple sees record revenue in India and 2 dozen nations

Phone maker Apple has seen record revenue growth in India and over two dozen countries in the quarter ended on June 30, 2024, its CEO Tim Cook said on Friday. Apple posted a 7.8 per cent growth in net income to US\$ 21.44 billion in the June quarter of 2024 compared to US\$ 19.8 billion in the year-ago period. The company recorded 4.8 per cent growth in total net sales at US\$ 85.77 billion during the reported quarter from US\$ 81.79 billion in the June quarter of 2023. "Apple is reporting a new June quarter revenue record of US\$ 85.8 billion, up 5 per cent from a year ago and better than we had expected. We also set quarterly revenue records in more than two dozen countries and regions, including Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, the UK, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand," Apple CEO Tim Cook said during the company's earnings call. The revenue of Apple from 'Rest of Asia Pacific' geography, which includes India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, grew by US\$ 760 million in the June quarter compared to the year-ago period.



NCLAT approves Byju's settlement with BCCI

In a major relief to Byju's, the NCLAT on Friday set aside insolvency proceedings against the troubled edtech major over a sponsorship deal and approved a Rs 158 crore settlement with the Board of Control for Cricket in India. The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), however, passed the order with a caveat that any failure to make payments on the specific dates mentioned in the undertaking would automatically lead to a revival of the insolvency proceedings against Byju's. The appellate tribunal also dismissed the allegation of round-tripping levelled by Byju's US-based lenders, saying they failed to provide any evidence for the same. The tribunal further said the money was paid by Riju Raveendran (brother of Byju Raveendran) through sales of his shares. "In view of the undertaking given and affidavit, the settlement between the parties (is) approved and as a result appeal succeeds and impugned order (passed by the NCLT) is set aside," said a two-member Chennai bench in its order in the open court. As per the undertaking, Riju Ravindran has made a payment of Rs 50 crore on July 31 against the outstanding dues owed by Byju's to BCCI.



Hydrogen-compliant grades steel pipes developed

Tata Steel and Welspun Corp have jointly developed hydrogen-compliant grade steel pipes for transportation of the gaseous hydrogen, a statement said on Friday. The development assumes significance as hydrogen transportation is critical for its usage in different sectors. "Tata Steel and Welspun Corp achieved the significant milestone of developing hydrogen compliant API X65 grade pipes, which successfully surpassed all necessary critical sour service and fracture qualification tests for transportation of 100 per cent pure gaseous hydrogen under high pressure at RINA, Italy," Tata Steel said in a statement. Tata Steel and Welspun Corp have become the first Indian companies to produce electric resistance welded (ERW) pipes for transportation of gaseous hydrogen, it said. In 2022, Tata Steel and Welspun Corp entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to develop hydrogen-compliant API-grade pipes through the ERW Pipe route. As part of the partnership, Tata Steel said it has supplied hot-rolled coils for the project from its Kalinganagar plant in Odisha, while Welspun Corp manufactured ERW pipes.

NIIT Q1 profit rises to Rs 7.75 cr, revenue climbs 32% to Rs 82.47 cr

Talent development company NIIT on Friday reported a three-fold rise in its consolidated net profits at Rs 7.75 crore in the June 2024 quarter. It had reported a net profit of Rs 2.18 crore in the year-ago period. Revenue from operations for the quarter under review came in at Rs 82.47 crore, up 31.86 per cent from Rs 62.54

crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. Seen sequentially, revenue grew 10.93 per cent, but net profit declined 30.5 per cent. "The growth was driven by expansion in number of customers across private banks, GCCs, Tier II GSIs and large Indian enterprises. All round growth in the business led by 94 per cent YoY growth in BFSI and other programmes and technol-



Universal Pictures lands the rights for Britney Spears' memoir 'The Woman in Me' biopic

PNS ■ LOS ANGELES

Pop star Britney Spears is getting a biopic with director Jon M Chu attached as a director and Marc Platt attached as a producer. Universal Pictures acquired the movie rights to the singer's bestselling memoir "The Woman in Me" after a competitive auction. Spears, 42, recently hinted about the biopic through her 'X' handle where she announced a "secret project" with producer Marc Platt. "Excited to share with my fans

that I've been working on a secret project with #MarcPlatt. He's always made my favorite movies... stay tuned." In the book, which Spears published last year, the singer honestly chronicles her early stardom, her relationship with Justin Timberlake, her marriage and the infamous conservatorship, which gave the right to her finances and well-being to her father Jamie Spears. The singer rose to fame after two of her albums "Baby One More Time" (1999) and "Oops!... I Did It Again" (2000)

became the top-selling studio album releases of the time. She later went on to work on albums "In the Zone" (2003), "Circus" (2008) and "Crossroads" (2022). Spears, however, had a rough patch in 2007 after her divorce from her second husband Kevin Federline, with whom she had two sons Sean Preston and Jayden James. The duo tied the knot in 2004 but filed for separation in 2006. She was previously married to her childhood friend Jason Allen Alexander in 2004 but they separated the same year.

TAX ISSUE

Karnataka authorities withdraw notice to Infosys

Tell company to file a response to DGGI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka authorities have withdrawn the pre-show cause notice served to Infosys, and directed the IT company to submit a fresh response to DGGI central authority on the issue, involving about Rs 32,400 crore GST demand.

The DGGI is the apex intelligence and investigative agency for matters relating to violation of the Goods & Services Tax, Central Excise Duty and Service Tax, and has been entrusted with the task of improving compliance with Indirect Tax laws.

"The company has received a communication from Karnataka State authorities,

withdrawing the pre-show cause notice and has directed the company to submit a further response to DGGI central



authority on this matter," Infosys said in a BSE filing on Thursday evening. India's second-largest IT company grabbed headlines on

Wednesday after GST authorities slapped a Rs 32,403 crore notice on it for services availed by the company from its overseas branches for five years starting in 2017. The company had earlier described the notice as a 'pre-show cause' notice and, all through, categorically maintained that it believes that GST is not applicable to the expenses mentioned.

Narinder Wadhwa, Managing Director and CEO of SKI Capital said thorough investigations and clear evidence are crucial before proceeding with cases against companies with significant international exposure to maintain market stability and investor confidence.

New record of over 7.28 cr income-tax returns filed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Income tax returns (ITRs) touched a new record of over 7.28 crore, 7.5 per cent higher compared to previous fiscal, by the July 31 deadline, the income tax department said on Friday.

The total number of ITRs for assessment year 2024-25 filed till July 31, 2024 is more than 7.28 crore, which is 7.5 per cent higher than the total ITRs for AY 2023-24 (6.77 crore) filed till July 31, 2023, the department said in a statement.

"Out of the total ITRs of 7.28 crore filed for AY 2024-25, 5.27 crore have been filed in the new tax regime compared to 2.01 crore ITRs filed in the old tax regime," it said.

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of taxpayers have opted for the new tax regime, while 28 per cent continue to be in the old tax regime.

The filing of ITRs peaked on July 31, 2024 (the due date for salaried taxpayers and other non-tax audit cases), with over 69.92 lakh ITRs having been filed on a single day.

The department also received 58.57 lakh ITRs from first-time filers, a fair indication of the widening of the tax base. In a historic first, ITRs (ITR-1, ITR-2, ITR-4, ITR-6) were deployed on the e-filing portal on the first day of the Financial Year i.e. on April 1, 2024.

Out of the 7.28 crore ITRs filed for A.Y. 2024-25, 45.77 per cent of ITRs are ITR-1 (3.34 crore), 14.93 per cent are ITR-2 (1.09 crore), 12.5 per cent are ITR-3 (91.10 lakh), 25.77 per cent are ITR-4 (1.88 crore) and 1.03 per cent are ITR-5 to ITR-7 (7.48 lakh).

Over 43.82 per cent of these ITRs have been filed using the online ITR utility available on the e-filing portal and the remaining have been filed using offline ITR utilities, it said.

Rupee settles 2 paise lower at 83.75 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled 2 paise lower at 83.75 (provisional) against the US dollar in a range-bound trade on Friday as massive sell-offs in domestic as well as global equity markets negated gains from a weak American currency.

The Indian currency resisted the fall due to a sharp decline in the dollar after the latest US data showed slower manufacturing growth in the world's largest economy, forex traders said. Foreign capital inflows also favoured the local currency, they said.

At the interbank currency exchange, the domestic currency opened at 83.74 and traded in the narrow range of 83.72 and 83.76 against the green-

back during the session. The unit finally settled at 83.75 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 2 paise from the previous closing level.

On Thursday, the rupee declined 5 paise to settle at 83.73 against the US dollar. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said a slight decline in the US dollar amid disappointing economic data from the US may prevent a sharp fall in the rupee. Any fresh intervention by RBI may also support the rupee.

"Traders may take cues from US non-farm payrolls data which is expected weaker than the previous month's reading. US\$-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.50 to Rs 84," Choudhary added.

Exxon Mobil second-quarter profit rises

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Exxon Mobil recorded one of its largest second-quarter profits in a decade on record quarterly production from oil and gas fields in Guyana and the Permian basin in the U.S., and its \$60 billion acquisition of Pioneer Natural Resources.

The energy company earned \$9.24 billion, or \$2.14 per share, for the three months ended June 30. A year earlier it earned \$7.88 billion, or \$1.94 per share.

The results topped Wall Street expectations, but Exxon does not adjust its reported results based on one-time events such as asset sales. Analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research were expecting earnings of \$2.04 per share. "We achieved record quar-



terly production from our lowest-cost-of-supply Permian and Guyana assets, with the highest oil production since the Exxon and Mobil merger," Chairman and CEO Darren Woods said in a prepared statement on Friday. "We also achieved a record in high-value product sales, growing by 10% versus the first half of last year."

ducer that has entered the business of capturing and storing carbon and stands to benefit from changes in U.S. climate policy.

In October Exxon topped that deal by announcing that it would buy shale operator Pioneer Natural Resources for \$60 billion. Two months later, the Federal Trade Commission, which enforces federal antitrust law, asked for additional information from the companies about the proposed deal. The request is a step the agency takes when reviewing whether a merger could be anticompetitive under U.S. law. Pioneer disclosed the request in a filing in January. The deal received clearance from the FTC in May, but the former CEO of Pioneer, Scott Sheffield, was barred from joining the new company's board of directors.

Markets snap five-day rally; Sensex tumbles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty halted their five-day rally to close with deep cuts on Friday in line with a global sell-off as investors dialled

During the day, it nosedived 998.64 points or 1.21 per cent to hit an intra-day low of 80,868.91. The broader Nifty of NSE slipped 293.20 points or 1.17 per cent to end at 24,717.70. It fell 324.05 points or 1.29 per cent to 24,686.85

Paints were among the gainers. The European markets were quoting lower in mid-session deals on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.77 per cent to US\$ 80.13 a barrel. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended lower on Thursday during the session.

NIIT Q1 profit rises to Rs 7.75 cr, revenue climbs 32% to Rs 82.47 cr

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crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. Seen sequentially, revenue grew 10.93 per cent, but net profit declined 30.5 per cent. "The growth was driven by expansion in number of customers across private banks, GCCs, Tier II GSIs and large Indian enterprises. All round growth in the business led by 94 per cent YoY growth in BFSI and other programmes and technol-

Saeeda Vineeta joins NGT as Registrar General

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Saeeda Vineeta, a member of the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Services, recently joined on deputation as the new registrar general in the principal bench of the National Green Tribunal. She joined the state's judicial service in 2007 as a civil judge (junior division) and was promoted to the senior division in 2012. Vineeta, who became a district judge in October 2018,

also worked as secretary of the Madhya Pradesh District Legal Services Authority (DLSA).

She also worked in the MP Judicial Academy as a faculty member from April 2022. In the last 16 years, she dealt with various civil and criminal matters, including those related to land acquisitions, arbitration proceedings, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases, heinous offences and motor accident cases.

Hiring activity up 12% in July, most sectors report double-digit growth

PNS ■ MUMBAI

White-collar hiring activity grew by 12 per cent in July compared to the same month last year as most sectors reported healthy double-digit growths, a report said on Friday. India's white-collar hiring activity grew to 2,877 job postings in July 2024, registering a 12 per cent year-on-year

increase compared to 2,573 during the corresponding month last year, according to the Naukri JobSpeak Index. The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly index representing

India's job market and hiring activity based on new job listings and job-related searches by recruiters on the resume database of Naukri.com. Most sectors reported healthy double digit growths, with pharma/biotech (26 per cent), FMCG (26 per cent), real estate (23 per cent), and AI-ML (47 per cent) leading the way, said the report.



JOHN ABRAHAM SLAMS JOURNALISTS FOR ASKING 'BAD QUESTIONS'

John Abraham recently got angry at the *Vedaa* trailer launch. The actor was upset after hearing that his movies were too alike. He requested that individuals refrain from forming opinions about the movie solely based on its trailer. At the press conference for *Vedaa*, John was asked to do 'kuchh naya' making him lose his cool. He replied, "Aapne film dekhi hai (have you seen the film)? Can I call out bad questions and idiots?"

The actor was upset when he was informed that his movies are often repetitive. He requested that individuals not base their opinion of the movie solely on its trailer. He said, "No, I just want to tell you that this is a dif-

ferent kind of movie. According to me, it is a very intense performance of mine. Of course, you haven't watched the film yet." He then humorously said, "See the film first; after that, I'm all yours, whatever you say." *Vedaa* is a tale about a young girl, portrayed by Sharvari in the titular role, as she battles against oppression. Her personality strives for fair treatment for oppressed communities based on caste and untouchability by fighting against tyrants. Abhishek Banerjee plays the villain in the action-thriller directed by Nikkhil Advani. Tamannaah Bhatia and Mouni Roy are also featured in brief appearances in the film.

Cardi B announces third pregnancy!

Cardi B, an American rapper, is expecting her third child. On Thursday, August 1, the rapper announced the exciting update to her fans through social media. Cardi B

shared a few photos of her baby bump while writing about starting fresh. The announcement comes one day after Cardi revealed her split from musician Offset.

"With every ending comes a new beginning! I am so grateful to have shared this season with you; you have brought me more love, more life, and most of all, renewed my power! Remind me that I can have it all! You've reminded me that I never have to choose between life, love, and my passion! I love you so much and can not wait for you to witness what you helped me accomplish, what you pushed me to do! (sic)", the rapper wrote.

Cardi said it is important to push through life's twists and turns and that her children make everything worth it. "It's so much easier to take life's twists, turns and tests lying down, but you, your brother and your sister have shown me why it's worth it to push through!"

Cardi B and Offset had previously confirmed their separation, stating that it was something that had been expected for a while.

Cardi B and Offset tied the knot in September of 2017. This is the couple's second announcement of their divorce. They had previously declared it for 2020 but then decided to cancel it.



It was indeed a legendary night! At the YouTube Fan Fest 2024, *W.i.S.H.*, India's first girl group in 22 years, lit the stage on fire with a high-energy performance of their songs, but it didn't stop there. In a shocking turn of events, *W.i.S.H.* opened with the sultry beats of Sunidhi Chauhan's *Crazy Kiya Re*. The powerhouse herself, Sunidhi Chauhan, made an astounding entrance as the audience swayed to the music, escalating an already amazing event into a full-blown phenomenon.

'I didn't have the guts to bring up talking about Sridevi with Janhvi on *Ulajh*'

Adil Hussain, famous for playing Sridevi's husband in Gauri Shinde's *English Vinglish*, now depicts Janhvi Kapoor's father in Sudhanshu Saria's suspenseful film *Ulajh*. In a special interview, Adil reminisced about his time working with the late Sridevi and described how seamlessly Janhvi saw him as her father, based on the strong on-screen bond he shared with her mother.

On being asked if they spoke about the late actress, Adil said, "It's hard for me to bring her up. My heart aches; I can't even digest or understand that she's not there. I can't even imagine the pain Janhvi probably still feels. My mother just passed away this month and she was 95 years old. Imagining a

young mother passing away, I didn't have the guts to bring it up. But we spoke about how we met on the set of *English Vinglish*."

When asked if star kids have it easy in the world of showbiz, Adil said that it's also a huge burden to carry. "It's a huge burden and, at the same time, maybe that initially, because of the familiarity of the world you have grown up in and have been around, is probably a bit easier than for those who come from the fringes. But you have to prove yourself. People will see through you, whether you are talented or doing a good job. You cannot cheat creativity; it shows on camera. The camera is the most ruthless thing on the planet. It can kill you instantly or make you amazing. Truthfulness and organic quality are judged by the camera, which catches your vulnerability, fear and incapability. You cannot cheat on that. If she is successful and loved by people, it's because she has the qualities to be loved, or anyone else for that matter."



'I will keep working till they have to shoot me down'

Talking about the work he said, "I will keep working always, no matter who says what, I will wake up every day and do my job. Whatever I earn, I earn it on my terms; I have never asked anything from anyone to date. I will keep on working till they have to shoot me down."

Talking about his recent films not doing well, the *Sarfira* actor said, "My 4 or 5 films did not work and I get messages like

obituaries. It's not like I am dead; one journalist messaged me don't worry, you will be back, I called him and told him I had not gone anywhere. I am here only, these little setbacks cannot break my spirit."

Akshay will be soon seen in *Khel Khel Mein* alongside Vaani Kapoor, Taapsee Pannu, Fardeen Khan, Ammy Virk, Aditya Seal, and Pragya Jaiswal. The film, directed by Mudassar Aziz, releases on 15th August.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



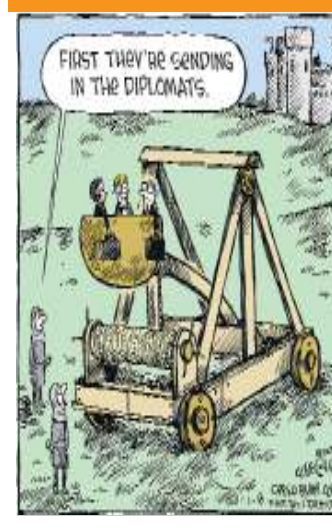
GARFIELD



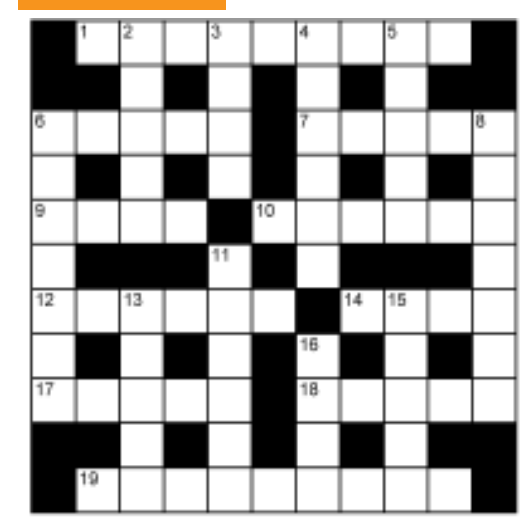
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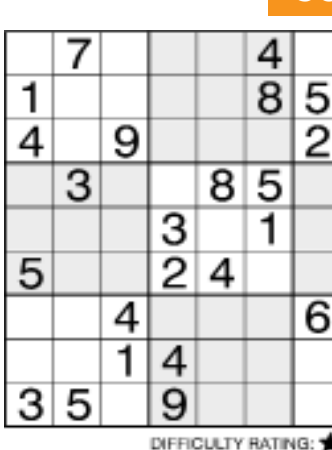
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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**
- This small sea creature might sting a swimmer
 - Does a signature on
 - Telling untruths
 - Very uncommon
 - The tiredness you get after a very long plane flight
 - A paper hanky
 - A hard black fuel
 - The opposite of tails
 - Train tracks
 - A month
 - Not moving
 - Pull something to make it longer or wider
 - A swimmer's glasses
 - Day's end
 - Frighten
 - A small oval oily fruit
 - A baby's transport
- DOWN**
- Very keen
 - Misplaced
 - Recorded with a movie camera
- SOLUTION**
- | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | C | A | L | P | E | L | S | |
| G | O | M | E | S | T | E | A | |
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'POLE DANCING COMMUNITY IN HYD HAS GROWN, CITY WAS WAITING FOR THIS TO HAPPEN!'

TEJAL SINHA

If you think of pole dancing as women gracefully twirling on a pole with soft smiles in soft lighting, well, it's much beyond! Despite the passage of time, pole dancing remains a controversial art form, primarily acknowledged for the reasons it should always be remembered. While the elegant moves and alluring stances are still present, the emphasis should now be on the remarkable athleticism and strength needed to excel in pole art.

And guess what? There have been changes in the world of pole dancing. But you may be asking yourself, How can we be so sure of that? Hyderabad recently welcomed its first pole dance academy, according to Pound Kakar, the founder of Pole Fit Bold Fit Academy and the city has responded positively ever since.

Having been born and raised in Mumbai, her connection with the city goes back to approximately 2006, when she visited her grandfather with her family. "We were basically from Mumbai," begins Pound during a quick chat with *The Pioneer* for our Hyderabad segment. "My twin sister, Dollar, and I had studied there. We were here in Hyderabad for the first time. I guess we were around 11 when we shifted here to Hyderabad. My parents had liked the city a lot more, too. Being these healthy kids grow-

ing up, we had a lot of allergies and Bombay was sort of contributing to pollution. When we came to visit our grandfather, my parents liked how spacious the city was, how the schools were bigger and how they sort of encouraged sports and other activities. I initially did cry my lungs out when we got to know we were shifting, but Hyderabad turned out to be a beautiful place."

Without a doubt, each city possesses its own unique charm. Yet, we inquire about what sets the city apart from others, and she responds that Hyderabad's laid-back atmosphere is what she truly appreciates about the city.

"What I have personally noticed is that people here can balance out their lives pretty well," says the Polerina. "People here know how to balance their professional lives and also the time when they need to relax. More than anything else, this is what I love about Hyderabad. Here, it's not about all obsessive and hustle work."

Hyderabad, she recalls, had welcomed her with open arms during the initial days when she had started the academy. "The response has been tremendous and people have been appreciating me for what I do," says Pound in regard to the overwhelming response and support the city has provided to her. "I have not real-



ly faced any nasty comments from anybody in Hyderabad. I might have come across them on social media, but not from people here.

Hyderabad professionally was very intrigued in the beginning and now the community has grown tremendously in the last two years. The love that the city has shown us is so overwhelming. It feels like the city was waiting for this to happen."

Also holding a Master's degree in Media, it was during the pandemic that she realised taking up pole dancing was the calling that she's been waiting for. And so, it was always in her mind to bring this dance form to the city.

"But I only got confident when I got my first invert on the pole. It is a deadlift chopper, where you are lifting your entire body weight using your lap muscles and biceps and you sort of go upside down." And then, there was no looking

back as she sat down with her parents, telling them about her inclination towards it. With her parents being very supportive of her, she went ahead and turned her passion into her profession.

Well, going ahead, one thing time she thinks of the city is 'Biryani and Haleem beside Charminar'. Ah, we are sure many of you feel it too!

As we head towards the head of the chat, Pound, for whom Hyderabad has certainly been 'home', says, "I love the work-life balance in Hyderabad and this could also be a drawback if they are way too laid back."

I can't really say I don't like that. In my personal experience in Hyderabad, it is open to new things and also safe for women as compared to other places I've been to. It warms up to the idea of any new activity coming up."

Hailing from Mumbai initially, Pound Kakar has found Hyderabad to be her home now. For our weekly segment of Hyderabad, she discusses her allure for the city and how it has helped her professionally

'Now, I want to do something romantic on celluloid'

AARTI SREENATH

In an illuminating interview, Raghav Juyal, the multi-talented actor and dancer, opens up about his latest venture, *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, which will soon start streaming on Zee5, a series that promises to challenge viewers' perceptions of time, reality and existence. Known for his eclectic roles and charismatic presence, he dives deep into the intricacies of the show and the enigmatic character he portrays.

Reflecting on the complexity of *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, Kill fame describes it as "mind-boggling," a term he doesn't use lightly. "When I was reading the script, I started questioning my own existence. The entire series is a rollercoaster through time, where the past has already gone, the future is yet to come and the present is perpetually unfolding. This narrative structure is so compelling that it forces both the characters and the audience to grapple with existential questions. It raises the eerie possibility of whether you're actually there or not," he explains. The series, produced by the dynamic duo Karan Johar and Oscar-winner Guneet Monga, underlines the kind of high-caliber production that is rare in Indian entertainment. The *Nawabzaade* fame's character in the series stands out for its depth and layers. He describes his role as that of a "dukhi aatma," a soul laden with sorrow, burdened by a tumultuous past filled with traumas and guilt. "The character is incredibly intriguing and curious, constantly questioning his reality and even his role as a police officer. He is not your typical hero; he's vulnerable, sensitive and full of contradictions. This cop isn't just about catching the bad guys; he's grappling with his inner demons," he shares. The role required him to undergo a significant transformation, both physically and mentally. "I had to wash out the body language of my previous character, Phani from *Kill*, and imbue a new rhythm into this character. The challenge was immense, but it was equally rewarding."

The series, an official adaptation of the acclaimed Korean drama *Signal*, brings together a talented team led by Umesh Bisht, known for his sensitive storytelling in *Pagglait*. Juyal elaborates on how Bisht's nuanced approach to human emotions and experiences adds a rich layer to the series. "Umesh Sir has a unique way

of bringing out the subtleties of human life. His understanding of cinema and life itself makes him an exceptional director. Working with him was an enlightening experience," he notes.

The filming of *Gyaarah Gyaarah* brought its own set of challenges, especially for Juyal, who found himself back in his hometown of Dehradun, a place that holds a special, albeit relaxed, place in his heart. "Being in Dehradun was nostalgic but also challenging. I'm used to a more laid-back lifestyle there, surrounded by friends who bring me momos and bun tikki. It's hard to stay disciplined in such a familiar environment. But it was a learning experience, and next time, I'll approach it with a different mindset," he admits. The production itself was a test of endurance, as the team shot in freezing temperatures in the mountains, adding a layer of authenticity to the series' suspenseful and mysterious atmosphere.

He also reflects on the camaraderie on set, especially with co-stars like Dhairya Karwa. "I've been very lucky with my co-stars. They're not just talented but also wonderful people. Dhairya, for instance, has a special connection with Dehradun, just like me. We all shared a bond over our love for the place, even having bonfires during the shoot. Despite the cold, we stayed in character and delivered our best performances," he recalls.

When asked if he resonated with his character, he candidly responds, "Not much, to be honest. But as an actor, you learn to tap into similar emotions or incidents from your own life to bring authenticity to your role. I drew upon my experiences as a Dehradun boy, incorporating some of those traits into the character. It was a

challenging but enriching process."

As for what the audience can expect, Juyal is confident that *Gyaarah Gyaarah* will captivate viewers. "These days, content is king. No amount of promotion can compensate for weak content. This series, with its unique blend of time, space, mystery, thriller and suspense, is unlike anything Indian audiences have seen before. It's an experience that will flip your perception of reality. I urge viewers to 'Pehle istemal kare, phir wishwas kare'—watch it and then judge. The show will captivate you with its intricate plot and rich storytelling," he promises.

As for his future projects, Juyal reveals a desire to explore new genres. "I've played a range of characters, but now I'd like to do something romantic. I've been a villain, a critically acclaimed actor, and a protagonist too; now it's time for something different. Let's see, *kuch rumani karte hai ab*," he says with a smile. For his fans and viewers of *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, the *Kill* fame has a special message: "Enjoy the story, close all the curtains, make some popcorn, and binge-watch it. The series will blow your mind with its suspense and mysticism. It's an experience you won't want to miss." As Raghav Juyal continues to explore new horizons in his acting career, *Gyaarah Gyaarah* marks another significant milestone, showcasing his versatility and dedication to his craft. With its rich narrative and complex characters, the series is poised to leave a lasting impact on audiences, making it a must-watch in the Indian OTT landscape.

Raghav Juyal discusses his most recent endeavour, *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, in an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*. The Dehradun native explores the distinct difficulties and exhilarating encounters of bringing this enigmatic and dramatic series to life. Juyal offers frank insights about his persona, the camaraderie on set and his developing acting career



HEALING POWER OF MEDITATION

Take a deep breath. Expand your belly. Pause. Release slowly, count to five with each exhale. Repeat four to five times. Congratulations. You've just taken the first step towards healing. Meditation, to many, is a simple word, yet you could spend a lifetime trying to understand its depths. For centuries, yogis have practiced the art of breath control, or pranayama, to harness the powers of healing. Similarly, the teachings of Buddha have long advocated breath-meditation as a pathway towards enlightenment. In this day and age, emerging scientific evidence increasingly gives credence to the healing powers of this ancient practice.

Whether it's through the gentle observation of breath or the devout practice of prayer, the benefits, spanning mental, physical, and spiritual realms, are undeniable. Yet, for many, meditation remains an elusive exercise.

Lifelong Pursuit of Stillness

Taking the first step in meditation doesn't have to be daunting—it can start with as little as five minutes when you wake up each morning. If you're living in a bustling city filled with the hustle and bustle of daily life, breaking into the habit of meditating can seem like a mountain to climb. But starting off is easier than you might think.

As you feel more comfortable, you can gradually increase the duration of your meditation sessions over time. Remember, consistency is key here, allow the practice to deepen and evolve naturally.

Mental, Physical and Spiritual Benefits

The impact that meditation has on mental health is beyond a shadow of a doubt. This practice helps the mind improve focus and live in the present, decreasing the mental clutter that time and again leads to negative thought processes. Studies have also found that meditating on a regular basis has a vast impact on physical health; it can improve immunity and heart health as well as lower blood pressure.

When it comes to spiritual well-being, meditation lets people get in touch not just with their inner selves but their surrounding environment. The key to spiritual enlightenment is meditation. If we are to seek enlightenment, we must start meditating on a regular basis to achieve the results we desire.

Fasting for Deeper Meditation

Fasting, especially intermittent fasting, can lead to the induction of a process called autophagy, where the body regenerates new cells and cleanses itself of damaged cells.

This process reduces inflammation, enhances mental clarity and boosts metabolic health. These physiological benefits thereby create an optimal internal environment that refines the meditative experience. The human body can channel more energy towards mental and spiritual practices when not preoccupied with constant digestion. Intermittent fasting, like the 16/8 method, complements meditation by promoting a clearer mind and a more balanced physical state.

Conscious Eating for Mindful Living
 Conscious eating means savouring every meal and being aware of how different foods affect the body. A balanced diet that includes vegetables, fruits, carbohydrates, proteins and vitamins is essential for overall health. Eating thoughtfully not only benefits digestion and energy levels, but it also promotes attention and intentionality in daily activities, which are important to meditation principles. Individuals can avoid the physical and mental fatigue that interferes with a focused and successful meditation practice by avoiding processed foods and sugary drinks.

(The author, Dr. Manjula Pooja Shroff, is known for her exclusive work called SHROFFism.)



Manu qualifies for 25m sports pistol in second position at Olympics

PTI ■ CHATEAURoux

Indian shooter Manu Bhaker kept herself on track for a hat-trick of Olympic medals, coming up with one of her most memorable performances in her favourite event, the 25m sports pistol, as she booked a place in the final placed second at the Chateauroux shooting range here on Friday.

The 22-year-old, who has already made history by becoming the first Indian athlete to win two bronze medals in one edition of the quadrennial showpiece, can add to her aura if she wins a third medal on Saturday, something which is well within her grasp after her commanding performance in the qualification round. Manu, who continued to dominate the event and remained among the top three almost throughout the qualification phase of 'precision' and 'rapid' rounds,



aggregated 590 to be placed second behind Hungary's Veronika Major who equalled the Olympic record with a score of 592. Manu, who has seen a marked improvement in her shooting after patching up with legendary former shooter-turned-coach Jaspal Rana, has won the 10m women's air pistol bronze and 10m air pistol mixed team bronze pairing Sarabjot Singh. She was in impregnable form in the sports pistol qualification rounds, firing 294 in the gruelling 'precision'

round with scores of 97, 98 and 99.

The 'rapid round' brought out the best in her as she shot a perfect 100, followed by two 98s for an aggregate of 296.

India's upcoming shooter and multiple Hangzhou Asian Games medallist Esha Singh faltered to aggregate 581 (291 in precision and 290 in rapid) to finish 18th among 40 shooters and miss the eight-shooter final by a distance.

Just after winning her second bronze medal here, in 10m air pistol mixed team event, Manu had urged the countrymen not to be 'disappointed' if she can't add more medals to the tally. But going by her imperious form, the Jhajjar shooter could well be in line to win a gold or silver.

Bhaker's sterling performance here has come after a failed campaign at the Tokyo Games in 2021 where a pistol malfunction stopped her from achieving her Olympic dream. She said that heartbreak made

her value the medals here even more.

Manu, the second youngest Indian athlete to win an Olympic medal after shuttler PV Sindhu, had added that she looks up to ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and Sindhu because they have "proved themselves".

India has won all three medals so far in shooting, with Manu bagging two and Swapnil Kusale taking the bronze in 50m rifle three-positions on Thursday.

Legendary India cricketer Rahul Dravid had also termed Manu's performance "incredible" following her second Olympic bronze medal.

"Manu's story is incredible after the disappointment of Tokyo Olympics, to come here and be able to get over that and compete and bronze is a phenomenal achievement," Dravid, the former India coach, had said during a panel discussion at India House in Paris.

I should have controlled mistakes in defence: Sindhu

PTI ■ PARIS

PV Sindhu has no regrets regarding her preparations for the Games as she did everything she could to be in the best shape but admitted defence let her down in the pre-quarterfinal against China's He Bing Jiao, here Thursday. Sindhu ran the Chinese world number 9 close in the first game but unending unforced errors meant that Bing Jiao ran away with the match 21-19 21-14 in 56 minutes. Sindhu even dictated a few points but had no answer to Bing Jiao's superior attack.

"I should have controlled in terms of a little bit of mistakes on my defense is what I felt," Sindhu said, reflecting upon the reason for her defeat. Sindhu had a training camp in Germany and also joined forces with mentor Prakash Padukone for better preparation.

"Everybody worked hard, so we've done whatever we could. Rest is destiny. I don't regret it," she said.

"I kept fighting still because you never know anything can happen. Both of us were fighting for each point because until the end you can't expect. It's not easy win or easy

points, you can't think that you have finished the game."

Bing Jiao's smashes and soft drops had Sindhu scurrying on both sides of the court. But when Sindhu attacked, the Chinese defended well.

"She has that jump smash. Even my smashes, I think, which were mid-court, they were just going out when she was challenging.

"I should have hit them inside and I should have got those points where I've made those unforced errors.

"She got much more confident in that because when I was hitting, she was defending, but still some points which were really mid-court also, I was hitting just out or just into her hand."

It was neck-and-neck in the first game with Sindhu and her rival locked 19-19. The two-time Olympic medalist said winning the game from that position could have changed things for her.

"It's sad that I couldn't convert it to win, especially in the first game because it was 19 all at some point.

"I think if it would have been the other way, especially when I challenged it. If I would have won the first set, maybe it would have been different. But I think it was... I mean, there

were rallies and it was going on well, but only one can win."

Asked if she would try to play in the next Olympics in the USA, Sindhu was non-committal.

"It's still four years away. So for me, right now, I just go back and rest for a bit, maybe just take some break and then come back and let's see what it is because four years is a very, very long time. So let's see," the 29-year-old said.

"It's sad. The result, I couldn't get what I expected, but it's a journey, isn't it?"

"It's been a wonderful journey so far. There were ups and downs, and I came back from an injury, and everything was going on well. You can't expect easy wins or picking the form at the right time. Sometimes it might not be your day. We all really worked hard."

In game two, Sindhu tried to unsettle Bing Jiao with smashes but her opponent was picking up all those low shots as well.

"Her defense was really good today. She was taking everything and I had to be even more patient. Sometimes I was changing and I was getting points. I was dictating and I was getting a few points, but I think it was not enough today."

PTI ■ PARIS

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh scored a brace as the India men's hockey team registered a famous 3-2 win over Tokyo Games silver medallist and nemesis Australia in its final Pool B match here on Friday.

Already assured of a quarterfinal berth before Friday's encounter, the Indians played valiantly and dominated the proceedings for major part of the match to stun the Kookaburras, against whom they last won in Olympics in the 1972 Munich edition. It seemed India had saved their best for their last pool match, as it delivered a power-packed performance, playing attacking hockey from the beginning, and defending well throughout.

Abhishek (12th), skipper Harmanpreet (13th, 33rd) scored for India while Tom Craig (25th) and Blake Govers (55) found the net for Australia.

With this win, India most likely will finish their pool engagements in the second position with nine points, finishing behind table toppers Belgium (12), who are yet to play a match. The pole position will not change even if Belgium loses its match against Argentina.

The goal difference after that match will determine the final placing. The Indians started on an aggressive note and made two circle entries in the first two minutes.

Veteran India custodian PR Sreejesh, who is playing his last international

Hockey: India stun Australia, register first win in 52 years in Olympics



tournament, was rock solid in front of the goal, making some vital saves to deny the Kookaburras.

In the 11th minute, Sreejesh made the first save to deny Tom Wickham, which resulted in a penalty corner. But the resultant effort from Jeremy Hayward was off target.

Jarmanpreet Singh then fired a pass to Sukhjot Singh from the right flank. He just needed to deflect the ball but he could not stop the powerful strike. The strong Australian defence easily foiled his attempt by the time he

gathered the ball and was ready to strike.

Australia created two back-to-back opportunities, but the Indian defence was rock solid. India stunned Australia by taking the lead through Abhishek in the 12th minute. It was Lalit, who received a pass in an empty D, he attempted a shot but that was saved by goalie Andrew Charter. Abhishek got the ball on rebound, turned, and hammered the it past rival goalkeeper Andrew Charter.

A minute later, India got a penalty corner when the ball touched the foot of Jake Harvie and Harmanpreet beat Charter's defence with fierce grounded flick.

Tim Brand had an opportunity to reduce the deficit early in the second quarter but he struck the ball wide. Australia earned their second penalty corner of the match in the 19th minute but Govers' shot was blocked Sreejesh.

Vice-captain Hardik Singh was a livewire in the mid-field, feeding the forwards consistently.

Australia got their third short corner in the 25th minute. It was a poor injection from skipper Aran Zaleski but it turned into a goal as the Australians recovered quickly to pass it to an unmarked Craig at the second post, who deflected the ball in.

India also got a penalty corner soon but this time Harmanpreet's strike was kept at bay by Charter. India led 2-1 at half time.

India got their third penalty corner when Manpreet Singh was tackled by an Australian defender. Harmanpreet's goalmouth strike was obstructed by Flynn Ogilvie. India took a referral, which resulted in a penalty stroke. And Harmanpreet made no mistake by converting the chance.

OTHER SPORTS

AP ■ PARIS

FIFA offers talks to leagues, player unions amid legal filings and threats in soccer politics

FIFA offered talks with global groups of soccer leagues and player unions to end a three-month deadlock after they threatened legal action over adding to the packed competitions calendar. In a letter seen by The Associated Press, FIFA told the World Leagues Association and FIFPRO on Thursday "our offer to engage in dialogue remains on the table" amid a swirl of legal filings and threats in international soccer politics.

"FIFA believes there is a more productive way forward for football than the threat of legal action," soccer's world body said in a statement to the AP.

In May, the leagues and union said FIFA was "inherently abusive" for continuing to add games and competitions that forced their members to adapt. FIFA has expanded the 2026 World Cup, hosted across North America, to 48 teams from 32, and added a 32-team Club World Cup that will also be played every four years. It launches next June in the United States. Also in the coming season, UEFA is expanding its three season-long club competitions



with extra teams and more games that squeeze domestic schedules. The European groups of leagues and player unions also have targeted FIFA - but not UEFA - in a formal legal complaint to Brussels. That is being handled by the European Commission, the executive arm of the 27-nation European Union that can intervene on alleged breaches of competition law. FIFPRO member unions in England and France also filed

suit against FIFA at a commercial court in Brussels, seeking a referral to the European Court of Justice. That court in Luxembourg was critical of FIFA and UEFA last year in a ruling in the Super League case brought by some storied soccer clubs. FIFA manages the calendar of international matches, which mandates when clubs must release players to national-team duty through 2030. The global groups of leagues and unions want talks on it reopened with them getting a greater say. On Thursday, FIFA said it "serves and balances the overall interests of world football, including the protection of players."

SL players' cricket awareness needs sharpening: Jayasuriya

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Interim coach Sanath Jayasuriya said Sri Lankan players will have to work on improving their "cricket awareness" in the wake of their collapse in the recently-concluded T20I series against India.

Sri Lanka were in good positions during the three-match rubber but they lost wickets in a heap to suffer a 0-3 defeat.

"I don't see a lack of commitment, but they have got to tackle pressure better. Their cricket awareness also needs sharpening. We are taking the responsibility; you can't go away from that," Jayasuriya was quoted as saying by 'ESPNCricinfo' as his side entered the three-match ODI series against India.

"As long as they realise that, and make sure that, we'll have to keep giving them the confidence and support," he added.

Jayasuriya said batsmen need not worry about hitting sixes constantly as large Sri Lankan grounds offer ample chances to score off through boundaries and twos.

"When you talk about power hitting, I don't think you need that much (in SL). If you hit enough fours and enough twos, you get the total that you need."

"The Sri Lankan grounds are a little bigger. There's no reason why you can't hit boundaries, or twos, or threes. If you can do that, you can get by without hitting so many sixes," he said.

The former Lankan captain said the players should be



ready to accept criticism after a shoddy show such as theirs in the T20Is series.

"We have to take the criticism as well, as a coach, as a support staff, as a team. I had to go through this (phase) in my time as a cricketer, every cricketer has to go through this. When criticism comes, you have to take it," he said.

Jayasuriya backed newly-appointed captain Charith Asalanka to come good sooner rather than later.

"Charith Asalanka is one of our best players in this format, and we need to remember that. But there is some pressure when you get captaincy. You have got to give him a little time."

"There are ten more players in the side, and 16 in the squad. We all have to get together and give him confidence. At any moment, the captain could click. Asalanka is someone who works really hard, professional and communicates well," he added.

If T20 produces attacking Test players, then I will not mind: Sehwag

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virender Sehwag wouldn't mind if youngsters starting with T20 cricket develop an aggressive streak which helps them grow as Test players who can be crowd-pullers in future. One of India's greatest Test openers, Sehwag, who was unveiled as Brand Ambassador of the inaugural Delhi Premier League, said one can't blame youngsters who are attracted to the shortest format which also provides financial viability.

"The manner in which England is playing Test cricket, scoring at five runs an over. In our playing days, Australia used to score at 4 runs per over. I have always believed that if you can attack, then you give your team more chances to win the Test matches," Sehwag told mediapersons on the sidelines of an event to announce the league.

The inevitable question was whether too many T20 leagues would drive the youngsters away from the red-ball game.

"Look my elder son is 17 and he played three-day cricket for Delhi



U16 but there are a lot of boys who might be waiting for that opportunity. When we were 18, there was no IPL. But, now, a youngster might think of playing IPL, and DPL gives you that opportunity.

"So, if anyone develops an aggressive game that can suit Test cricket then why not? After all, we would like people to come and watch Tests," said the Nawab of Najafgarh. But didn't Sehwag play that aggressive

game in Test even before IPL? "Was it good or bad? I scored a triple ton in 270-odd balls. Today's kid might score 400 if they play that many balls," said Sehwag, whose son, Aaryavir, will be a part of the

IT'S ALL ABOUT FOCUSING ON ONE PROJECT AT A TIME FOR ALLU SIRISH!

K. RAMYA SREE

Actor Allu Sirish is back to entertain the audience with his latest film, *Buddy*. In a recent conversation ahead of the release, Allu Sirish, the charismatic star known for his diverse roles, shared intriguing details about his latest film, *Buddy*. The movie, directed by Sam Anton, is produced by KE Gnanavel Raja and Adhana Gnanavel Raja under the Studio Green Films banner. With Gayathri Bharadwaj and Prisha Rajesh Singh playing pivotal roles

Allu Sirish's latest film, *Buddy*, has now hit cinemas. Ahead of the release, the talented actor shares insights on the production journey of the film, dismissing rumours around the film being a remake and more

alongside Sirish, the film promises an adventurous and action-packed ride. Allu Sirish recounted the production journey of *Buddy*, which began in March last year and wrapped up by July. "Initially, we aimed to release the film in December, but with over 3,000 CG shots and the intricate animation required for the *Buddy* character, we faced delays. We wanted to ensure that *Buddy* met international standards, which is why we moved the release to August," Sirish explained. The extra time allowed for meticulous work, ensuring that the film's visual effects are top-notch. When asked about the storyline, Sirish emphasised the unique aspects of *Buddy*. "Director Sam Anton brought a fresh perspective to the concept of a Teddy Bear coming to life. Although similar themes have been explored before, *Buddy* stands out with its unique conflict, characterisation and narrative. I was excited to portray a pilot, adding a new layer of intensity to my role," he said. Despite the film's similarities to other works, Sirish assured that *Buddy* offers a distinct experience. Recent buzz suggested that *Buddy* might be a remake, a notion Sirish was quick to address. "There have been speculations about whether *Buddy* is a remake. We understand the confusion, especially with the release of our poster. However, I want to assure the audience that *Buddy* is an original film. We've put a lot of effort into creating a unique experience that combines both class and mass entertainment," Sirish clarified.

In response to changing viewing habits, Sirish discussed the importance of the theatrical release for Telugu audiences. "We've focused on making *Buddy* accessible in theatres at affordable prices. Unlike the North, where theatre attendance is relatively low, Telugu moviegoers still prefer watching films on the big screen. We want to ensure that *Buddy* reaches as many viewers as possible," he noted. While *Buddy* includes a love story, Sirish explained that it plays a secondary role. "Director Sam included just enough romance to support the story without overshadowing the main plot. The film is designed to be fast-paced, with a runtime of 2 hours and 8 minutes, which suits the concept-oriented nature of the movie," he said. Sirish praised the director for maintaining a brisk and engaging narrative. The film features several high-octane action sequences, which Sirish and his team approached with a focus on realism. "We worked closely with the action choreographers to design natural and impactful sequences. The production quality is exceptional, with the acquisition of an old airplane for key scenes, including the climax fight," Sirish added. Reflecting on his career, Sirish mentioned his preference for focusing on one project at a time. "I believe in giving each film the attention it deserves, which sometimes leads to gaps between releases. Delays are a part of the industry and it's essential to ensure that each project is completed to the highest standard," he concluded.



Vijay Deverakonda, Gowtam Tinnanuri's film locks in a release date

Vijay Deverakonda, who has captured hearts across India with his remarkable performances, is preparing to dazzle audiences once again with his upcoming film, *VD12*. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Gowtam Tinnanuri, known for his National Award-winning work in *Jersey* and *Malli Raava*, *VD12* promises to be a riveting action drama. Currently, the film is being referred to by its working title, *VD12*. With the shoot largely completed in the picturesque settings of Sri Lanka, the production team has announced a grand release date of March 28, 2025. Fans can look forward to the official title and first look of the film, which are set to be unveiled

in August. Rockstar Anirudh Ravichander, celebrated for his musical genius, is composing the soundtrack, while the cinematography is being handled by ace lensmen Girish Gangadharan and Jomon T John. National Award-winning editor Navin Nooli is overseeing the film's editing, ensuring a polished final product. Produced on a grand scale by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi of Sithara Entertainments and Sai Soujanya of Fortune Four Cinemas, *VD12* is presented by Srikrara Studios. The meticulous care and passion invested in the project aim to deliver an unprecedented cinematic experience.

Sree Siri Sai Cinemas to release Vijay Antony's *Toofan* on August 9

Actor Vijay Antony's latest venture, *Toofan*, is generating significant buzz ahead of its grand release. Produced by Kamal Bora, D. Lalitha, B. Pradeep, and Pankaj Bora under the Infinity Film Ventures banner, this film marks their third collaboration with Vijay Antony, following the successful releases of *Raghavan* and *Hathya*.

Directed by Vijay Milton, *Toofan* is poised to captivate

audiences with its unique blend of poetic action and compelling storytelling. The film promises to deliver an engaging and fresh cinematic experience.

Scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on August 9, *Toofan* is being distributed by Sree Siri Sai Cinemas. The new unveiled sneak peek has already garnered a tremendous response, further heightening anticipation for the film's debut.



Anupam Kher begins shooting for *The Indian House*

Veteran actor Anupam Kher has kicked off the shoot of the highly anticipated movie *The India House*, marking his 542nd film.

On the official Instagram handle, production house Abhishek Agarwal Arts treated fans to Anupam Kher's video.

The BTS clip shows Anupam Kher getting into a vanity van to get into an avatar in which he is completely unrecognisable. It also features a close-up of Kher's face. Sharing the video, he wrote, "The 'Timeless Titan of Indian Cinema' @anupampkher Ji begins shooting for #TheIndiaHouse. The National Award-winning actor plays a powerful and key role in the period drama."

Anupam Kher also shared the video from the film's set on his X handle. He wrote, "Announcement: Delighted to announce my 542nd film, #TheIndiaHouse, a pan India period

drama!" He further went on to thank the makers including producer Ram Charan, actor Nikhil Siddhartha, producer Abhishek Agarwal and director Ram Vamsi Krishna. Sharing the experience, Anupam Kher stated, "Abhishek Agarwal believes that I am his lucky mascot. I believe it too. But he is also a wonderful producer to work with. She is understanding, affectionate and has a great sense of creativity. I hope *The India House* turns out to be another blockbuster like *The Kashmir Files* and *Karthikeya 2: Jai Ho!*" Anupam Kher will play the character of Shyamji Krishna Varma. The film set against the backdrop of India's struggle for independence, *The India House*, is expected to offer a riveting story filled with emotion, sacrifice, and patriotism. Speaking of *The India House*, the pan-Indian historical drama will star Nikhil Siddhartha (*Karthikeya 2* fame) in the lead role, with Anupam Kher portraying the prominent character. Directed by Ram Vamsi Krishna, the film is being produced by Abhishek Agarwal and Vikram Reddy under the banner of Abhishek Agarwal arts and V Mega Pictures. The film, presented by RRR star Ram Charan, is slated for a mega release in 2025.

Tharun Bhascker's new film announced

Arrow Cinemas and Dolamukhi Subhultron Films announced their latest cinematic venture, marking the second collaboration for both production houses. This forthcoming film promises to be a wholesome entertainer, featuring the versatile Tharun Bhascker in the lead role and introducing Vamsi Reddy Dondapati as the director. Produced by Boosam Jagan Mohan Reddy, with contributions from acclaimed writer and director Venu Udugula, the film aims to offer a

rich blend of entertainment and emotional depth. As their second joint project, it is set to elevate storytelling and production standards to new heights. The announcement was made in an innovative fashion, showcasing a stamp paper that humorously depicts the character Srinivas Goud's fictional divorce from his wife, Sripatha. Filming is scheduled to commence in October, and the production team is enthusiastic about bringing this project to

fruition. To uncover fresh talent, an open casting call for aspiring actors has been announced. Further details about the technical crew and other key members of the production team will be unveiled in the coming weeks. Stay tuned for more updates as this exciting project develops.



Malavika Mohanan onboards *Sardar 2*

Karthi-starrer superhit film *Sardar's* sequel was kicked off earlier in July. Directed by PS Mithran, the makers had announced that actor SJ Suryah has joined the cast. Now, on Friday, the makers had announced that actress Malavika Mohanan has joined the cast and will be playing the female lead in the film. Produced by Prince Pictures, the sequel will have music composed by Yuvan Shankar Raja. The rest of the cast of *Sardar 2* are yet to be announced. Meanwhile, in one of her latest interviews, Malavika shared her desire to play a gangster role. Apart from from *Sardar 2*, she will also be seen in *The Raja Saab*, starring Prabhas and Vikram's *Thangalaan*.

British actor Daniel on his Indian debut film *Thangalaan*

British actor Daniel Caltagirone, known for his roles in films such as *The Pianist* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider – The Cradle of Life*, is

making his Indian cinema debut as the antagonist Lord Clement in the highly anticipated Tamil film *Thangalaan*. Directed by Pa Ranjith and starring Vikram, the film promises an epic drama set against the backdrop of the Kolar gold mines, a setting previously popularised by the Kannada franchise KGF. Caltagirone, who is currently in Chennai for the film's promotion, shared his thoughts on the role and his experience working on the project.

In a recent interview with PTI, Caltagirone emphasised that his portrayal of Lord Clement in *Thangalaan* is far from a stereotypical villainous role. "When Pa Ranjith first approached me, we had an extensive conversation about the character. I didn't audition; Ranjith simply called my agent and expressed interest. I was keen on understanding the portrayal of British characters in Tamil cinema. I was cautious about stepping into a role that might end up being cliched or tokenistic," Caltagirone revealed. He praised Ranjith's vision, stating, "Ranjith made it clear that he wanted me to avoid the

typical British antagonist role. He aimed to showcase something different in Indian cinema and I was excited to be part of that vision." Caltagirone, who had previously worked with international directors like Tarsem Singh and Shekhar Kapur, found Ranjith's approach refreshing and innovative. Caltagirone described Lord Clement as a complex character with a rich backstory. "Lord Clement and Vikram's characters are two sides of the same coin. The film explores how both characters, driven by their desire for gold, are shaped by their harsh experiences. It's not just about being evil; it's about understanding what made them that way," he explained. This nuanced portrayal contrasts with the more straightforward villain roles often seen in cinema. The actor spoke candidly about the challenges and the extensive time commitment involved in *Thangalaan*. "Shooting for *Thangalaan* took over a year. I arrived in India in October 2022 and wrapped up in November 2023. It felt like working on a project for a century due to the demanding schedule and the

physicality of the role," Caltagirone joked. He also shared insights into the rigorous stunts he performed, expressing his admiration for Indian actors, who often undertake demanding roles without relying heavily on stunt doubles. Caltagirone expressed his respect for the Indian film industry and its actors. "My experiences in India have always been profound. The actors here push boundaries and I have immense respect for their dedication. Indian filmmakers are incredibly passionate, and that enthusiasm has made each project I've been part of truly memorable," he said. Reflecting on his previous experiences in India, including working with Tarsem Singh on *The Fall* and Shekhar Kapur on *The Four Feathers*, Caltagirone noted a deep connection with the country. "India has always felt like a second home to me. There's something about Indian cinema and culture that resonates deeply, and working here has always been a significant part of my career," he shared.

Kriti's cyberpunk avatar in *Love Insurance Kompany* hints at futuristic love



The long-awaited movie *Love Insurance Kompany (LIK)*, helmed by Vignesh Shivan, features Pradeep Ranganathan, Kriti Shetty, and SJ Suryah in key roles. The movie has been creating a lot of excitement, as the initial posters of Pradeep and SJ Suryah have received great feedback from both fans and critics. On Friday, the makers revealed the initial glimpse of the movie's female protagonist, Kriti Shetty. The poster displays Kriti in a futuristic environment, looking at her "love score" on a modern, spatial mobile device, with the backdrop of September

2025. This romantic comedy with a science fiction twist centers on a love story involving time travel. The film has been highly anticipated due to the positive reception of its promotional material. The movie *LIK* is a collaboration between Rowdy Pictures and Seven Screen Studio, with a strong supporting cast consisting of actors like Yogi Babu, Myskin, Seeman, Anandaraj, Malavika, Sunil Reddy, Gouri G. Kishan and Sha Ra. Anirudh Ravichander writes the musical score, Sathyan Sooryan handles cinematography and Pradeep Ragav edits the film.