

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The pioneer  
 For 10 years, former Chief Minister KCR did not step out of his farmhouse, while Revanth Reddy is travelling abroad to ensure the state's welfare. The BRS government never considered attracting investments. Why are BRS leaders uncomfortable with initiatives that help the people of Telangana?  
 - Ponnam Prabhakar, Minister, TG P4

**'How much Delhi exchequer lost due to faulty liquor policy'**  
 5

**CAN'T IGNORE FOOD INFLATION: DAS**  
 8

**Niharika Konidela: My true passion lies IN ACTING**  
 P12

**DON'T MISS...**

**Aqua farmers advised not to use...**

West Godavari District Collector C Nagarani has asked the aquaculture farmers not to use hazardous antibiotics and chemicals in the fish ponds and to use the medicines approved by the CCA. A meeting with the aqua farmers, dealers, exporters, and the officials of MPEDA and fisheries, was held here on Thursday to discuss the issue and challenges being faced by the aqua sector. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the aqua farmers should register their fish ponds with the MPEDA and they should have the...

**Several heatwave indices failed to...**

Selecting a heatwave index is crucial for identifying dangerous conditions across varied geographies and weather, according to a study that found that many existing indices failed to capture severity of heatwaves, including those in India. As the planet warms, heatwaves have become more frequent and intense, emerging as a significant contributor to heat-related deaths. Researchers said that this underscores the urgency of recognising their impact and severity. In the study...

**IT hiring likely to surge as demand...**

With IT companies gradually coming out of the slump and actively ramping up their hiring efforts, a report on Thursday said that recruitment is set to surge with an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year. The demand for skilled IT talent is growing after a slow period late last year and early this year. Hiring is set to surge, with an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year, according to a report by Indeed, a global job matching...

**Wrestler Aman enters semifinals...**

Young Indian grappler Aman Sehrawat rekindled India's hopes of a medal in wrestling, demolishing former world champion Zelimkhan Abakarov of Albania by technical superiority to seal a place in the 57kg free-style semifinal at the Paris Olympics here on Thursday. Aman was in imperious form as he toyed with Abakarov in the second round. The 21-year-old Indian locked his legs at the start of the second round and turned him over multiple times to earn eight straight points to secure a 12-0 victory...

**Janmabhoomi 2.0 soon**

**TDP politburo moots Rs 5 L insurance cover for party members**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) politburo meeting, chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, has decided to begin Janmabhoomi 2 soon. The meeting, held at the party central office at Mangalagiri on Thursday, also discussed the Skill Census which is the first of its kind in the country and political strategies for MLC elections. Naidu decided to fill nominated posts, take up a party membership drive by offering Rs 5 lakh accident insurance for Rs 100 TDP party membership, and initiatives towards poverty alleviation. The politburo has decided to make appropriate efforts to strengthen the Telugu Desam Party in Telangana. On Janmabhoomi-2, Chandrababu Naidu said, "A comprehensive plan is being prepared with the cooperation of NITI Aayog for the development of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Vision 2020 has given good results so we will create Vision 2047. The Janmabhoomi programme undertaken in united Andhra Pradesh has received a good response from people. Now under Janmabhoomi-2 with the cooperation of the people, development and welfare programmes will be carried out with the cooperation of all the people."

- Politburo meet discusses political strategies for MLC elections.
- Anna Canteens to be run on the lines of Annadanam programmes.
- Efforts to be made to strengthen TDP in Telangana.
- CMs TDP leaders to popularise 7 white papers released by govt.
- Hardworking TDP leaders to be rewarded with nominated posts.



A comprehensive plan is being prepared with the cooperation of NITI Aayog for the development of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Vision 2020 has given good results so we will create Vision 2047.

**Ensure seed supply, input subsidy for farmers: CM**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has instructed the Agriculture Department to ensure a seamless supply of seeds across Andhra Pradesh. To support farmers affected by July's heavy rains, he has also

approved a Rs 36 crore input subsidy for crop replanting. Naidu emphasized the importance of 100% e-crop registration and called for agricultural reforms to reduce costs and boost farmer income. During a review of agriculture and allied sectors, he stressed the need for technology-driven growth in the sector. The CM advocated for the increased use of drones in pesticide spraying and proposed establishing a drone testing centre in the state. He also highlighted the potential of satellite technology in soil moisture detection. *Continued on Page 2*



AP Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan at a meeting with Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre in Bengaluru on Thursday.

**AP, K'taka govts sign MoU on forest protection**

- Karnataka to provide Kumki elephants to AP.
- Collaboration to combat red sander smuggling.
- Proposal for Yatri Niwas facilities in AP.
- Focus on ecotourism development.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Panchayat Raj, Environment and Forest Minister K Pawan Kalyan has announced a collaborative effort with Karnataka to address shared environmental challenges. After meeting with Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Minister Eshwar B Khandre in Bengaluru, the two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) focused on forest conservation. *Continued on Page 2*

**Row over Pawan's remarks on portrayal of heroes in Telugu films**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and actor Pawan Kalyan has stirred a storm of controversy with his recent comments on the changing portrayal of heroes in the Telugu film industry. Speaking at an international conference in Bengaluru, Pawan Kalyan expressed concern over the shift in characterisation of heroes from protectors of the environment to those involved in illegal activities. He drew a stark contrast between the heroic figures of the past, who often championed environmental causes, and the current trend of portraying heroes as smugglers and criminals. *Continued on Page 2*

**AP asks Centre to sanction 1L tonnes of red gram**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Civil Supplies, Nadendra Manohar, met Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution Prahlad Joshi and Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas (PNG), Hardeep S Puri, in New Delhi on Thursday. Minister Manohar represented several important issues related to Andhra Pradesh including red gram allocation. Manohar said that he asked the Centre to sanction 1 lakh tonnes of red gram to meet AP's requirement. During the meeting with Union Minister Prahlad Joshi, Minister Manohar sought the allocation of red gram (tur dal) to Andhra Pradesh to enhance the coverage of beneficiaries against the existing NFSA coverage to AP State. He further sought permission to open eight new price reporting centres. The minister asked the Centre to allocate Rs 532 crore from the Price Stabilisation Fund to stabilise prices in the State. He further wanted the Centre to release the pending amount of Rs 1187 crore to the State at the earliest and approval for the construction of 11 Silo godowns. Union Minister Prahlad Joshi has responded positively to all the



above issues raised and assured of early action on the issues raised. He also assured that a special meeting with Senior officers from the Union Government and State Government will be convened, for redressal, after the completion of the Parliament sessions. In the second programme, Minister Nadendra Manohar handed over the letter written by Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Nara Chandrababu Naidu to Union Minister Hardeep S Puri. Manohar explained about conversion of the existing 60 lakh Deepam connections in AP State to the PMUY scheme to the Union Minister who responded very positively and assured early action in this regard. Minister Manohar was accompanied by MPs of Ongole, Machilipatnam, Kakinada Eluru and other higher Officials.

**Govt tables Waqf Bill in LS, refers it to JPP**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on Thursday and referred to a joint parliamentary panel after a heated debate, with the government asserting the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the opposition calling it targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said he will talk with leaders of all parties for constituting the joint parliamentary committee. Soon after Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju sought leave to introduce the Bill, opposition INDIA bloc MPs strongly protested the introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, calling it an "attack" on the Constitution and aimed at targeting Muslims. Congress MP KC Venugopal, who had submitted notice to oppose its introduction, accused the government of violating the right to freedom of religion and claimed the legislation was being brought with an eye on the upcoming assembly polls. "This is a draconian law and a fundamental attack on the Constitution," Venugopal said. He said people taught the BJP a lesson -- in the Lok Sabha polls -- for its divisive politics but it is continuing with the same, keeping in mind the upcoming assembly elections in states such as Maharashtra.

**Govt set to launch Skill Census: Lokesh**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Education, IT and Electronics Minister Nara Lokesh said that the first-of-its-kind Skill Census programme in the country is going to be launched in the State for the first time to identify skills among the youth and improve their employment opportunities. *Continued on Page 2*



**India win successive hockey bronze after 52 years, gift Sreejesh perfect farewell**

PNS ■ PARIS

The Indian men's hockey team clinched a second successive bronze medal at the Olympic Games for the first time in 52 years with a comeback behind 2-1 win over Spain, giving veteran goalkeeper PR Sreejesh a fitting farewell here on Thursday. It was tense last few minutes for the Indians as they faced two short corners within the last minute but the defence stood tall and soaked in the pressure. India, who claimed the bronze in Tokyo Games after a hiatus of 41 years, lived up to the expectations despite not having a perfect build-up to the Games. The last time India won back-to-back Olympic medals was in 1968 (bronze) and 1972 editions (bronze).



The bronze medal was also a desperate wait for the Indian contingent in Paris, which has endured six fourth-place finishes so far, apart from heartbreaking disqualification of wrestler Vinesh Phogat. Spain went ahead with skipper Marc Miralles (18th) converting a penalty stroke while India captain Harmanpreet Singh (30th, 33rd) stole the limelight with a brace.

**Phogat can still win silver medal**  
 ● Court of Arbitration accepts appeal

PNS ■ PARIS

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has accepted the appeal against Vinesh Phogat's disqualification. Initially, Vinesh appealed to be allowed to compete in the gold medal match in the women's 50-kg weight category, but this was denied as the US's Sarah Hildebrandt had already won the event. In her second appeal, Vinesh requested the CAS to declare her a joint-silver medalist which may be granted. The CAS will review her appeal and she could potentially return to India with a medal. Vinesh's appeal hearing will be conducted online. Joelle Monlouis, Estelle Ivanova, Habbine Estelle Kim and Charles Amson who are pro

bono lawyers with the Paris Bar for the Paris 2024 Olympics will represent her at the CAS hearing. If Vinesh wins the appeal, she will be awarded a joint silver medal. If she loses, the disqualification will stand, and she will finish in last place. The star Indian grappler was having a stellar run at the Paris Olympics having switched from the 53 kg to the 50 kg weight category just five months ago. Vinesh was disqualified from her gold medal match in the women's 50-kg weight category for being 100 grams overweight on the day of her bout. As a result, Yusneylys Guzman, whom Vinesh had defeated in the semi-final, advanced to the final and ultimately lost to US's Sarah Hildebrandt.



**AP reservoirs 67% full after excess rainfall**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Excess rainfall in June and July in Andhra Pradesh has resulted in 108 reservoirs across the state being filled up to 67 per cent of their storage capacity by Thursday, prompting officials to discharge water from various dams. Recently, the Meteorological Department noted that Andhra Pradesh received excess rainfall for the period from June 1 to July 31, amounting to a cumulative rainfall of 301.4 mm, which is 34 per cent higher than the normal cumulative rainfall of 225.2 mm. Further, it forecasts the likelihood of above-normal rainfall over south coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP) and Rayalaseema, and normal to below-normal rainfall over north coastal Andhra Pradesh in August. The Andhra Pradesh Water Resources Information &



Management System (APWRIMS) said the current water storage including in all minor, major and other reservoirs, is over 657 TMC or 67 per cent. It was only 46 per cent a year ago at 456 TMC. The total capacity of all the reser-

voirs at Full Reservoir Level (FRL) is pegged at 983.49 TMC with a flood cushion of 326.15 TMC. According to the latest APWRIMS data, the water level at Srisailem Reservoir, a major reservoir, was at 882.6 ft, followed by Nagarjuna Sagar Reservoir (585.4 ft), Pulichintala Project (167.88 ft) and Prakasam Barrage (57.05 ft). Consequently, floodwater inflows are being discharged at various dams. Over 2.67 lakh cusecs of floodwater was discharged at Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada by 6 am on Thursday, Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) managing director R Kurmanadh said in a press release. By 7 pm on Wednesday, 47,235 cusecs of floodwater were released at Sunkesula Barrage, Srisailem Dam (4.2 lakh cusecs), Nagarjuna Sagar (2.7 lakh cusecs) and Pulichintala Project (2.88 lakh cusecs). Considering the rising floodwaters in the Krishna River, Kurmanadh alerted people in the riparian villages and settlements to be cautious, avoiding navigation of all kinds.

**Buddhadeb passes away**

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who will be remembered both for his commitment to the communist ideology and a pragmatic approach to industrialising the state, passed away at the age of 80 at his residence here on Thursday. Bhattacharjee, a stalwart of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), was known for his efforts to bring industrialisation to the state, an endeavour that, despite his best intentions, eventually led to the downfall of the Left Front government after 34 years of continuous rule.





# Conflict between Malas and Madigas in AP

The Supreme Court judgment on 1 August 2024 dealt with another five-judge bench of SC in a case of Andhra Pradesh. Two judgments conflict with each other. In 2020, SC supported the sub-categorisation of SCs, while opposing SC verdict in 2005. The Supreme Court's decision in *E.V. Chinnaiah v. State of A.P. and Ors.*, (2005) 1 SCC 394 held that the Scheduled Caste groups were a "homogenous group" notified in the Presidential List under Article 341. Punjab State appealed against the High Court decision and separately Andhra Pradesh High Court challenged the validity of *Chinnaiah*.

The journey went beyond 2000 and another landmark verdict was given in 2020. The bench noted that the aspect of "backward classes" in *Indra Sawhney* also included the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Justice Arun Mishra also observed that states are best placed to study "disparities in different areas." Additionally, the referring bench suggested that the 'creamy layer' exclusion would also apply to the Scheduled Caste category, as observed in *Jarnail Singh v. Lachmi Narain Gupta* (2018).

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**PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU**  
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

In June 1997, the Maadiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS) organized a big rally from Chittoor to Hyderabad, after which the then Chief Minister of AP (Chandrababu Naidu) agreed to divide the SCs into the A, B, C, and D categories. A *Mala Mahanadu* leader E.V. Chinnaiah, Mallala Venkat Rao with another challenged the order before the AP High Court, saying it was a myth that Malas corner everything from the six per cent SC quota.

While BCs are inclusive along with SCs and STs, the 'creamy layer' became another category with 'exclusive'. It was created by the historical

judgment in *Indra Sawhney* that confirmed reservations for Other Backward Classes and the exclusion of the 'creamy layer' within OBCs. What we need to understand is that the Governments both at the Centre and in the States could not make them 'forward', though 'backwardness' has been

perpetuated for the last 75 years by extending reservations every 10 years. The OBCs were created in the Mandal Commission Report as suggested by the judgment in the *Indra Sawhney* case. (See the entire report of the Commission. <https://www.nbc.nic.in/Writereaddata/Mandal%20Commission%20Report%20of%20the%201st%20Part%20English635228715105764974.pdf>)

litigation either from one of the State High Courts or the Supreme Court. Justice B.R. Gavai's remarks on states needing to identify and exclude the 'creamy layer' within the Scheduled Castes category will start a series of judgments. **WHEN CJI WAS SILENT** Three other judges concurred with Justice Gavai's remarks but the Chief Justice's judgement did not opine on the topic. 'Creamy layer' within the Scheduled Caste category was not framed as an issue; so, there remains some confusion about whether Justice Gavai's observations have the force of law. Our civil society needs to identify based on 'empirical evidence' to conclude who should be called the 'creamy layer', backward and most backward categories among the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (though, now it is confined to the Scheduled Castes). The State governments in different states have

to decide by notification or law such that executive or legislative decisions will naturally be subject to judicial review. **LANDMARK JUDGMENT IN 2024** The Union government and several state governments argued in favour of sub-classification. The respondents contended that sub-classification by states amounts to "tinkering" with the Presidential List, which is a prerogative of Parliament. The bench of the Supreme Court majority (6:1) held that the different entries in the Presidential List can be considered "backward classes" under Article 16(4). Hence, the Supreme Court bench with a 6:1 majority judged that states could create sub-classifications within the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories on 1st August 2024 (*State of Punjab & Ors. Vs. Davinder Singh & Ors. 2024, INSC 562*). (Concluded)

## CM Naidu to inaugurate Intl Tribal Day celebrations today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Tribal Welfare Department authorities are all set to host the International Tribal Day celebrations on August 9 (Friday) at the Tummalapallivari Kshetriya Kala Kshetram in Vijayawada. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will inaugurate the celebrations and witness various folk dances performed by tribals.



Tribal Welfare Minister Gummadi Sandhya Rani inspecting the arrangements for conducting the International Tribal Day celebrations at the Kala Kshetram in Vijayawada on Thursday

In preparation for the event, Minister for Tribal Welfare and Women and Child Welfare, Gummadi Sandhya Rani, along with Tribal Welfare Secretary K Kanna Babu, NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana, Joint Collector Nidhi Meena, VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra, Tribal Welfare Officer J Sunitha, and Vijayawada RDO Bh. Bhavani Sankar inspected the arrangements at the Kala Kshetram on Thursday.

Minister Sandhya Rani highlighted that International

Tribal Day is celebrated on August 9 every year nationwide. She also mentioned that several ministers, people's representatives, tribal leaders, and high-ranking officials are expected to attend the celebrations. She explained that various tribal cultures will be showcased during the event.

Furthermore, Minister Sandhya Rani mentioned that CM Naidu would interact with tribal people to understand and address their issues. Encouraging tribal participation on a large scale, she emphasised the importance of their involvement in making the Tribal Day celebrations successful.

## AP govt to felicitate organ donors

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday said it will felicitate organ donors under a new scheme called 'Jeevandan' to encourage organ donations.

State Health, Medical and Family Welfare Special Chief Secretary MT Krishna Babu issued orders mandating the district collectors or his/her subordinates to lay a wreath or garland on the mortal remains of the deceased donor. "Donor family members shall be felicitated by presenting a shawl, certificate with a frame, and some flowers, as a mark of respect to every deceased organ donor at the time of donation," said Babu in the Government Order (GO).

Besides felicitation, Rs 10,000 will be disbursed to the kin of the donor for carrying out a dignified funeral, including the free transportation of the body of the donor from the hospital to his/her residence or the crematorium.

Observing that organ donation is an act of supreme nobility, the Special Chief Secretary noted that several organs could be harvested from deceased donors, such as kidneys, livers, lungs, heart, intestine, pancreas, hands and skin.

## Mangalagiri to be gold hub of south India: Nara Lokesh

Says weavers' welfare is govt's priority

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Education Minister Nara Lokesh inaugurating a 'Kalyana Mandapam' for the weavers' community in Mangalagiri on Thursday.

Education, IT and Electronics Minister Nara Lokesh has said that the social service programmes undertaken by the Padmashaliya Bahuttama Sangham are ideal for all sections. Minister Lokesh inaugurated the newly-constructed Kalyana Mandapam under the auspices of Padmashaliya Bahuttama Sangham at Mangalagiri on Thursday.

Lokesh and his wife Brahmini were warmly welcomed by the community elders. Later, they participated in a special puja at Bhadravati Sametha Bhavanarushi Swami temple.

On this occasion, Lokesh said that the government would support and cooperate with the programmes undertaken by the Padmashaliya Bahuttama Sangham and the development of the temple. He said that the weavers of Mangalagiri are his soul mates and the love they showed him during the elections will never be forgotten. He said that he

would take all measures to restore the past glory to Mangalagiri weavers. He said that Weavers Shala has been set up as a pilot project to increase the income of handloom workers and market linkage has been done with Tata Tanera. Lokesh said that we are working to ensure that the GST issue will be resolved soon. Lokesh said that goldsmiths in Mangalagiri will be trained to make better designs through skill development, and efforts have been made to establish a special gold hub on approximately 25 acres to make Mangalagiri a gold hub of South India. Mangalagiri has many problems that have accu-

mulated over the years and every step taken will be towards a permanent solution to the problems. Lokesh said that Kalyana Mandapam has been built in a way that is accessible to all and the youth should participate in the service activities organized by the community. The youth should participate in all programs to learn about the history of Mangalagiri and preserve the history. MLCs Murugudu Hanumanth Rao, Panchumurthy Anuradha, Constituency Coordinator Nandam Abaddiah, Janasena Constituency Coordinator Chillapalli Srinivas, Padmashaliya Bahuttama Sangam Elders participated in this programme.

## Comedian accused of denigrating Hindu gods

PNS ■ SURYAPET

The Rashtriya Vanara Sena Mission lodged complaint with Two Town police station here against small screen popular comedy star Bithri Satti for making videos denigrating the Hindu Gods and Hindu religion. An FIR was lodged against him in the case. The controversial comedy star is defending his case by making selfie videos claiming himself to be an innocent person and accused vested interests of circulating videos maligning his image.

However, the Rashtriya Vanara Sena criticised comedy star terming the videos as egoistic. The Vanara Sena demanded that the comedy star tender public apology. Otherwise, he would have to taste the ire of Hindus.

## AP, K'taka govts sign MoU on forest...

Continued from Page 1

A key issue discussed was the escalating elephant menace affecting both states. Karnataka pledged to provide eight Kumki elephants to Andhra Pradesh to mitigate crop damage caused by wild elephants. Pawan Kalyan expressed concern over the significant agricultural losses incurred due to elephant raids. The ministers also addressed the persistent problem of red sander smuggling. Karnataka police have seized red sander

logs worth Rs 140 crore during the past few years while being transported illegally from Andhra Pradesh. To combat this, both states will explore advanced technologies, including satellite surveillance, to monitor red sander smuggling activities. Karnataka has extended an invitation to Andhra Pradesh to establish Yatri Niwas facilities at Tirumala and Srisailem for the convenience of their devotees. This proposal will be presented to Chief Minister N

Chandrababu Naidu for consideration. Both states have committed to developing a comprehensive strategy for ecotourism. During the meeting, seven key areas were identified for cooperation, including preventing indiscriminate felling of red sander trees, curbing illegal transportation, and combating poaching. Pawan Kalyan expressed his admiration for Kannada culture and traditions, vowing to learn the language.

## Row over Pawan's remarks on..

Continued from Page 1

While Pawan Kalyan didn't mention any specific actor or film, his remarks have been widely interpreted as a veiled criticism of Allu Arjun's blockbuster 'Pushpa', where the actor plays a sandalwood smuggler. The film's immense popularity and Allu Arjun's subsequent political campaigning for the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) are believed to have added fuel to the speculation. Social media has been abuzz with reactions to Pawan Kalyan's comments, with many users drawing a direct connection between the actor's words and Allu Arjun. However, others have cautioned against reading too much into the statement, suggesting it might be a general observation rather than a personal attack.

The controversy has sparked a wider debate on the role of cinema in shaping societal values and the responsibility of filmmakers to portray positive and responsible characters.

## YSRCP to fight against move to privatise medical colleges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister Merugu Nagarajana came down heavily on the TDP coalition government for what he called lying about new medical colleges before the elections and now deciding to privatise them.

Speaking to media at the camp office here on Thursday, Merugu Nagarajana demanded that the government retract its decision to privatise these colleges and said YSRCP would fight on behalf of poor students otherwise. He also stated that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, HRD Minister Nara Lokesh and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, should honour their pre-election promises regarding the seats in the new medical colleges, or protests would certainly be initiated to expose their hypocrisy to the public.

The former minister said Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had not established a single government medical college despite being CM for 14 years and added that former Chief Minister and YSRCP President YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, in his five-year term, undertook the unprecedented construction of 17 medical colleges simultaneously, creating 2,550 new medical seats and introduced a well-thought-out model to ensure there would be

no financial difficulties in running those new medical colleges, aiming to provide high-quality medical care to the poor but this model had been distorted and misrepresented shamelessly by certain leaders and media.

He slammed the TDP Coalition government for discussing the PPP model for new medical colleges in the recent Cabinet meeting and said they are being deceitful and their false propaganda against the YSRCP chief was solely aimed at tarnishing his image without any genuine intention to provide medical education to poor students. Nagarajana noted that the government had promised to revoke all GOs and fill all seats in the government sector when they came to power and questioned why this promise was not being kept and why there was an attempt to privatise the new medical colleges.

He mentioned that classes had already started in five colleges (Vizianagaram, Machilipatnam, Rajamahendravaram, Eluru, Nandyal) in 2023-24, and the second phase would have seen the start of classes in 2024-25 at medical colleges in Paderu, Markapuram, Madanapalle, Pulivendula, and Adoni if Jagan were still in power and their status was now uncertain.

## YS Jagan to console kin of attack victim today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chief minister and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will console the family of Pasupuleti Pedda Subbarayudu, who was allegedly murdered in an attack by TDP workers at Seetharamapuram Village in Mahanandi mandal of Nandyal district on Friday.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: Aug 09 12:37 AM to Aug 10 03:14 AM

Shashthi: Aug 10 03:14 AM to Aug 11 05:45 AM

Nakshatram: Hasta: Aug 08 11:34 PM to Aug 10 02:44 AM

Chitra: Aug 10 02:44 AM to Aug 11 05:48 AM

Rahukalam: 10:46 AM to 12:21 PM

Yamagandam: 3:31 PM to 5:06 PM

Varjyam: 11:46 AM to 01:34 PM

Gulika: 7:36 AM to 9:11 AM

Amritakalam: 07:56 PM to 09:45 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 AM to 12:46 PM

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

Temp: 34°C

Humidity: 73%

Sunrise: 5:50 AM

Sunset: 6:35 PM

Updated: August 8, 2024 5:00 PM





Irrigation officials released nearly 3 lakh cusecs surplus water from Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Thursday, following heavy inflows from upstream (Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar)

# 3.10 lakh cusecs released from Prakasam Barrage

If floodwater exceeds 3.97 lakh cusecs, Central Water Commission will give the first flood warning

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada has been receiving a large amount of floodwater from upstream of Krishna River. Irrigation Circle officials released around three lakh cusecs of surplus water into the sea by lifting all 70 gates on Thursday. In the past two days, all gates of the Prakasam Barrage have been lifted. Out of a total of 70 gates, 10 gates were lifted by eight feet and the remaining 60 gates by seven feet.

According to sources, the released inflow at the barrage was 3.10 lakh cusecs. Of this, 2.44 lakh cusecs came from Pulichintala and 54,000 cusecs, from Keesara. The Irrigation Circle officials released 2.96 lakh cusecs into the sea by lifting all 70 gates and another 13,768 cusecs to the canals, to maintain the barrage level at 12 feet.

The upper reservoirs on Krishna River, including the Srisailem Project, Nagarjuna Sagar Project, and Pulichintala, are receiving huge floodwater.

Therefore, the authorities discharged the surplus water downstream, resulting in the Prakasam Barrage receiving more than 3.10 lakh cusecs of floodwater. NTR and Krishna District Collectors Dr G Srijana and DK Balaji, along with VMC Commissioner Dhyanaachandra, alerted the public residing in low-lying areas downstream of the barrage.

Sources stated that if the flood discharge from the upper stream increases, the discharges of the Prakasam Barrage will also increase. If the floodwater

crosses 3.97 lakh cusecs at the barrage, the Central Water Commission (WRD) will issue the first flood warning at the barrage, officials said. However, the present inflows to the barrage averaged around 3.10 lakh cusecs.

Meanwhile, both the NTR and Krishna district administrations alerted the people living along the shores of Krishna and suggested they shift to safe places. Flood Control Rooms were opened at the district headquarters to monitor the situation of River Krishna.



## Ram Mohan Naidu backs para-badminton star Poorna Rao

Union Minister facilitates sponsorship of Rs 1.5 lakh for Rao's participation in international championship

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu has come to the aid of para-badminton player Chapara Poorna Rao, who is poised to compete in an international championship in Surakarta, Indonesia. Poorna Rao, a native of Tekkali, has displayed extraordinary resilience, transforming a severe spinal injury from a road accident into a platform for athletic excellence. With seven international medals and a global ranking of 33, his journey is a remarkable testament to determination and perseverance. Poorna Rao approached Minister Naidu on August 5, seeking financial backing for his trip to Indonesia. Recognising the young athlete's unwavering dedication and immense potential, Naidu responded promptly. He underscored that neither disability nor financial hurdles should obstruct talent. Within just two days, Naidu facilitated a sponsorship of Rs 1.5 lakh from Dream 11 sports organisation, securing Poorna Rao's participation in the tournament.



# GCC's helping hand to tribal coffee farmers

Initiative includes measures to ensure fair pricing, financial aid, and support systems for coffee industry

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GCC Managing Director Kalpana Kumari, on Thursday, unveiled a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving the livelihoods of tribal coffee farmers in the region. The initiative includes measures to ensure fair pricing, provide financial assistance, and strengthen support systems for the coffee industry. Addressing a gathering of stakeholders at the ITDA video conference hall, Kumari outlined a detailed roadmap designed to uplift the lives of tribal coffee growers. Key components of the plan include the provision of loans to farmers and enhanced collaboration between GCC staff and field-level coffee personnel. To

secure a stable market for coffee produced by these farmers, GCC has committed to procuring 3,000 metric tonnes from Max Company, with an ambitious target of 5,000 metric tonnes annually.

Recognising the importance of collaborative efforts, Kumari emphasised the need for joint initiatives and announced future partnerships with ITDA to optimise procurement processes. To gain a deeper understanding of farmers' challenges and aspirations, she engaged in direct dialogue, reaffirming GCC's commitment to their welfare.

Paderu ITDA Project Officer V Abishek provided an update on coffee cultivation progress, highlighting the successful collection of 700 met-

ric tonnes of coffee fruit through Max and the target of 1,000 metric tonnes for the year. He also emphasised the establishment of two eco-pulp units and the expansion of coffee plantations across 16,000 acres in the 2023-24 financial year.

To gain firsthand insights into local enterprises, Kumari visited the soap-making unit in Araku Valley and the Naandi Foundation coffee procurement unit. These visits underscored her commitment to fostering sustainable development in the region.

The convergence of GCC's financial support, ITDA's developmental initiatives, and the dedication of tribal coffee farmers is expected to create a significant positive impact.

# Bagchi cracks down on infant abductions

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a swift response to the alarming surge in newborn kidnappings and baby conversions, Police Commissioner Dr Shankha Brata Bagchi has initiated stringent measures to safeguard infants across the district. The Commissioner has called for a comprehensive overhaul of security protocols in all maternity and newborn care units.

Dr Bagchi has emphasised the urgent need for a proactive approach to prevent these heinous crimes. In a detailed letter to the District Collector, he has outlined a robust security plan that includes mandatory installation of high-definition CCTV cameras, round-the-clock monitoring by dedicated personnel, and the deployment of trained security

Calls for overhaul of security protocols in all maternity and newborn care units



guards in the vicinity of neonatal care units and maternity wards. To further ensure

the safety of newborns, the Commissioner has proposed the implementation of RFID tagging for both mothers and infants, a technology that can effectively prevent baby swapping.

A recent inspection of healthcare facilities in the district has revealed security lapses. The Commissioner highlighted that out of 80 healthcare facilities in the city—comprising 68 private hospitals and 12 government hospitals—some currently lack the recommended security measures. Dr. Bagchi has reported these deficiencies to the District Collector, along with

detailed suggestions for improvement.

The District Collector has been entrusted with the task of enforcing the new security guidelines across all private and government hospitals. The administration is expected to conduct regular inspections to ensure compliance. Dr Bagchi has assured the public that the Police Department is committed to working closely with healthcare providers and the community to create a safe environment for newborns. He has appealed to parents to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the authorities.

# AU launches PG Diploma in Intellectual Property Rights



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University has taken a significant step towards strengthening the nation's intellectual property ecosystem with the launch of a one-year PG diploma in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). The programme, inaugurated on Thursday, aims to address the burgeoning demand for IPR professionals.

Delivered in a hybrid format to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds, the course received an enthusiastic response, with 54 students from across India and abroad enrolling in the inaugural batch. The programme's curriculum is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of IPR laws, regulations, and industry best practices.

Vice-Chancellor Prof G Sasi Bhushana Rao and Registrar Prof N. Kishore Babu extended their support to the initiative, emphasising the university's

commitment to IPR education and research. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the substantial impact of the DPIIT-IPR Chair, which has facilitated IPR training for approximately 15,000 students and supported the filing of nearly 150 patent applications.

Prof. Hanumanthu Purushotham, Course Director and DPIIT-IPR Chair Professor, shared that the course has attracted a diverse cohort of 54 students from across India and abroad, including working professionals from various fields. P Muralikrishna, Director of Novel Patent Services Pvt. Ltd., the industry partner, emphasised their commitment to providing practical training and industry exposure to the students. With this innovative programme, Andhra University aims to create a skilled workforce capable of safeguarding intellectual property and driving innovation in the country.



# Jamaat-e-Islami meet TDP MPs, urge them to stall Waqf Amendment Bill

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) State Minority Cell general secretary, Mohammad Fataullah, along with representatives from Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, met with Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath and Amalapuram MP Ganta Harish Madhur to discuss the potential negative impacts of the proposed Waqf Amendment Bill on the Muslim community and Waqf Board properties.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind secretary Abdul Rafiq, executive secretary Inamur Rahman, and retired IAS officer Hasibur Rahman, led by Mohammad Fataullah, met with the MPs in Delhi. On Thursday They urged the MPs to oppose the bill, highlighting the significant chal-

lenges it could pose to the Muslim community if enacted.

The MPs responded positively, assuring the delegation that they would bring the matter to the attention of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Education Minister Nara Lokesh. They promised to take appropriate action regarding the concerns raised.

Subsequently, Amalapuram MP Harish Madhur addressed the issue in Parliament, requesting that the Waqf Amendment Bill be referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for further review.

This move reflects the central government's decision to allow a more thorough examination of the bill's implications.

# CM to launch CREDAI's SOUTHCON on Aug 24

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI), Andhra Pradesh, will host SOUTHCON 2024 at Ayana Hotel & Convention Centre in Vijayawada on August 24 and 25, according to the members of CREDAI at a programme held on Thursday. Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu will be inaugurating the programme.

CREDAI AP SOUTHCON 2024 aims to foster collaboration, innovation, and sustainable growth in southern India's real estate sector across southern states. This conference unites key industry figures to share insights, tackle challenges, and explore opportunities in the dynamic real estate landscape of South India. Key leaders and stakeholders came together to drive progress, exchange valuable insights, and strengthen connections within the real estate community.

G Ram Reddy, national secretary of CREDAI said, "The



South Indian states contribute 31% to the national GDP with higher per capita income. These states are at the forefront of the technology, automobile, healthcare and startup revolution in the country thereby attracting investments across sectors. This requires a focused approach towards building world-class infrastructure as we move towards 'Viksit Bharat'. At SouthCon 2024 a report on the Construction and Present Market Scenario in South India prepared by JLL will be released through the hands of CM Chandrababu Naidu.

According to B Raja Srinivas, Joint Secretary, CREDAI National said, The SouthCon 2024 has been planned with the

objective to encourage the real estate developers in the region to come together to collaborate, innovate and adopt sustainable construction practices. Andhra Pradesh is at the cusp of rapid growth and transformation as they set up the new capital at Amravati. Alla Siva Reddy, Chairman, CREDAI Andhra Pradesh said, "As Andhra Pradesh gears up to build a new capital region at Amravati, the developers from the state will greatly benefit from the diverse and rich experience of industry leaders from other southern states and the world and adapt the best sustainable practices and building materials to develop Amravati as Green, Sustainable and a True Global City."

# 18 red sanders logs seized; one smuggler arrested

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Anti-Red Sanders Smuggling Task Force team seized 18 red sander logs and arrested smugglers at Madireddypally village in Rajampet forest division in Annamayya district.

DSP Chenchubabu told the media that on the directions of SP L Subba Rayudu, a task force police team led by RSI Y Viswanath conducted combing in the forest. They spotted some red sander woodcutters carrying red sanders on their heads. When they tried to approach them, they started fleeing after dumping the red sander logs.

The police apprehended one smuggler who was identified as Doraiswamy belonging to Tamil Nadu state. The police seized 18 red sander logs and launched a search for those who escaped. CI G Srinivasulu registered a case.

# AP Chambers urges SIDBI to open more branches in State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry Federation (AP Chambers) president P Bhaskar Rao on Thursday requested the chairman and managing director of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) Manoj Mittal to open more branches in the state. Rao noted that SIDBI branches are needed as there are numerous MSME clusters in the southern state and called for branches at Machilipatnam, Kakinada, Guntur and Kurnool. Currently, SIDBI operates

branches in Vijayawada, Vizag and Tirupati. "As there are numerous MSME clusters in Andhra Pradesh, consider opening new branches in key clusters such as Machilipatnam, Kakinada, Guntur and Kurnool," said Rao in a letter to Mittal.

Lauding SIDBI for its dedication to improving credit flow to MSMEs, the AP Chambers president highlighted that the bank addresses financial and developmental challenges within the ecosystem.

Emphasising the thriving gold business in

Machilipatnam, he noted that the town has strategic importance by the Machilipatnam Port, while Kakinada is significant for the same reason as well as a thriving MSME sector.

Similarly, he noted that Guntur is renowned for its agro-based market, featuring spices, textiles, tobacco and others, while Kurnool houses an industrial park in Orvakal with a large potential for industrial growth.

Rao added that new branches will facilitate better credit access and give a fillip to industrial development in the southern state.

# Special drive from today to combat child labour

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad has directed the task force committee members to commence a special drive starting Friday, to eradicate child labour within the district. The initiative aims to identify and take appropriate action against child labourers in the district, in strict adherence to the guidelines set by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

Speaking at the District Task Force Committee meeting held at the Collectorate meeting hall on Thursday, the Collector emphasised the necessity for officials from all departments to collaborate with the Labour Department in this critical task. From August 9 to 31, com-

From August 9 to 31, inspections will be carried out in various companies, shops, etc. in Visakhapatnam dist

prehensive inspections will be carried out across various companies, private businesses, shops, factories, and other industries within the district to gather details about their workforce. The NCPCR guidelines strictly prohibit the employment of individuals under 14 years of age and only allow those aged 15 to 18 years to work in non-hazardous organisations.

The District Collector highlighted the importance of targeting companies that violate these regulations. With the upcoming wedding season, he noted the likelihood of catering



companies employing school students and instructed officials to inspect wedding venues for any instances of child labour. Special attention will be given to the Anandapuram and Padmanabham mandals,

known for their higher numbers of migrant workers and potential use of children in BRICS companies. Legal action will be pursued against any violators.

During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner of the Labour Department Sunitha reported that since the task force committee's formation in August 2021, nine cases of child labour have been registered. Besides, 126 cases have been filed against the employers who failed to comply with minimum wage laws. She assured that labour laws are being rigorously enforced in alignment with

NCPCR guidelines. This year's NCPCR theme, "Freedom for Children," is being supported with special programmes to raise awareness and promote the cause.

The meeting was attended by District Revenue Officer K. Mohan Kumar, Deputy Commissioner of Labour Department Sunitha, ACL Rama Devi, DSO Suryaprakasha Rao, DEO Chandrakala, SSA PO Srinivasa Rao, BC Welfare Officer Sridevi, DM&HO Jagadiswara Rao, and representatives from ICDS, Police, and other departments.





# Tammileru in spate, first warning issued

PNS ■ ELURU

The Tammileru rivulet is in spate with heavy inflow and the first warning has been issued. Several low-lying areas were inundated at Tangellamudi village. The flood water of Tammileru was overflowing from the causeway at Ameenapet.

The police diverted the vehicular traffic coming from Sanivarapupet through Saint Javier School. The vehicles which were going towards Sanivarapupet from Ameenapet were diverted via the new bus stand and TTD Kalyana Mandapam.

DSP Shrawan Kumar, Irrigation Superintendent Engineer CH Dev Prakash, RDO M Sheik Khajavali and Deputy Tahasildar Gayatri inspected the causeway and monitored the flood. DSP Shrawan Kumar said that a police picket was set up at the Ameenapet causeway. Since there have been no floods to the Tammileru for the last few years, hyacinths, wild plants and creepers sprouted and spread all over the riverbed inhibiting the free flow of flood water. The officials engaged an earthmover to remove the hyacinth and wild plants from the rivulet at the new bus stand area here on Thursday. The vehicles were stranded 2 km on either side of the GST Road.

The water level in Tammileru reservoir stood at 349.42 feet as against its full capacity of 349.65. AEE Pramanandam told the media that the Tammileru reservoir was receiving 8,155 cusecs of water while 8,893 was being discharged downstream while 2,014 TMC of water was impounded in the reservoir.

Meanwhile, the Errakaluvu reservoir is also receiving heavy inflow at Jangareddygudem. The reservoir is brimful with 82.30 meters of water. Four crest gates of the project were lifted to release 6,500 cusecs of water downstream. According to the irrigation officials, due to heavy rains in the catchment areas, the normal life in agency areas in the Eluru district was thrown out of gear on Thursday. All streams, rivulets, canals and nalas including Palacharlavagu, Aswaraopet and Jilleru, Gunjavaram, Dodnapudi streams, Toorupu Kaluvu are overflowing with flood water in Jangareddygudem, Buttayagudem, Polavaram and Jeelugumilli mandals.

# Aqua farmers advised not to use hazardous chemicals, antibiotics

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector C Nagarani asked the aquaculture farmers not to use hazardous antibiotics and chemicals in the fishponds and to use the medicines approved by the CCA. A meeting with the aqua farmers, dealers, exporters, and the officials of MPEDA and fisheries, was held here on Thursday to discuss the issue and challenges being faced by the aqua sector.



Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that aqua farmers should register their fish ponds with the MPEDA and they should have the Farm ID. The aqua farmers should buy the shrimp breed from the CAA-registered hatcheries only, she told them.

She pointed out the US media's accusations and negative publicity against the Indian shrimp sector, stating it may affect the export of shrimp. West Godavari district is at the third position in AP in aqua farming, she said. The Collector also voiced the allegations that environmental damage, shrimp farming practices, pollution of water sources and excessive use of antibiotics contribute to the health of consumers. She recalled that the US media published articles alleging that the aqua industry had failed to

meet food safety standards, posing health risks to consumers and raising questions about the safety of shrimp imported from India. The Collector emphasized the need to hit back the accusations firmly. "At the same time, the quality of aqua products should also be enhanced to face competition in the international

market. Over 50 percent of aqua products are exported to the USA. The doubts raised by them may lead to decrease in exports," the Collector feared. There are over one lakh aqua farmers and 3.5 lakh aqua sector workers in the district. The aqua processing units are providing sustenance to over two lakh people in the district, the Collector acknowledged. "Antibiotics released from shrimp and fish farming ponds pollute waterways, harm ecosystems and create antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the environment," Collector Nagarani cautioned. She said that there are 14 shrimp hatcheries in the district and a total of 38,762 hectares of ponds (fish + shrimp) under aquaculture are under cultivation. Out of the total 21,150 hectares under shrimp cultivation in ponds, only 14,987 hectares of ponds have been registered by MPEDA, she observed. The aqua farmers raised their problems in the meeting and urged the Collector to take the issues to the government and resolve them same. DRO J Uday Bhaskar Rao, MPEDA officer TG Manoj Kumar, Industries GM M Mangapathi Rao, AP Aqua dealers association president CH Krishnam Raju and fisheries officer NVS Prasad were among those who attended the meeting.

# Adivasis true progenitors of civilisation: Bonela Vijaya Chandra

## World Adivasi Day celebrated



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a momentous celebration of World Adivasi Day, Parvathipuram MLA Bonela Vijaya Chandra delivered a powerful and moving tribute to the Adivasi community, declaring them the true progenitors of world civilisation. His words, spoken amidst the grand festivities at the Forest Mother statue within the local Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) office on Thursday morning, struck a chord with all present.

The day commenced with a vibrant procession, a symbolic journey that began at the Government Junior College and culminated at the ITDA office. Tribals, adorned in traditional attire, danced their way through the streets, their rhythmic movements echoing the heartbeat of a culture rich in history and spirit. MLA Bonela Vijaya Chandra, accompanied by ITDA Project Officer S Sedhu Madhavan, led this dynamic parade, embodying a deep connection between the leadership and the people. Upon reaching the ITDA Office, a special puja was performed at the statue of the Forest Mother—a revered symbol of the tribal community's spiritual heritage. This act of devotion was more than ceremonial; it was a heartfelt prayer for the ongoing prosperity, happiness, and well-being of the tribal people. MLA Bonela Vijaya Chandra and the Project Officer paid homage to the cultural roots that continue to sustain the community. Bonela Vijaya Chandra's address to the gathered crowd was charged with emotion and commitment. "The happiness of the tribals is the government's mission," he proclaimed, "and we will work tirelessly to achieve this." His

words reflected not just a promise, but a pledge to uplift and empower the Adivasi community. The crowd responded with traditional dances, a spontaneous and joyous affirmation of their rich heritage and deep-rooted traditions. Project Officer S. Sedhu Madhavan extended his heartfelt wishes to the entire tribal community, emphasising the importance of preserving and nurturing these ancient traditions. He expressed hope that such celebrations will continue to strengthen the bonds within the community, fostering unity and cultural pride. The event was attended by several distinguished figures from various tribal associations, including APO A. Muralidhar, Palaka Ranjit Kumar, Palla Suresh, Arika Chandrasekhar, and Intikuppala Ramakrishna.

# Collector for overhaul of education system

PNS ■ PADERU

In a scathing indictment of the district's education system, District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has vowed to undertake a comprehensive overhaul to address the issues of low literacy rates and inadequate enrolment. During a high-level meeting held on Thursday, Kumar expressed deep concern over the prevailing state of education and outlined a robust action plan to rectify the situation.



To improve the infrastructure of schools, the Collector announced a substantial allocation of Rs 2.5 crore. This fund will be utilised for essential upgrades and improvements to create a conducive learning environment for students. Emphasising the significance of digital identity, Kumar mandated Aadhaar enrolment for all students and warned of strict disciplinary action against schools resorting to proxy teaching. In a bid to enhance transparency and accountability, the Collector proposed the implementation of facial recognition systems to monitor the attendance of both students and teachers. Additionally, he directed the formation of school education committees, empowering local communities to address critical issues such as access to clean water, electricity, and hygienic sanitation facilities on the school premises. Recognising the pivotal

role of effective teaching methodologies, Kumar stressed the importance of comprehensive lesson planning. To incentivise academic excellence, a grading system will be introduced, with a focus on improving the performance of underachieving students. To equip teachers with the necessary skills, the Collector announced plans for specialised training programmes to enhance their subject-specific knowledge. The meeting also addressed the critical aspect of student health and well-being. The distribution of essential student kits, along with proactive measures to combat sickle cell anaemia, was discussed. To prevent the spread of vector-borne diseases, the Collector directed officials to implement comprehensive mosquito control measures in all schools. District Education Officer P. Brahmaji Rao and other senior officials were present at the meeting and pledged their full support to the Collector's initiatives.

# Three held for chain snatching, theft

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR district police arrested three people, who were involved in chain snatching and bike and laptop theft, in Vijayawada on Thursday.

The police seized 80 grams of gold ornaments worth Rs.11 lakh, five laptops and eight bikes from their possession. As per the direction of Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu and under the supervision of Crime Additional DCP Krishna Murthy, special teams were formed to keep vigil. As part of this, CCS police took a person, Devalla Gopi, 27, into their custody at the PNBs on Thursday, while he was trying to sell 80 grams of ornaments in the city. During the interrogation, he confessed that he committed chain snatching under AS Nagar and Krishna Lanka police stations. Later, the police seized all gold ornaments and arrested Dharavathu Durg Prasad, 27, a resident of A Kondur at the Vinayaka Temple in connection with a bike theft and N Nagababu, 27, who was arrested at Benz Circle in a laptop theft case.

# Withdraw move to reduce 'Upadhi' job cards: CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao has condemned the statement made by the Union Minister in Parliament regarding the deletion of 35 lakh MGNREGA job cards. He demanded that the government withdraw its decision. The AP Government issued as many as 80 lakh job cards, but according to him, the employment never exceeded 60-70 per cent, he said. In a press release here on Thursday, Srinivasa Rao alleged that there was a conspiracy to cut the budget allocation for MGNREGA in the name of reducing the number of labourers. Except for Jammu and Kashmir, all residents who are living in rural areas can get Upadhi scheme job cards. So, the government should withdraw the statement immediately, he said. Further, Srinivasa Rao stated that if the government failed to provide employment, the government should pay 50 per cent of unemployment benefits to the labourers. At present, four people are working on a job card, so the government should issue a



job card for every new couple, he said. However, the BJP-led NDA government is trying to cut the budget allocation for Upadhi scheme and planning to gradually set aside this scheme, he alleged. Srinivasa Rao demanded that the Central government fill the vacancies in the All India Medical Sciences (AIMS) at Mangalagiri. As of now, 48 per cent of teaching posts and 32.5 per cent of non-teaching staff posts are lying vacant. After the State bifurcation, the Central government allotted AIMS to the State and the medical treatment cost at this hospital is very cheap. At this stage, the State government should mount pressure on the Centre to fill all vacancies in AIMS, he added.

# VMC Commissioner visits APIIC colony

## Asks civic staff to remove silt from drains

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra and Industrial Area Local Authority (ILA) Commissioner Madhu conducted a joint inspection in the APIIC colony on Thursday, to understand the issues faced by the residents. During the inspection, the Commissioner requested the ILA authorities to remove silt from the drains in order to prevent rainwater from stagnating on the roads. Speaking on the occasion, Dhyanaachandra said that ILA authorities should take special care to remove silt in the drains at Auto Nagar. Plastic waste has been dumped in the drains and as a result, the drains in Auto Nagar are overflowing. It also leads to spread

of seasonal diseases. He made it clear that the APIIC colony residents should not face any sanitation issues. Later, he visited Chittinagar and asked the residents to shift to safer places in view of continuous rains. Officials should serve notices to the people asking to vacate their houses, he instructed. Furthermore, he directed the officials to complete the remaining part of the iron mesh to the hill. VMC Corporator Jasti Sambasiva Rao, Chief Engineer M Prabhakar, Chief City Planner GVGSV Prasad, Chief Medical Health Officer Dr P Ratnavali, Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) G Srijana, Deputy City Planner Jubin Biron Roy, EE G Samrajyam and others accompanied the Commissioner.

# MP urges Centre to do justice to P'varam evacuees

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar has urged the Centre to do justice to over 1.20 lakh evacuees of the Polavaram project and establish an incubation centre for oil palm farmers in the district. Speaking in the Lok Sabha on Thursday during the Question Hour, the MP said that there are only seven incubation centres in AP though there are 26 districts in the state. Stating that there are over one lakh oil palm farmers in Eluru district, the MP appealed to Micro, Small and Medium Industries Minister Jitin Ram Manjhi to establish an oil palm research centre and incubation centre to promote oil palm cultivation. Speaking on the Polavaram evacuees, MP Mahesh Kumar said that there are over 1.20 lakh people are affected by the backwaters of the Polavaram project and emphasised the need to do justice to the evacuees. Employment opportunities should also be provided to them, he added.

# KCR never went abroad to get investments: Ponnampati

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's official trip to the United States, aimed at seeking investments for Telangana, has drawn sharp criticism from BRS leaders, who appear "envious," stated Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnampati Prabhakar. "Why are BRS leaders uncomfortable with initiatives that benefit the people of Telangana?" he asked. He highlighted the fact that the Chief Minister along with the state's Chief Secretary, Finance Secretary and IT and Industries officials, are negotiating investments for the state. "For 10 years, former Chief Minister KCR did not step out of his farmhouse, while Revanth Reddy is travelling abroad to ensure the state's welfare," Prabhakar said. He urged the people of Telangana to take note of these criticisms aimed at undermining the Chief Minister's efforts. "The BRS government never considered attracting investments," he added and accused BRS leaders of levelling baseless allegations to cover up their failures.



He highlighted the fact that the Chief Minister along with the state's Chief Secretary, Finance Secretary and IT and Industries officials, are negotiating investments for the state. "For 10 years, former Chief Minister KCR did not step out of his farmhouse, while Revanth Reddy is travelling abroad to ensure the state's welfare," Prabhakar said.

Addressing the Sunkisala incident, he said, "A comprehensive inquiry has been ordered by the Chief Minister, and those responsible will be held accountable. No one will be spared, and action will be taken based on

the investigation's findings." Prabhakar also criticized the BRS for its hasty decisions regarding the Kaleshwaram Project, claiming that the decisions harmed Telangana's farmers. "Farmers in the state have not seen the benefits they enjoyed during the united Andhra Pradesh era in the last 10 years," he said. Prabhakar accused the BRS of dodging accountability in the Assembly, pointing out their inability to respond adequately to questions. He highlighted the government's guarantee of 200 units of free electricity and Rs 500 gas cylinders and urged those not receiving these benefits to report the matter. "The Congress government has already waived Rs 150,000 in farmers' loans and plans to waive Rs 2 lakh at one go," he stated. He concluded by criticising Union Minister Kishan Reddy for his inability to address the injustices against Telangana in the Union budget. "The current government is dedicated to running a transparent administration focused on public welfare," he declared.

# MBU celebrates National Space Day with ISRO, NARL



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Mohan Babu University (MBU) has observed National Space Day in association with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the National Atmospheric Research Laboratory (NARL). The occasion commemorated the first anniversary of the Chandrayaan-3 mission's successful soft landing on the moon's southern polar region, an achievement that earned August 23 the title of National Space Day by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Dr S Somanath, Chairman of ISRO, whose visionary insights underscored India's space achievements and future aspirations, addressed the gathering. Distinguished dignitaries including A Rajarajan, Director of SHAR, Dr AK Patra, Director of NARL and Dr Anil Bharadwaj, Director of PRL, also attended the event. Dr M Mohan Babu, Chancellor of MBU, said: "Our partnership with ISRO and

NARL for National Space Day exemplifies Mohan Babu University's unwavering commitment to fostering academic excellence. This landmark event has not only celebrated India's incredible achievements in space, but also inspired our students to dream big and push the boundaries of what's possible. We are proud to play a role in shaping the next generation of India, and we will continue to provide our students with unparalleled opportunities to reach for the stars." The event showcased India's pioneering spirit in space exploration and transformed MBU's campus into a vibrant hub of scientific discovery and innovation. Over 1,000 students from across 30 colleges and 25 schools, along with prominent figures from the space community and academia, participated in the event. It also highlighted MBU's recent student achievements, including the successful launch of a High-Altitude Balloon Satellite in partnership with ISRO and NARL.



ACROSS THE STATES



Barber held for spitting on customer's face

A barber here was arrested a day after a video of him applying his spit on a customer's face made rounds on social media, police said on Thursday. The barber's makeshift shop was bulldozed by the local administration. Superintendent of Police Amrit Kumar Anand said, "We received a report regarding a video in which a barber, Yusuf, was seen applying his spit on the face of a customer. Acting on the complaint we arrested him on Wednesday night." According to the police, the incident occurred a fortnight ago but the video was posted online recently and it began doing rounds on Wednesday. "The accused is seen applying some cream on the face of the customer in the video. While doing so he spits, spits in his palms and applies it on the customer's face," Circle Officer Kapoor Kumar said. The local administration on Thursday reached the spot and bulldozed the makeshift salon. "The salon was made using tin sheets and was an encroachment. It was removed with a bulldozer today," the CO said



17 Indian workers stranded in Bangladesh evacuated

Together 17 Indian workers engaged in road construction in Bangladesh and stranded due to the ongoing unrest were evacuated by the BSF, an official said on Thursday. BSF Tripura Frontier IG Patel Piyush Purusottam Das received a call about the workers' situation on Wednesday evening, the official added. "Due to unrest in Bangladesh, the workers were stranded at their camp in Ramrail. They were en route to ICP Akhaura from the Bangladesh side, and a request was made to the BSF to facilitate their safe passage through ICP Agartala," a BSF official said, adding that contact was promptly established at the nodal officer level between the BSF and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB). "In a well-coordinated operation, the BSF and BGB worked together effectively. The BGB assisted the 17 AFCONS workers, ensuring their safe movement to ICP Agartala, where their customs and immigration were cleared late at night before handing them over to the BSF," the official added.



CBI arrests ED assistant director for taking bribe

The CBI has arrested an assistant director of the ED for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 20 lakh from a Mumbai-based jeweller, officials said on Thursday. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had conducted searches at the premises of the jeweller, Vipul Harish Thakkar, on August 3 and 4. Assistant Director Sandeep Singh Yadav allegedly threatened to arrest Thakkar's son if he did not pay him Rs 25 lakh, according to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). During negotiations, the amount was reduced to Rs 20 lakh, the officials said. Later, Thakkar approached the CBI. "The verification of the complaint in the presence of independent witnesses, prima facie revealed criminal conspiracy hatched by Sandeep Singh, Assistant Director, Enforcement Directorate HQ, New Delhi with unknown others to obtain undue advantage... of Rs 20 lakh by himself and through other person from the complainant Vipul Thakkar for not arresting his son Nihar Thakkar in the matter being investigated by the ED," the CBI FIR stated. Yadav, who is an officer from the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), was caught red-handed while accepting the bribe in the national capital.

MEETINGS WITH EC  
Political parties demand immediate Assembly polls in J&K

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

With the Supreme Court deadline for holding Assembly polls looming large, the Election Commission (EC) held a series of meetings in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday with political parties and district heads of the civil administration and police in order to get a feedback for holding the election.

The EC team, led by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar and including election commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and S S Sandhu, met representatives of registered political parties, including the National Conference (NC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress and Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party (JKPP), at the International Convention Centre (SKICC) here.

Immediate Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir was the



dominant demand of all the political leaders who met the visiting EC team.

Assembly polls have not been held in Jammu and Kashmir since 2014. The polls

were due to be held in early 2019 following the dissolution of the legislative body of the erstwhile state in 2018.

However, after the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir

into Union territories in August 2019, the Assembly polls could not be held due to various reasons, including a delimitation exercise that was completed in 2022.

Rahul takes loco pilots to meet Vaishnav over their concerns

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday met a delegation of loco pilots in the Parliament House complex and took them to meet Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav in a bid to resolve their issues and problems.

Gandhi also posted a video of his meeting with the loco pilots in which they are seen airing their grievances like long duty hours, lack of toilets and tough working conditions.

Loco pilots, who were part of the delegation, said Gandhi met them in the Parliament House and then took them to meet the Railway Minister.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Today, again met loco pilots in Parliament House, where they reiterated their demands for adequate



comfort and basic amenities in the cabins. This is extremely necessary for the safety of millions of passengers who travel by train every day, and is a completely justified request."

"The loco pilots were arranged to meet the Railway Minister, who listened to their problems and promised to look into their concerns," the former Congress chief said.

"I will ensure that solutions to these problems are implemented for the safe travel of the people of the country," Gandhi said.

Court extends Arvind Kejriwal's judicial custody till Aug 20

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday extended the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till August 20 in a corruption case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged excise scam.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended Kejriwal's custody after he was produced before the court through video conference.

The court is likely to consider on August 12 a supplementary charge sheet filed by the CBI against Kejriwal in the case. The judge had sent Kejriwal to judicial custody in June, saying his name has surfaced as one of the "main conspirators" and the investigation was still in progress. The judge had also noted the apprehension of the CBI, which claimed that Kejriwal may influence the witnesses

KILLING 2 CIVILIANS IN KASHMIR  
Pak-based terrorist among 4 charge-sheeted by NIA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has charge-sheeted four people, including a Pakistan-based terrorist, for their involvement in the killing of two civilians in Kashmir this year, an official statement issued on Thursday said.

Adil Manzoor Langoo, Ahran Rasool Dar alias Tota, Dawood and their Pakistan-based handler Jahangeer alias Peer Sahab have been charge-sheeted under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, it said. The NIA special court, Jammu, has already issued an open-ended non-bailable warrant against Jahangeer who is absconding. The probe agency on Wednesday charge-sheeted the four people for the killing of two non-local civilians by the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its offshoot The Resistance



working under the directions of Jahangeer, who had motivated them to unleash 'jihad' in the Srinagar area to spread fear and terror among the non-locals with an intention to wage war against the government of India," the NIA said.

The trio had conspired with their handler Jahangeer to kill the civilians at Shala Kadal, it added. On the directions of Jahangeer, Langoo and Dar had received arms and ammunition which were used subsequently by Langoo to commit the crime, the statement said.

Dawood had helped Langoo destroy evidence of the crime, it said. The NIA has been cracking down on terrorist organisations active in Kashmir. LeT, the largest terrorist group in the region, has been working through various offshoots to carry out its operations after it was banned by the government.

Anxiety on rise in rural India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anxiety levels have increased in rural India, a report released on Thursday revealed, stating that nearly 45 per cent respondents said they have suffered anxiety.

The prevalence of mental health disorders in India has risen steadily in recent years, contributing to the escalating public health concern, according to the State of Healthcare in Rural India Report - 2024, which covered a total of 5,389 households in 21 states.

"One of the major findings of the survey was related to mental health, revealing that anxiety levels have risen in rural India, making it no longer just an 'urban' phenomenon," the report said.

"The study reveals that 45 per cent of the respondents across gender most of the time have anxiety and worry that impacts their state of mind. The data reveals that anxiety and worry impact mental



health much more among the older cohorts than those who are younger," it added.

The report said that 40 per cent of those aged 18-25 years admitted feeling anxiety, with the proportion increasing to 53 per cent among those who are 60 and above.

The report also talked about the concept of "Neighbourhoods of Care" as a fundamental shift in the approach to health delivery.

The report found that 73 per

cent of rural households with elderly members need constant care. Yet, engaging an external caregiver as a paid service does not seem to have a great deal of traction in rural India, with only 3 per cent of such households ever having opted for the same. The majority (95.7 per cent) prefer family caregivers, predominantly female (72.1 per cent), highlighting the need for caregiver training on home-based care.

Delhi LG gives nod to prosecute IAS officer for 'forging'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena has granted sanction for the prosecution of IAS officer Udit Prakash Rai for allegedly forging the signatures of three chief secretaries of two Union Territories on his annual performance appraisal reports, Raj Niwas officials said on Thursday.

The Lt Governor has also recommended the case to the Ministry of Home Affairs for further action, they added.

There was no immediate reaction from Rai. A 2007 batch IAS officer, Rai allegedly forged the signatures of his reviewing authority -- the chief secretaries of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Delhi -- between 2017 and 2021, officials said.

A criminal case of forgery has been registered against Rai at the IP Estate Police Station on the complaint of

the Special Secretary (Vigilance) of the Delhi government, they added.

Rai, in his annual performance appraisal reports (APARs) for the period April 1, 2017, to October 8, 2017 and October 9, 2017, to March 31, 2018, forged the signatures of his then reporting authority -- S C L Das, the then principal secretary (revenue) in Andaman and Nicobar administration and the reviewing authority, Anindo Majumdar, the then chief secretary there, the Directorate of Vigilance official said.

In the APAR for the period April 1, 2019, to July 30, 2019, Rai forged the signatures of the reporting authority, Vikram Dev Dutt, the then principal secretary (revenue) in Andaman and Nicobar administration and reviewing authority, Chetan Bhusan Sanghi, the then chief secretary there.



Parliament completes Budget process

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament on Thursday completed the Budget process with the Rajya Sabha returning the Appropriation Bill and Finance Bill to the Lok Sabha. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had moved both the legislation, along with the Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill, in the Rajya Sabha for return to the lower House.

After a brief discussion and reply by the minister, the Upper House returned all the money bills. Earlier, these bills were approved by the Lok Sabha. Sitharaman presented the Budget in the Lok Sabha on July 23.

EXTREME WEATHER  
Several heatwave indices failed to capture severity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Selecting a heatwave index is crucial for identifying dangerous conditions across varied geographies and weather, according to a study that found that many existing indices failed to capture severity of heatwaves, including those in India.

As the planet warms, heatwaves have become more frequent and intense, emerging as a significant contributor to heat-related deaths. Researchers said that this underscores the urgency of recognising their impact and

severity. In the study, published in the journal Nexus, the researchers from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University analysed six available heat wave indices, including the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index and Canada's humidex.

WBGT index was first developed in the 1950s by the US military to prevent heat-related illnesses in training camps.

The authors found that five of them failed to identify dangerous heat stress days during the heatwaves of Spain and the US in 2022 and those in 2023 in India's West Bengal and



Uttar Pradesh. Because of low humidity, the air was largely dry during these heat waves, even as these regions registered record-breaking temperatures, they

said. How lethal a heat wave is depends not only on temperatures recorded, but also humidity in the air, the researchers said.

They explained that just as how humid air can be a reason for severe fatality even under low temperatures, conversely, dry air can somewhat counter the impact of high temperatures, thereby contributing towards underestimating the actual heat stress on such days.

The authors found that of the six indices they studied, only one -- the 'lethal heat stress index' -- was able to account for these countering effects of dry air, and therefore, performed better in identifying days with dangerous heat wave conditions.

Cong chief Kharge vows to strengthen party in poll-bound Jharkhand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday vowed to strengthen the party organisation in Jharkhand to ensure that the INDIA bloc government is elected in the poll-bound state.

Kharge made the remarks in a post after he met Congress leaders from the state, including Jharkhand unit chief Rajesh Thakur and AICC in-charge of state Ghulam Ahmad Mir.

"Today, in a meeting with the leaders of @INCJharkhand,



we vowed that by going to the people in the upcoming Jharkhand elections and strengthening the organization, we will once again form the government of INDIA in

the state," Kharge said in a post in Hindi on X.

"It is our resolve to protect water, forests, land and tribal culture of the people of Jharkhand," he said.

The meeting comes a day after the Jharkhand Congress leaders met Congress general secretary, in-charge of organisation, K C Venugopal.

The Congress is in an alliance with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the RJD and the Left in the state.

Elections are slated to take place in Jharkhand later this year.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Daunting task ahead

The interim Govt led by Yunus must restore law and order in Bangladesh as there is chaos and fear all around

As Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus takes charge of the interim government of Bangladesh, he may have the challenging task of restoring peace and law and order in the country. Bangladesh, relatively a young nation, is once again in the throes of instability. The latest chapter in its ongoing saga of unrest, unfolded after the ouster of Sheik Hasina and subsequent takeover by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. As Yunus steps into power, the country is gripped by fear and uncertainty, prompting hundreds of citizens to seek refuge in India. Recent months saw political violence, protests, and crackdowns on dissent, creating a volatile environment that led to the ouster of Sheik Hasina and chaos on the roads of Dhaka. The announcement of Muhammad Yunus, a globally renowned figure for his work in microfinance and founder of Grameen Bank, taking over the reins of power comes as a dramatic twist. Yunus, who has faced his share of political and legal challenges in recent years, has long been a critic of the Hasina Government's policies.



The political upheaval has triggered a wave of fear among the populace especially the minorities. Reports indicate that hundreds of Bangladeshis are attempting to cross the border into India, driven by concerns for their safety. The future course of Bangladesh's political landscape under Yunus' leadership is fraught with uncertainty. Yunus has been an advocate for political reform and transparency. His leadership could usher in a new era of governance, focusing on anti-corruption measures and democratic practices. However, implementing these changes in a deeply entrenched political system will be a formidable challenge. Besides, Bangladesh's economy has been under strain due to mismanagement and corruption. Yunus' expertise in economic development and microfinance could play a pivotal role in revitalising the economy, promoting entrepreneurship, and creating jobs. While some may view him as a saviour, others may see him as an outsider with no political experience. Building trust and garnering widespread support will be essential for his administration's success. However, the biggest challenge would be restoring peace and maintaining the law and order. Ensuring law and order during this transition period is paramount. Yunus will need the cooperation of the military and law enforcement agencies to maintain stability and prevent further violence. As Bangladesh stands on the brink of a new political era with Muhammad Yunus at the helm, the road ahead is uncertain. The immediate priority will be to address the fears of the populace and restore a sense of security, especially amongst minorities. All said and done, right now the army will call the shots and till elections are announced nothing can be said about the future of interim government itself. The coming days will be crucial in determining whether Yunus' leadership can guide the country towards stability and prosperity or if Bangladesh will descend into further chaotic unrest.

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### PICTALK



A priest performs 'aarti' at Bade Hanumanji temple which was flooded after heavy rains in Prayagraj

## Rediscovering the true value of life

Amidst climate change and environmental crises, it's time to re-evaluate our priorities and appreciate the irreplaceable gifts that nature freely provides

The best things in life, they say, come free. It is a dubious statement that we may not readily agree to in a world where anything material has a price tag attached to it. The problem is not in the maxim that I opened this piece with; the problem is with our definition of "the best things". We have devised a curious way to assess our lives by putting a numerical value on everything we can possess and call our own. Even as we scamper all over the place trying to fetch luxuries and comfort items, we tend to forget several things which we do not personally possess but are indispensable to our existence. They are more valuable to us than all the material assets of the world put together. Air, sunlight, water, and soil for instance. Many things are too obvious for us to appreciate as I discovered recently when astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore got stranded in space. Reports say that her extended stay would affect her body adversely and as per NASA,



it could alter the structure of the eyes and brain, and their function "because low-gravity conditions shift the body's fluids toward the head". Gravity: The natural phenomenon that Newton discovered by chance in late 1666 when he saw an apple fall to the ground isn't something that we pay attention to in our daily lives. We take universal gravitation for granted, just as we take many other conventional things and natural forces as part of our privilege on this planet. The heat wave sweeping across the globe, the unprecedented floods and unseasonal snow are all testimonies of this casual attitude we have adopted towards the most valuable things in life that the universe has granted us. Climate change has been converted to a mere topic of discussion and not as a veritable threat for all species. Who will tell us that we have been presently allowed to live the best versions of ourselves aided by natural resources and no matter how hard we try, we cannot replicate these conditions in another part of the universe anytime soon? We may be vain to declare that space travel will soon become a regular thing thanks to man's daring explorations. We can claim that we are

doing everything we can to shift our domicile to another planet. But let us make no mistake - we cannot find another optimal domain to establish ourselves should the present one perish because of our over-indulgences. Our conceit might make us proclaim that the skies are for us to invade, but to find another place like this where everything is measured just right for our survival will only remain a pipedream. It's time we stopped taking the vital elements of existence as a given. It's time for us to stop expanding our wingspans without regard for nature. That an apple should fall is part of a grand cosmic design, but the fact that hills are sliding, forests are burning and villages are getting swept away is part of man's narrow and reckless nature. The value of the many simple blessings we have been bestowed with will be known only when these free privileges are taken away from us. (The writer is a columnist and author based in Dubai; views are personal)

doing everything we can to shift our domicile to another planet. But let us make no mistake - we cannot find another optimal domain to establish ourselves should the present one perish because of our over-indulgences. Our conceit might make us proclaim that the skies are for us to invade, but to find another place like this where everything is measured just right for our survival will only remain a pipedream. It's time we stopped taking the vital elements of existence as a given. It's time for us to stop expanding our wingspans without regard for nature. That an apple should fall is part of a grand cosmic design, but the fact that hills are sliding, forests are burning and villages are getting swept away is part of man's narrow and reckless nature. The value of the many simple blessings we have been bestowed with will be known only when these free privileges are taken away from us. (The writer is a columnist and author based in Dubai; views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

## Cultural identity shapes behaviour

This cultural phenomenon, observed in many parts of the world, highlights the profound impact of inherited values on personal and collective actions



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

In India, several clans have their pedigree narratives. It is a great instrument for creating venerable ideals of behaviour and conduct and, above all, pride in their antecedents. Like many other places in the world, their pedigree is often traced to some other planet or has an anecdote or theory associated with their distinctive pedigree. Some consider themselves descendants of the Sun (Suryavanshi), others consider themselves descendants of the Moon (Chandravanshi), and so the call goes on.

The veracity of these claims is another story altogether, but invariably there is an ideal connected to them, and that is important. For example, the Suryavanshis are supposed to be very committed to their 'word of mouth', and they are supposed to never backtrack from what they have said or promised.

These ideals are important in identity formation and establishing a bottom line of behaviour. They also create a narrative of keeping the clan on track, such as it may be. There are fallouts for rituals, marriages, festivities, and more. Loyalty is not territorial because the clan has, often, migrated from its place of origin but the bonding is clear. Their rituals of festivities and celebrations keep the clan together, even though technology may have played its role in the widespread celebration and observance of clan identities. The protocols are very often strictly adhered to. Often these serve as an unwritten code of behavior.

There is another anecdote linked with planets, especially the Sun. Japan is considered to be the land of the rising sun, and there are anecdotes about special places in many parts of the world related to the sun. Toledo is a good illustration of a place where the sun's rays are said to have met the Earth for the first time.

There are other rituals associated with the sun in many parts of the world as well. In



India, planet worship is considered particularly venerable by many components of the population, and the steps in sun worship are a widely shared phenomenon. This practice is often accompanied by pouring water facing the sun. Celebrating obeisance to the sun is popular and has many stories spun around it.

It may be useful to remind oneself that, in the belief of many, worship of even other planets is a virtuous thing to do. The point, however, is to recognise that behaviour is determined by one's belief, and this belief may not always be an act of choice but an act of an inherited value system and cognitive association with values that are considered virtuous. This component of tradition, which is common in many parts of the world, is now often referred to, not so complementarily, as the Third World Phenomena. The older the community, the greater their belief and the more grounded their behaviour.

In such communities' gender relationships have a strong overlay of traditional beliefs.



LIKE MANY OTHER PLACES IN THE WORLD, THEIR PEDIGREE IS OFTEN TRACED TO SOME OTHER PLANET OR HAS AN ANECDOTE ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR DISTINCTIVE PEDIGREE. SOME CONSIDER THEMSELVES DESCENDANTS OF THE SUN, OTHERS CONSIDER THEMSELVES DESCENDANTS OF THE MOON

Indeed, icons that grow up at times geography-wise and even climate-wise are significant factors in belief systems.

The broad takeaway from this narrative should be a realisation, that what goes into the composition of the human mind and belief system is often not only acquired from formal learning in the classroom but also by inherited and handed down beliefs.

This is an important aspect of learning which deserves far more attention even in formal learning systems. There is an obvious need to understand, all that goes into the making of one's identity and personality make-up.

One of the important dimensions should also be to assess and evaluate the complete personality of a person when recruiting him. The identity that that person carries may have many layers that are important for his work performance. Unfortunately, not enough literature is available to convert all this into assessment instruments. This understanding would help to

explain why there are so many times a situation of grief when a person is recruited on just what could be called his 'professional knowledge'.

It will be worth remembering that professional knowledge is indeed important in the work dimension but that is not a full personality at work. To create a work identity, it is important to selectively integrate the cultural identities of individuals with a focus on the organisational identity of the enterprise concerned.

This is an important dimension of work management that both employers and employees need to pay much more attention to, more than what they have enabled so far. This will help to manage, better, group identities at work and create a culture of resonance for greater productivity and fulfillment all around. The idea of focusing on the 'complete personality', to the extent possible, is worth considering.

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

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### BANGLADESH CRISIS

Madam — Amid the backdrop of controversial job reservations and widespread violent protests, Bangladesh has seen its former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed flee the country and seek temporary exile in India, a sanctuary supposedly facilitated by the United Kingdom. The nation now stands on the brink of establishing a new interim regime, led by Muhammad Yunus and supported by student unions and the military. It is deeply disappointing that the international community, with whom Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had maintained good relations—particularly China, the US, and the United Kingdom—turned a blind eye to her government during this crisis. The violent student protests, demonstrations, and clashes, followed by anti-government forces, went largely ignored by these global allies. China, despite being a close economic partner of Bangladesh, remained a passive observer throughout the turmoil.

India's support for Bangladesh during this tumultuous period is commendable and highlights Prime Minister Modi's political commitment to its neighbor, strengthening bilateral relations rooted in cultural and historical ties. However, it is regrettable that Hindu citizens and temples have borne the brunt of the lawlessness and vandalism, acts seemingly orchestrated to provoke Indian sentiments.

While the caretaker government led by the army appears to be a viable solution at the moment, it remains uncertain whether it can overcome the significant economic losses and extensive damage to national properties caused by the protests.

There is hope that peace will prevail in Dhaka and that New Delhi's active involvement will help pave the way for the formation of an interim government, free from being hijacked by the military or anti-India radical elements. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Bagarkote

#### We are proud of you!



Had the gravitational force acted on Vinesh Phogat been little bit kinder she would have not only lost the silver medal which was in her grab but would have also bagged a gold considering her performance in the tournament so far. Vinesh lost the gold by weighing 100 Grams more than the permit-

ted weight of 50 kgs in the category and also suffered a disqualification from the tournament. It is one of the most unfortunate thing that could have happened to her as a sports person, shattering her dreams. Regardless of this she is the golden girl and would be remembered for her superb performance.

While Phogat has been successful in bagging Gold and silver medals in Commonwealth and Asian games, courtesy misfortune Olympics has been eluding her as she suffered an injury in Rio olympics in 2016 while in 2020 Tokyo olympics and in the Paris olympics yesterday she suffered a cruel disqualification! Phogat, you might have lost Gold medal in Olympics, for sure you have won a place in the hearts of all the sports lovers in the world! We are proud of you!!

Gopalswamy J | Chennai

#### THE PLIGHT OF SEWER WORKERS

Madam— Kudos to Mr N Sadhasiva Reddy for his letter titled "Death of sanitation workers" (August 7). Our eardrums are constantly bombarded with the triumphant declarations of "conquering" the other side of the Moon, yet all that is provided for a sewer worker risking his life for society's "dirty work" is an ordinary rope. Billions of state funds are invested in mass yoga performances on the streets to showcase the country's "might" to the world, yet the same ordinary rope is the only safety measure for the poorest souls in this "mighty" India. Gigantic statues and bullet train projects are undertaken to "mesmerize" the world, but the faceless manual scavengers who work tirelessly to keep our environment clean receive no more than that ordinary rope.

Those who ignore the plight and suffering of these unsung heroes, without whose essential service our "civilized modern" society would come to a standstill, are nothing short of barbarians. Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

#### PREAMBLE MISSING IN NCERT BOOKS

Madam — The absence of the "Indian Constitution" preamble in some NCERT textbooks for certain classes should not lead to blame. Instead, consider this as an opportunity to highlight its sacred importance and encourage students to learn it with increased focus.

This can greatly contribute to shaping a clean thought process centered on equality and the socialist republic structure. It would be beneficial if NCERT issued a circular or sent an online message to all schools following the NCERT syllabus, advising them to download the preamble from Google or refer to other NCERT textbooks. Emphasising its sacred points with enhanced focus during teaching can greatly benefit the students. It is very important that today's children know about our freedom struggle and how our Constitution was written.

PV Srinivas Sreelekha | Secunderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

### HASINA'S OUSTER: A BLOW TO INDIA

Ouster of Sheikh Hasina shakes India's strategic balance in the neighbourhood



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A full-fledged crisis has been lobbed in India's court, with the ouster of PM Sheikh Hasina earlier this week. India's already troubled neighbourhood has now three countries under the firm grip of the armed forces. Pakistan, Myanmar and now Bangladesh, are now the army-ruled trioka, on a slippery slope of getting too close to China. Out of the two, it was Bangladesh which has been the crown jewel of India's neighbourhood first policy, having had a visibly pro-India government for the past decade and half. Pakistan has been China's proxy state acting against Indian interests, while Myanmar due to the army rule, has also slipped closer to China. Meanwhile, a pro-China (read anti-India) leader in the Maldives, a not-too-Delhi-friendly regime in Nepal, presents Indian diplomacy as one of its biggest challenges in recent history.

Former PM Sheikh Hasina, despite her dictatorial governance style, enjoyed bipartisan support in India. She used her relations with Narendra Modi and the opposition leaders in India, to come out heavily on extremist forces operating on Bangladeshi soil against India's interests. It is no coincidence that former PM Hasina has travelled to New Delhi thrice in a year. PM Modi, lauded her efforts in upgrading the bilateral relations when she came for a state visit, a first under the new government in the centre. Indo-Bangladesh bilateral grew from strength to strength during Sheikh Hasina's decade and a half-regime, with important long-term infrastructure projects being operationalised by India and increasing new transit and trade corridors between the two



neighbours. India shares, nearly 4000 km of land border with Bangladesh, bringing its 5 states in unique proximity to the neighbour. This land border, the fifth largest land border in the world, acts as a porous conduit for the movement of goods and people during times of bonhomie, as governments maintain strict vigil keeping in mind each other's interests. This was visible during Sheikh Hasina's tenure when cross-border smuggling and terrorism had nearly vanished. This has built a very comfortable position for Indian diplomats, as they have trusted a friendly regime to keep Indian interests in mind. However, with Sheikh Hasina, gone and chances of her never being back in the political arena of Bangladesh looking extremely certain, things are about to change. India has not built bipartisan support for itself in the local Bangladeshi politics.

It has chosen to be cosy with Sheikh Hasina's government and dealt with overtures from the principal opposition party in Bangladesh with nonchalance. The fear was, that showing any affinity to Bangladesh's opposition party may not be taken kindly by Sheikh Hasina. Therefore a public diplomacy narrative emerged, that Sheikh Hasina was 'too close to be comfortable', with India and acting against her nation's interests. A caged opposition in Bangladesh managed to get external support from China, and Pakistan's intelligence agency, both of whom have a huge interest in keeping India under constant stress in the geopolitical affairs of the region. The on-ground situation in Bangladesh currently is against India. The current interim regime has allies who may be infiltrated with extremist elements, with whom India has had bitter experiences in the past. The nature of the protests and subsequent ouster of Sheikh Hasina ensured that any of her policies, including being pro-India would not be taken too kindly by the Bangladeshi citizens. An anti-Sheikh Hasina mood could easily be swayed to anti anti-India mood, which would be detrimental to the long-drawn deep bilateral relationship. It would be a challenge for India to work new bunch of leaders in Bangladesh and remain a crucial strategic allies for the eastern neighbour.

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

# Bangladesh at political crossroads

The interim government faces a formidable task in restoring law and order, organising free and fair elections, combating corruption and gaining public trust



K S TOMAR

According to British parapsychologist Celia Elizabeth Green, "In an autocracy, one person has his way; in an aristocracy, a few people have their way; in a democracy, no one has his way." This sentiment resonates deeply with the ousted former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, who refused to acknowledge the clear signs of her impending downfall. Conspiracy theory is gaining momentum which led to ouster of EX PM, Sheikh Hasina which allegedly included the intelligence agencies of America (CIA), Pakistan (ISI) and China which yearned for an alternate government led by EX PM, Khalida Zia who might be on her way of ascendancy to power in future. Another version points out the preference of China and Pakistan to have Anti-Indian government in Dhaka which might alter the regional balance in South Asia.

**CONSPIRACY THEORY.** There have been numerous speculations and allegations regarding the United States' involvement in attempts to oust Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Some argue that the U.S. might be seeking a more favourable government in Dhaka due to concerns over human rights, democratic practices, and regional security dynamics. Critics suggest that American interests, particularly in countering China's growing influence in South Asia, might drive such alleged conspiracies.

However, concrete evidence of U.S. involvement in any conspiracy against Sheikh Hasina is lacking. Officially, the U.S. government has maintained a stance of promoting democratic values and fair elections in Bangladesh. Publicly, U.S. officials have expressed concerns about political repression and the fairness of the electoral process under Hasina's administration but stopped short of endorsing any regime change.

Sheikh Hasina's administration has leveraged these allegations to bolster nationalist sentiment and consolidate power, portraying itself as a bulwark against foreign interference. This narrative resonates with many Bangladeshis, fostering a perception of external threats to national sovereignty. Ultimately, while suspicions persist, the claims of direct American involvement in a conspiracy to oust Sheikh Hasina remain speculative and unproven. The situation underscores the complex interplay of domestic politics and international relations in Bangladesh.

Hasina's dramatic fall from grace has not surprised many, except perhaps herself. She ignored the rising tide of public discontent and the conspiracies hatched by vested interests aiming to assert dominance in South Asia and undermine India. Winning 288 out of 300 seats in the January 2024 elections, alongside the arrests of opposition leaders and suppression of dissent, highlighted a significant loss of credibility for Hasina, culminating in widespread revolt and her eventual ouster.

Hasina, a pro-democracy leader who witnessed the sacrifices made by her late father and family, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh, has now left the nation poised for a potential regime dominated by hardliners, anti-India, and pro-China forces, possibly sandwiching this troubled nation between two powers in the future. The interim government faces several challenges:

**Restoring Political Stability:** establishing neutral ground and engaging in dialogue with all political factions to ensure a peaceful and democratic transition.



**Organizing Free and Fair Elections:** Ensuring upcoming elections are free, fair, and credible to restore public trust in the democratic process.

**Combating Corruption:** Initiating anti-corruption drives to target high-profile politicians and business leaders while ensuring fairness.

**Maintaining Law and Order:** Managing protests and civil unrest carefully, and ensuring security forces act with restraint to avoid human rights abuses.

**Ensuring Human Rights:** Balancing order with respecting human rights and avoiding authoritarianism. Gaining Public Trust; Building public confidence through transparency, effective communication, and inclusive policies.

**International Relations:** Engaging with international organizations, donor countries, and regional allies to ensure continued support and investment. The political upheaval in Bangladesh over the past 13 months has been deeply polarizing and emotionally charged citizens. Experts attribute the whirlwind of violent emotions to an unresolved conflict over the nation's identity—a conflict that must be successfully addressed for the country's survival. There is no denying that Hasina was a secular and reformist figure in Bangladesh.



THERE IS NO DENYING THAT HASINA WAS A SECULAR AND REFORMIST FIGURE IN BANGLADESH. HER GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ENSURING SAFETY AND FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH, MAKING BANGLADESH ONE OF THE FASTEST-GROWING DEVELOPING NATION

Her government had been instrumental in ensuring safety and fostering economic growth, making Bangladesh one of the fastest-growing developing nations. Yet, her leadership was marred by accusations of election rigging, suppression of opposition, and human rights violations, which stoked public discontent.

The crisis reached its peak with unprecedented violence and street protests, allegedly orchestrated by Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, and active involvement from Khalida Zia's BNP and Chinese intelligence networks.

Amidst this turmoil, Nobel Peace Laureate Muhammad Yunus was chosen to lead an interim government after consultations with military leaders and key stakeholders. Experts and ex-diplomats agree that the current turmoil is a by-product of the public uprising against Hasina, who fled the country with India's assistance. She is now seeking asylum in Europe, with the UK being a potential destination, though nothing is certain.

**Comparative Analysis of Hasina and Rajapaksa's Ousters** There are several similarities between Sheikh Hasina's downfall in Bangladesh in 2024 and the ouster of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022. Both events stem from political, economic, and social factors.

**Economic Mismanagement and Authoritarian Governance:** Sheikh Hasina faced criticism for stifling dissent and undermining democratic processes. Similarly, Gotabaya Rajapaksa's administration was criticized for authoritarianism and nepotism. Both countries struggled with economic difficulties, rising living costs, and unemployment, leading to public frustration and mass protests.

**Debt and Foreign Exchange Issues:** Bangladesh experienced increasing national debt and challenges in managing foreign exchange reserves, while Sri Lanka faced a severe economic crisis characterized by foreign exchange shortages and high inflation, leading to widespread hardship.

**Public Unrest and International Factors:** Both countries saw mass protests against economic hardships and political repression. The international relations of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were strained due to economic mismanagement and human rights abuses, affecting foreign aid and investment.

Challenges for IndiaThe ouster of Sheikh Hasina presents several

challenges for India: **Political Instability in Bangladesh:** The removal of a stable, pro-India government may lead to political instability, creating a power vacuum that could be filled by elements less friendly toward India.

This could foster anti-India sentiments and alter bilateral relations. **Border Security and Migration:** Political changes might affect cooperation on border management, potentially increasing challenges related to illegal migration, human trafficking, and terrorism.

**Economic Relations and Trade:** Changes in the political landscape could impact ongoing and future trade agreements, affecting bilateral trade beneficial to both countries. **Geopolitical Dynamics:** A new leadership might tilt towards China, enhancing its influence in Bangladesh and affecting India's strategic interests in the region.

**Counterterrorism Efforts:** A change in leadership might alter the level of collaboration on counterterrorism, impacting efforts to combat terrorism and insurgency.

**Water-Sharing Disputes:** The Teesta River water-sharing agreement, already a contentious issue, might face new challenges with a change in leadership.

**India's Strategic Response:** Experts suggest India should engage diplomatically with the new leadership, enhance border security, reassess trade agreements, and strengthen regional alliances to counter external influences like China's growing presence in Bangladesh.

Navigating these challenges requires a careful balance between immediate stabilization measures and laying the foundation for long-term democratic governance. The success of the interim government in managing these issues is crucial for providing stability to Bangladesh.

(The writer is a strategic affairs columnist and political analyst based in Shimla; views are personal)

# Khalistan movement is bereft of any vision, survives merely on hatred

Khalistan movement harps upon divisive tactics and has struggled to present a viable vision for a sovereign state nearly fifty years since its inception

Gurupatwant Singh Pannun, of Sikhs for Justice, recently released a video over his X-handle that Chandra Arya, a Hindu Member of Parliament in Canada's House of Commons should go back to India. Arya had earlier criticized the Khalistani extremists for vandalism at BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Edmonton in Alberta state. The temple was recently found sprayed with anti-India graffiti of recognizably Khalistani variety.



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

Why do Khalistani always need to assert their existence through hatred of the Hindus? If they are indeed fighting for a sovereign Khalistan, even though no sensible or patriotic Indian would approve of it, they must establish the tenabil-

ity of the idea. Strangely, a movement approaching 50 years has not been able to throw up a credible map of Khalistan. On June 9, 2022, Pannun released a map of Khalistan at an event held at Lahore Press Club which showed Shimla, Himachal Pradesh as the capital of Khalistan. Could things get more ridiculous? The Sikhs comprise less than two per cent of Himachal Pradesh's

population. Their percentage same in Shimla city, which is not contiguous to Punjab where most Sikhs live. The map in addition to Punjab encompassed almost the whole of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, five districts of Rajasthan, several districts of Uttarakhand and several districts from Uttar Pradesh.

The net effect of such a map would be to reduce the Sikhs into a minority in Khalistan! In the early 19th century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh could rule over trans-Sutlej Punjab, by the dint of sword, despite the Sikhs comprising no more than 10 per cent of the population (based on Census figures, 1881). This was because the form of government was autocratic in an era of autocr-

racy. Still, the Maharaja had to pursue an inclusive and tolerant policy given the fractured religious demography of Punjab.

In the 21st century, when democracy has triumphed in the sub-continent, do Khalistanis propose to turn the clock back on political evolution? The fact that "Khalistan" should be carved out from the Indian side of Punjab alone makes the motive of its sponsors suspect.

Few Sikhs indeed remain on the Pakistan side of Punjab, from where the bulk of them were ethnically cleansed after the partition. However, the very same fact should prohibit the Sikhs from pursuing any secessionist agenda from the Indian side. The Sikhs concentrated in the fertile terrains of



central Punjab, which fell to the Pakistan side, and took refuge on the Indian side after the partition. There was a forcible exchange of population between the two halves of Punjab on religious lines. This bolstered their population from 13 per cent in colonial Punjab (Census, 1941) to 33 per cent in East Punjab (Census, 1961). After the reorganization of Punjab (1966), whereby Hindu-dominated Haryana

and Himachal Pradesh were separated, their population share increased to 60.2 per cent in rump Punjab (Census, 1971).

There is no grouse against Sikhs becoming a majority in Indian Punjab, as never before in the history of Punjab. However, there would certainly be a grouse if this majority, of less than two-thirds, wants to secede from the territory of the state. Questions will be asked why they have not demanded a single square inch of territory from the Pakistan side and all liability is on India which had graciously accommodated the Sikhs after the partition. The Khalistanis could grumble that not conceding a sovereign nation to the Sikhs during the partition itself was an injustice.

This is a bogus argument. None of the districts in colonial Punjab had a Sikh majority, which made the demand for "Khalistan" completely untenable.

As early as December 2, 1942, Master Tara Singh had asked for the bifurcation of colonial Punjab — one dominated by the Muslims and another by Hindu-Sikhs. History aside, "Khalistan" would put the future of Sikhs in jeopardy. Around 30 per cent of wheat procured by authorities and 21 per cent of rice procured during FY 2021-22 came from Punjab alone. The loss of this assured procurement by the Food Corporation of India will put Punjab under mountains of rice and wheat. The "Khalistan", a landlocked nation sandwiched between

India and Pakistan, will be dependent on trade with both. Even today it can redirect its procurement mechanism profitably towards other states rather than favouring Punjab. However, Punjab, whose 75 population is dependent on agriculture for livelihood would be sorely hit. The loss of a huge pan-Indian market for Punjab will be disastrous in every sector e.g. transportation, hosiery, machine tools etc. The Sikh population in other states of India would be adversely affected. No wonder, the Khalistanis prefer to stroke passions, by ducking these critical questions.

(The writer is an author and an independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)



MONEY MATTERS

NINTH TIME IN A ROW

# RBI keeps interest rate unchanged

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Thursday expectedly kept the benchmark interest rate and stance unchanged for the ninth straight policy meeting, saying it cannot afford to look through persisting high food inflation and has to remain vigilant to prevent spillover.

Retaining its unambiguous focus on inflation, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which consists of three RBI and three external members, kept the benchmark repurchase or repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent.

Four out of the six members of MPC voted in favour of the rate decision. The panel, whose four-year term ends in October, also decided to retain a policy stance at "withdrawal of accommodation" to aid MPC's focus on bringing inflation towards its 4 per cent target.

Inflation climbed to 5.08 per cent in June, primarily driven by the food component.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said food inflation remains "stubbornly" high.

"Without price stability, high growth cannot be sustained," he said, adding that "monetary policy must continue to be disinflationary".

He said the MPC could have looked through high food inflation if it was transitory. "But in an environment of persisting high food inflation, as we are experiencing now, the MPC cannot afford to do



## Can't ignore food inflation: Das

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid suggestions for excluding food inflation while setting benchmark interest rates, Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said the Reserve Bank cannot ignore it while formulating the monetary policy.

He said that the weightage of food in the overall consumer price inflation, which stands at 46 per cent currently, was done in 2011-12, and needs to be revisited, and added that analysis work is going on by the National Statistical Office.

"The MPC (monetary policy committee) may look through high food inflation if it is transitory; but in an environment of



persisting high food inflation, as we are experiencing now, the MPC cannot afford to do so," Das said in his policy review statement.

"It (MPC) has to remain vigilant to prevent spillovers or second round effects from persistent food inflation and preserve the gains made so far," he

added.

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran had pitched for excluding food inflation from the rate setting calls, saying that the monetary policy has no bearing on the prices of food items, which are dictated by supply side pressures.

Das declined to elaborate further on the remarks made in the written statement earlier in the day, but said that the weightage of food in CPI could change based on the findings of the NSO survey.

The current CPI basket is based on 2011-12 data and the review could not be undertaken because of the Covid pandemic, he said.

## RBI's move on expected lines: Experts

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to maintain the status quo on key policy rate was on expected lines, experts said on Thursday. Bandhan Bank Chief Economist and Head of Research Siddhartha Sanyal said the status quo on the key (repo) rate is not a surprise.

The central bank was emphatic to underscore the commitment to further disinflation and is in no hurry to cut rates, he said.

While the RBI closely watches the heightened volatility in financial markets

globally, it has rightly avoided a knee-jerk reaction, Sanyal said.

The decision to keep the rate at 6.5 per cent was taken with a 4-2 majority in the six-member MPC. Equirus Securities economist Anitha Rangan said the decision to keep the rate unchanged was taken in view of the domestic inflation led by the food side.

"RBI is not going to ignore food inflation. According to the central bank, the pace of inflation is moderating but the moderation is uneven and slow. Therefore patience is required," she said.

so. It has to remain vigilant to prevent spillovers or second round effects from persistent food inflation and preserve the gains made so far in monetary policy credibility." The MPC last revised interest rate in February 2023, when it was hiked to 6.5 per cent.

The status quo by RBI comes amid varied central bank action in advanced economies. While the Bank of England reduced interest rates last week, Bank of Japan hiked rates to their highest levels since 2008. Also, fears of a US recession have risen on the

back of weak employment numbers, piling up pressure on the Federal Reserve to start cutting rates to support the economy.

RBI retained India's GDP growth forecast at 7.2 per cent and headline CPI inflation at 4.5 per cent for the current fiscal 2024-25.

Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank said, with growth remaining robust, the MPC still has room to hold on to policy stance to get confirmation on the disinflationary trend.

## 'Critical minerals drivers of modern economy'

Coal and mines minister G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said that critical minerals have emerged as drivers of the modern economy and the Centre has ensured the country taps into this global opportunity through the launch of the National Critical Mineral Mission. Union Budget 2024-25 has proposed launching Critical Mineral Mission for domestic production, recycling of critical minerals, and overseas acquisition of critical mineral assets. Its mandate will include technology development, skilled workforce, extended producer responsibility framework, and a suitable financing mechanism. Addressing the national seminar on challenges and opportunities in the mines and minerals sector organised by the Mining, Geological, Metallurgical Institute of India, Reddy said that the government has brought about a paradigm change in the coal and minerals sector, making it transparent and competitive. He elaborated on the government's extensive efforts over the past decade to harness this potential through initiatives such as the introduction of a commercial auction regime for coal and mineral blocks and encouraging private sector partnership.



## FMCG growth slows, rural outpaces urban market

The FMCG industry's volume growth slowed to 3.8 per cent in June quarter 2024 due to macroeconomic headwinds which impacted the staple food categories, including packaged salt, wheat flour and palm oil, according to a report by data analytics firm NielsenIQ. The industry saw a volume growth of 7.5 per cent in June quarter 2023 and 6.5 per cent in March quarter 2024. "Urban consumption growth dips to 2.8 per cent from 5.7 per cent in Q1'24 while Rural growth is at 5.2 per cent vs 7.6 per cent in the last quarter. However, rural outpaces urban in most parts of India in terms of volume growth," it said. Modern Trade, which includes supermarkets, hypermarkets, and large-format stores continues to exhibit double-digit volume growth at 10.9 per cent year-on-year. However, it was slower as compared to the March quarter. Volumes decelerated for traditional trade (such as Kirana stores) registering 3.1 per cent growth in Q2'24 (June quarter) compared to 5.6 per cent in the previous quarter, it added. The FMCG consumption growth has been primarily impacted by the food sector, with growth at 2.4 per cent in June quarter compared to 4.8 per cent in March quarter, the report added.



## Meesho says 33 pc e-comm shoppers under 25 yrs

Softbank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho on Thursday said 33 per cent of users under the age of 25 and people from UP and Bihar are driving the growth of the segment in India. Based on Sensor Tower and Meesho's internal data, the report found that users from tier 4 cities and beyond are the most frequent and repeat shoppers in e-commerce, shopping across categories such as women's fashion, footwear and baby care. The report titled "Meesho's Smart Shopper Report" said, "1 in every 3 users is under the age of 25, making Gen Z the fastest-growing demographic to adopt e-commerce. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are leading in e-commerce user growth, showcasing remarkable potential and adaptability of these states." More than 80 per cent of Indian online shoppers come from tier 2 and beyond cities such as Ambur, Rourkela, Sangli and Zirakpur, the report said. According to the report, customers in the Northeastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim are increasingly making e-commerce purchases based on influencer content, contributing to an impressive 40 per cent of all orders from these states.

## Sensex falls 581 pts as RBI retains policy stance

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed nearly 1 per cent down on Thursday after the Reserve Bank of India decided to keep the policy rate unchanged for the ninth time in a row and termed food inflation "stubborn".

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 581.79 points or 0.73 per cent to settle at 78,886.22 in a volatile trade. During the day, it tumbled 669.07 points or 0.84 per cent to 78,798.94.

The NSE Nifty declined by 180.50 points or 0.74 per cent to close at 24,117. During the day, it tanked 217.8 points or 0.89 per cent to 24,079.70.

Analysts said continuous foreign fund outflows and weak trends in the US and European markets drove domestic equities lower.

"The domestic market reversed its earlier gains as RBI's held its current policy rates with a caution to revise upward the CPI and moderate



the growth forecast for Q1," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. Among 30 Sensex firms, Asian Paints, Infosys, JSW Steel, UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, Larsen & Toubro, HCL Technologies and Tata Steel were the biggest laggards.

Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ITC, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank were the gainers.

"Today's MPC decision to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5% did not come as any surprise as the rate setting

committee once again reiterated its stand on containing inflation without sacrificing growth," V P Nandakumar, MD & CEO, Manappuram Finance, said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.44 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.16 per cent.

Among the indices, metal tanked 2.02 per cent. IT (1.82 per cent), utilities (1.62 per cent), commodities (1.45 per cent), tech (1.40 per cent) and realty (1.22 per cent) also declined.

## NSE adds 1 crore investors in 5 months, total goes up to 10 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Thursday said its unique registered investors have crossed the 10 crore mark, with the latest 1 crore addition taking place in just five months.

The investor base has seen more than 3-time jump in the last five years, facilitated by rapid growth in digitisation, rising investor awareness, financial inclusion and sustained market performance.

"The unique registered investor base on the National Stock Exchange of India crossed the 10-crore mark on August 8, 2024," the bourse said in a statement.

With this, the total number of client codes (accounts) registered with the exchange stands at 19 crore. This includes all client registrations done till date.

Notably, clients can register with more than one trading member.

Investor registrations at

NSE have seen an accelerating trend over the last few years. The exchange said that it took over 25 years for the registered investor base to hit the 4-crore mark in March 2021. The subsequent 1 crore increments have come through at an accelerated pace, taking on an average of about 6-7 months, with the last crore added in just over five months.

Of the 10 crore registered investors, the median age is 32 years. Five years ago, it was 38 years. This reflects the increasing interest in markets among the youth. Nearly, one in five investors today are females.

"This growth can be attributed to several key factors, including the streamlined Know Your Customer (KYC) process, enhanced financial literacy facilitated by stakeholder-led investor awareness programmes and enduring positive market sentiment," Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer of NSE, said.



## Silver plunges by Rs 1,100 per kg; gold flat at Rs 71,350 per 10 g

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices ruled flat at Rs 71,350 per 10 grams while silver prices declined by Rs 1,100 per kg in the local market here on Thursday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Silver prices plunged by Rs 1,100 to Rs 81,100 per kg on decreased offtake by coin makers and industrial units. The metal closed at Rs 82,200 per kg in the previous session. In the national capital, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity remained flat at Rs 71,350 and 71,000 per 10 grams, respectively.

On the global front, gold at Comex was quoted at USD 2,396 per ounce, up by USD 3 from the prior day.

## India's logistics cost will be below 9% of GDP by April next year: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's logistics cost will come down to 9 per cent of GDP by April next year, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday. Addressing an event here, Gadkari further said the country's exports will also increase when the logistics cost comes down to single digit.

"Our logistics cost now is 16 per cent...It will come down to 9 per cent by April next year," he said.

However, according to quick estimates of economic think tank National Council of

The road transport and highways minister noted that Indian economy needs to create more jobs.



Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the logistics cost in India ranged from 7.8 per cent to 8.9 per cent of GDP in 2021-22.

The road transport and highways minister noted that Indian economy needs to create more jobs.

While noting that earlier

governments did not give enough attention to rural sector, he said that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government is giving more priority to the agriculture sector.

"We need to increase our agriculture growth...We need to increase per capita income in rural areas," Gadkari said.

The minister noted that India is the fastest growing major economy, and the government is working hard to make it the third largest economy in the world.

Currently, India is the fifth largest economy globally.

## JFSL to lead financial future for India: Ambani

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jio Financial Services Ltd (JSFL) will lead the way in shaping a prosperous and inclusive financial future for India by focussing on technology and developing tailor made products, RIL Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani said.

JSFL is a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL). It is engaged in the business of investing and financing, insurance broking, payment bank and payment aggregator and payment gateway services.

In a message to shareholders, Ambani said the company's focus remains firmly on innovation, growth, and fostering financial literacy across the nation.

"We are expanding our portfolio of services, elevating user experience, and harnessing the power of cutting-edge technology to simplify and personalise financial management for our valued customers," he said in the inaugural Annual Report of JSFL released on Thursday.

The mission is to revolutionise the way financial services are delivered and experienced in India and the company has laid a strong foundation by integrating technology with



a customer-first approach, resulting in seamless, secure, and innovative financial solutions, he said.

Looking ahead, he said, "we will continue to leverage our expertise in technology and deep understanding of the Indian market to develop financial products and services that cater to the unique needs of our customers."

"With the unwavering support of our customers, partners, employees, and shareholders, I am confident that JSFL will lead the way in shaping a prosperous and inclusive financial future for India," he said.

In her message to shareholders, JSFL director Isha M Ambani said, the company's strategy is the seamless integration of cutting-edge technology to streamline and enhance the user experience.

## IT hiring likely to surge as demand grows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With IT companies gradually coming out of the slump and actively ramping up their hiring efforts, a report on Thursday said that recruitment is set to surge with an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year.

The demand for skilled IT talent is growing after a slow period late last year and early this year. Hiring is set to surge, with

an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year, according to a report by Indeed, a global job matching and hiring platform and a subsidiary of Recruit Holdings.

This data from Indeed has been compiled from Indeed Hiring Tracker and Indeed's Hiring Tracker. Indeed Hiring Tracker is a quarterly report that explores the employment landscape and job market.

The report further revealed



that almost 70 per cent of all tech jobs currently on the Indeed platform are for software roles.

The dominance of software roles on Indeed is driven by the rapid adoption of technologies by companies like AI, machine learning, and blockchain which has further amplified the need for specialised software development, the report stated.

The thriving tech startup ecosystem also plays a significant role, as new ventures prioritise

hiring developers to build and scale their products, it said.

According to Indeed data, companies are actively hiring for roles such as Application Developer, Software Engineer, Full-Stack Developer, Senior Software Engineer, and PHP Developer. There's also a growing demand for NET Developers, Software Architects, DevOps Engineers, Data Engineers, and Front-End Developers, it stated.



# what's brewing?

## 'MY PARENTS FRAMED MY FIRST PAYCHECK'



In an exclusive IMDb 'Speed Dating' segment, Sharvari spilled the beans on her favourite holiday, the movie she can watch repeatedly, her prized possession and much more. When asked about her favourite holiday, Sharvari expressed her love for Ganesh Chaturthi, stating, "My favourite holiday in general is Ganesh Chaturthi. I really love going to my native place,

Morgaon. It's the best time off that I get from work and I just love that place very, very dearly. So no matter what, every year, I take out time during Ganesh Chaturthi and go to my native place and that's the best holiday ever. We have a house there, which is called Wada and it is almost more than 100 years old. I think that the fact that family comes together and it's such an auspicious occasion just makes me feel like my year begins and ends there. It's just very, very close to me." When asked which movie she could rewatch anytime, Sharvari said, "I love *Jodhaa Akbar*. I used to be obsessed with that movie growing up as well. I think I can rewatch it anytime. I used to know the dialogues by heart; I used to love the costumes, the set and, of course, everybody on the set of *Jodhaa Akbar*. But I would say Aishwarya Rai Bachchan ma'am's character Jodha is obviously my favourite." Talking about her most prized possession and reflecting on a cherished memory from early on in her career, Sharvari said, "When I was an assistant director, I got my first paycheck and I remember that my parents actually framed that paycheck and wrote a really sweet note under it. So I think that's my most prized possession."

### Daisy Ridley opens up about her Graves' disease

Actor Daisy Ridley was diagnosed last year with Graves' disease, an autoimmune disorder affecting the thyroid, she revealed in a recent interview. The 32-year-old, who shot to fame with her starring role in the latest *Star Wars* trilogy, has previously discussed struggles with endometriosis and polycystic ovaries. But after filming the thriller *Maggie* in 2023, Ridley felt exceptionally fatigued and irritable, she told in an article. She said she initially dismissed her symptoms, which also included weight loss and hand tremors, due to the role's intensity. "I thought, 'Well, I've just played a really stressful role; presumably that's why I feel poorly,'" she said. But discussing the symptoms with her doctor ultimately led to her being diagnosed with Graves' disease. Graves' disease is the

most common cause of hyperthyroidism and is more likely to affect women than men, according to the European Thyroid Association. Other celebrities to have suffered from it include rapper Missy Elliott and former US first lady Barbara Bush. "We all read the stats about women being undiagnosed or underdiagnosed and sort of coming to terms with saying, 'I really, actually don't feel good,'" said Ridley. Already a vegan, Ridley said she has switched to minimising gluten intake since her diagnosis, among other lifestyle changes. The last *Star Wars* trilogy ended in 2019 with *Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker*. Since then, Disney has promised three new feature films about the sci-fi universe created by George Lucas, one of which is to star Ridley again as her character Rey.



## Moana and Maui bring a new adventure on Nov 27

A fresh teaser for the eagerly awaited sequel to the Disney film *Moana* has been released. The creators hinted at the anticipated gathering of the crucial characters from the movie, Moana and Maui. Dwayne Johnson shared the teaser on his social media account with a message accompanying it, "Can I get a chee hoo, November 27th. *MOANA 2* (sic)." The teaser hints at yet another thrilling

adventure on the horizon. Following the release of the teaser, enthusiastic fans filled the comment section with upbeat responses, including one user expressing their anticipation by saying, "I am eager for this." One person commented with "I love it," and numerous others shared heart emojis. Dwayne, who voices Maui and is also a producer of the movie, had earlier expressed his excitement about the film in an X post that read, "The Polynesian cultural significance of the role and our story has resonated with families around the world and has become one of my greatest honours to bring to life and share. New characters, new journeys, and new music. I am excited for you and your families around the world to join us on this journey." *Moana 2*, directed by Dana Ledoux Miller and Jason Hand, is scheduled to premiere in theaters on November 27.



## Abhishek Banerjee confirms joining *Rana Naidu 2*

The highly anticipated second season of the hit series *Rana Naidu* is set to begin filming, and fans have another reason to rejoice. Acclaimed actor Abhishek Banerjee has joined the star-studded cast, taking on a pivotal role in the upcoming season. *Rana Naidu*, starring Rana Daggubati and Venkatesh, quickly became a fan favourite with its gripping storyline and stellar performances. The series, which also features talented actors such as Surveen Chawla, Sushant Singh, Gaurav Chopra, Priya Banerjee, Arjun Rampal and Ashish Vidyarthi, is produced by Sunder Aaron and Locomotive Global. Created by Karan Anshuman, who also serves as a director alongside Suparn S Varma and Abhay Chopra, the second season promises to elevate the stakes even higher. Abhishek Banerjee, known for his versatility and impactful



performances, expressed his excitement about joining the cast: "I am thrilled to be a part of *Rana Naidu Season 2*. The series has set a high bar with its first season and I am eager to bring something new and exciting to the story. Working with such an incredible cast and crew is an honour and I can't wait for the audience to see what's in store." With filming set to commence, the anticipation for *Rana Naidu Season 2* continues to build. Fans can look forward to a series that promises to deliver even more drama, suspense, and unforgettable moments.

## Gulshan Devaiah calls Vinesh Phogat's silver appeal 'unfair'

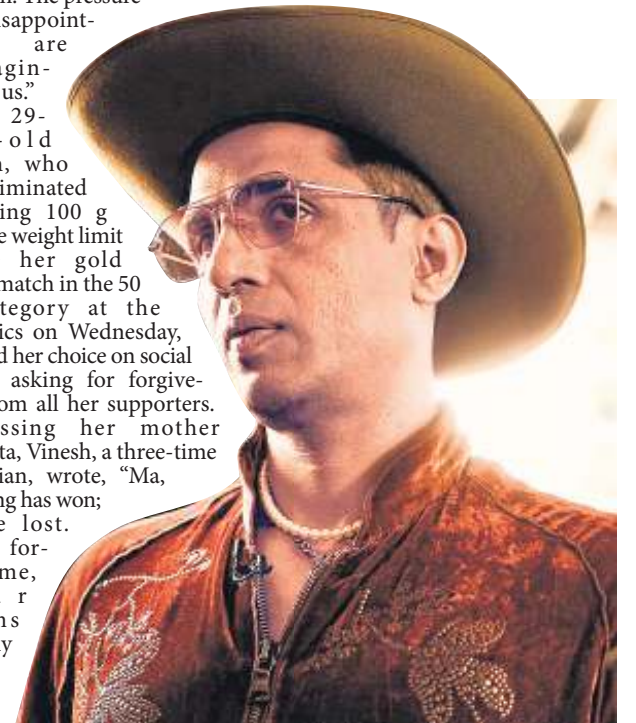
Celebrities responded to the news on Thursday following Vinesh Phogat's retirement from her international wrestling career. Gulshan Devaiah, among the others, have written messages showing their support for the wrestler.

Gulshan Devaiah shared a picture of Vinesh on X (formerly Twitter) and shared a slightly different take. "Emotionally, I hope an appeal is accepted and Vinesh is awarded the silver, but I also feel it's unfair on every other athlete who's been disqualified earlier under the same circumstances. I'm deciding to accept it and move on, but it's not really about how I feel." He added, "This must be unimaginable and devastating for Vinesh and her team. As a fellow Indian, I say thank you, champ!!! Be well (raised hands emoji)." *Vande Mataram* (folded hands emoji)." A person commented on his post, "Just to know, when was the last time a player was disqualified like this in the finals?" Gulshan replied, "I don't know. As much as I want her to win and get our appeal accepted, I'd want it to be on fair ground. I'm not an expert on this field or claim to have stats stacked in my inbox. I'm her fellow Indian who's upset with this situation and also wants this to be fair because I don't

want anyone questioning her win if the appeal is accepted (I hope it is and I hope our officials are making a strong case). More importantly, I hope she's ok with this unfortunate situation. The pressure and disappointment are unimaginable to us."

The 29-year-old Vinesh, who was eliminated for being 100 g over the weight limit before her gold medal match in the 50 kg category at the Olympics on Wednesday, revealed her choice on social media, asking for forgiveness from all her supporters. Addressing her mother Premata, Vinesh, a three-time Olympian, wrote, "Ma, wrestling has won; I have lost. Please forgive me, your dreams and my

courage; everything is broken. I don't have any more strength now. Goodbye wrestling, 2001-2024. I will be indebted to you all. Forgive (me)."



### FUN

#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



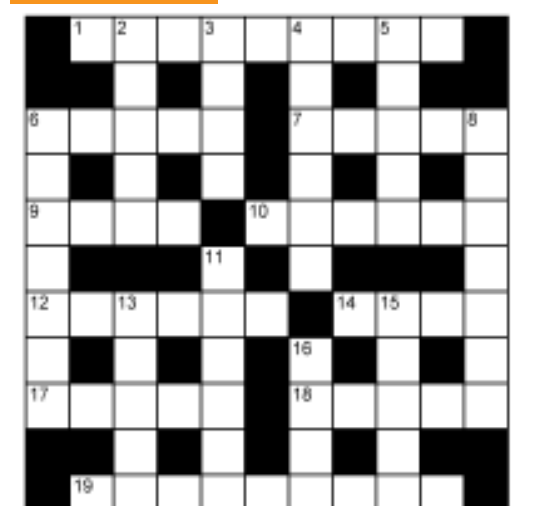
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

#### ACROSS

- A person who lives next door
- Two times two, times two
- Speed competitions
- Have a lie down
- Sick
- A bed for a small baby
- The start of the day
- Rub out
- A large bird of prey
- An exciting experience

#### DOWN

- So dull it makes you feel sleepy
- The opposite of aunt
- Pain in your ear
- No sound at all
- The arm of a coat
- A special prize
- A feeling of rage
- A compass direction



#### GINGER MEGGS





## NAVIGATING NEW NATIONS

Ravi Prabhu, an avid world traveller, has captivated tales of travelling to over 195 countries. Popularly known as Ravi Telugu Traveller, takes **The Pioneer** through his travel voyage experiences for our exclusive Travelogue segment.

AARTI SREENATH

In a world where wanderlust knows no bounds, globetrotter Ravi Prabhu's journey symbolises the boundless spirit of exploration. With a repertoire of languages spanning continents, this seasoned traveller has traversed 195 countries, sharing captivating tales and remarkable experiences. His linguistic prowess is evident as he effortlessly switches between Bengali, Odia, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada, among many more. Though not fluent, his ability to converse in French, Spanish and Portuguese further highlights his commitment to connecting with diverse cultures.

Guess what? While over 600 people have gone into space and 6,600 have scaled Mount Everest, only 280 out of the world's 850 million people have visited every country. Ravi Prabhu is one of those elite 280.

Having travelled over 30 lakh air miles—equivalent to travelling eight times to the moon—on over 1,000 airlines, popularly known as Ravi Telugu Traveller, he has invested a significant portion of his hard-earned money on these trips. Despite the extensive travel, he maintained his career and family life, making his achievements even more incredible.

As our conversation delved into his recent travels, his eyes lit up with passion as he recounted his trip to Venezuela, making it the 195th country on his list. For our exclusive Travelogue segment, he begins, "The most memorable part was seeing Angel Falls, the world's highest waterfall. Unlike the waterfalls in India, which are undoubtedly beautiful, like Jog Falls and Dudhsagar Falls, Angel Falls is beyond imagination. It's about 1 km tall and witnessing such a vast amount of water from that height is an unforgettable experience." His adventure to Angel Falls was nothing short of extraordinary. "I took a helicopter ride and landed on top of the falls. I also embarked on an 8-hour boat journey through the jungle to reach the foot of the falls. This was one of the most memorable moments I had been waiting for, and that's why I saved Venezuela for last."

When asked about his fashion sense while travelling, his philosophy was refreshingly practical. "Comfort matters the most to me," shares the wanderer. "Fashion sense,



to me, is about ease. I believe that what you wear should make you feel comfortable. I prefer dressing down rather than dressing up, especially while traveling. Even today, for this interview, I deliberately didn't wear a suit because this is how I travel. Fashion is not just about clothes; it's about how you carry yourself. Comfort is ideal." For this avid traveller, cultural experiences and interactions with locals form the essence of his journeys. Every place he visits, interacting with the locals is something that he never misses. "For me, the most important thing is human interaction. It's not just about seeing famous landmarks like waterfalls or beaches, but about connecting with people and their traditions, art, and culture."

India, he says, has the most complex culture. As we discuss his deep appreciation for India's rich cultural heritage, "As I travelled more, I realised how rich our culture is. Traditional dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Kathakali take years to master, unlike some other countries where traditional dance forms are simpler. This made me appreciate India's cultural richness even more."

His travels have also led him to discover lesser-known gems. "In Pakistan, I visited the beautiful Luv Kush Temple in Lahore's fort, which many people don't get to see. I managed to get it opened for the first time in history and shared the experience on YouTube. In India, places like Gandikota in Andhra Pradesh are amazing yet not widely known. It looks like a Grand Canyon and is a hidden gem I believe more people should visit."

In discussing his travel preferences, he emphasised the importance of convenience and connectivity. "The choice of accommodation depends on the budget, but I prefer places with strong Wi-Fi and easy access to public transport. While staying at luxury hotels is nice, I also enjoy staying at local hotels where I can experience local cuisine and culture." When it comes to relaxation and rejuvenation, the home holds a special place in his heart as he gushes with a heart-warming tone, "Being with my wife, daughter and dog helps ease any stress and tension."

Travelling extensively comes with its share of unexpected adventures. He recounted some of the more challenging moments he faced, namely, "I experienced severe turbulence while flying from Istanbul to Baghdad, which was quite frightening. There was also a time when we faced landing issues due to strong turbulence."

As a lover of diverse cuisines, he does appreciate the variety available in the US, right from Indian to Japanese to Ethiopian cuisine. As we head towards the end of this chat, he shared his future travel aspirations: "I plan to visit Antarctica next. It's quite expensive, but I want to experience it as a family. Another dream destination is space."

In conclusion, this polyglot and world traveller continues to explore and share his unique experiences, inspiring others with his stories from around the globe.

## 'I put on my Sherlock hat and analysed 36 Days script'



TEJAL SINHA

Actress Chahat Vig has been one of those compassionate souls who doesn't shy away from bringing out the best of her talent, not just on screen but also by giving the best of her work to society. Having had a thriving career in the industry, she jumped into the showbiz scene at the age of 22 with *Gumraah*, starring Aditya Roy Kapur and Mrunal Thakur. Following her debut, she explored her prowess pretty well, starring as the lead opposite Manish Paul in *Rafuchakkar*.

"My journey in the industry has been quite a ride—challenging, rewarding, and all about moving forward," shares her *Gumraah* fame. "I jumped into the scene at 22, right out of film school, diving into ads and endless auditions, and dealing with plenty of rejections along the way." Well, it seems like she's on a quest to explore the best of her valour, because there's no stopping. Now, at 25, she is pleased to see *36 Days* as one of the top-streamed shows in India and to have her character Sia resonate with the audience.

Talking of her latest project, *36 Days*, she has been all over the news for her portrayal of Sia, as she stars alongside Neha Sharma, Purab Kohli and Chandan Roy Sanyal. Quite humbled by the attention that she's been receiving, she enthuses, "I was really drawn to Sia because she's such a complex and interesting character. Her story is about finding love within herself and chasing her dreams, all while being in a relationship that doesn't give her much space to do either. It's a compelling journey, and I was excited about the chance to explore her struggles and growth, and to bring all those different facets of her personality to life."

Preparing for her role, she says, feels a bit like being Sherlock Holmes, searching for clues in the script about the character. For Sia, "I put on my

Sherlock hat and carefully analysed the script to uncover those details. I created a storyboard outlining Sia's life journey in chronological order and imagined her life before the events of the script to understand her personality, behaviour and motivations. To help embody Sia, I gave her a soft and delicate speech pattern, which felt like an invisible costume that helped me get into character."

Sia Walia, the character she portrays, is an elegant actress with a strong love for her spouse. Sia's strong compassion and love for her husband, along with her drive and determination to conquer her fears, greatly attracted her to the character. "Her transformative journey towards self-love and success with integrity is what makes her so inspiring," shares the *Rafuchakkar* fame.

Going ahead, she recalls her experience shooting in Goa, mainly known for its beaches. "While we were shooting in Goa, I had a bit of an accident and ended up with a nasty bruise on my right elbow."

With a funeral scene scheduled in just four hours, I had to push through the pain. I asked the costume team for a black shawl to cover the bruise and I used the discomfort to enhance my performance. My co-actors were fantastic, keeping things light and using humour to help me cope with the pain off-camera." In addition to her successful career, Chahat also finds comfort and enthusiasm in pole sports, a therapeutic pastime that helps her stay grounded.

She explores psychology as well, demonstrating her wide range of interests. "Pole fitness is at the center of my heart," shares the avid polorina as we head toward the end of the chat. Going on to sign off on this talk, she says, "It brings me so much joy. It's such a fun and dynamic way to work out, combining dance, acrobatics, and strength training. For me, it's not just about fitness; it's a passion that really challenges me both physically and mentally. It helps me build strength, improve flexibility, and stay motivated in my fitness journey, all while having a great time."

Actress Chahat Vig, known for her stints in *Gumraah* and *Rafuchakkar*, has given a remarkable performance in her latest *36 Days*. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she discusses her overwhelming feelings for the responses and getting into the skin of the character.

## Preventing infections in transplant recipients!

India performs 17,000–18,000 solid organ transplants every year. Transplant recipients face an increased risk of infection due to two main factors: epidemiologic exposure to pathogens and the extent of immunosuppression. The balance between these factors determines susceptibility to infection. Even those with standard immune systems can develop infections if exposed to high pathogen levels or if their immunosuppression levels are not properly assessed. Understanding and managing these risks is crucial for ensuring the long-term health and success of transplant recipients.

### Risk factors for infection :

Immunosuppression in transplant recipients increases their susceptibility to infections due to factors such as the type and number of immunosuppressive medications, the underlying medical condition and other health concerns. Even low-virulence organisms can cause invasive infections in these patients. Therefore, the likelihood of disease is influenced not only by the pathogen's aggressiveness but also by the patient's immune system strength and environmental exposure.

### Best practices for infection prevention :

Effective infection prevention strategies are crucial for transplant recipients to reduce the heightened risk. Implementing best practices can significantly lower the incidence of infections and enhance patient outcomes.

**1 Good hygiene practices:** Hand washing with soap and warm water is crucial for removing germs and preventing them from entering the body through mucous membranes. Additionally, avoiding the sharing of personal items like makeup, toothbrushes, eating utensils and glasses helps reduce the spread of pathogens.

**2 Avoiding contact with sick individuals:** Transplant recipients should avoid close contact with people who are known to be sick or have been exposed to contagious diseases. This includes common infections such as the cold, flu, strep throat and conjunctivitis.

**3 Safe food handling:** Ensuring food safety is vital for transplant recipients. They should thoroughly cook all foods, especially meat, and avoid raw foods that may harbor harmful bacteria or viruses. Safe food handling practices include frequent handwashing, cleaning food preparation surfaces, avoiding cross-contamination, cooking food to the appropriate temperature and promptly refrigerating leftovers.

**4 Clean drinking water:** Access to clean drinking water is essential to prevent gastrointestinal infections. Transplant recipients should ensure their drinking water is free from contaminants that could compromise their health.

**5 Regular medical monitoring:** Attending regular monitoring appointments enables healthcare providers to identify and address signs of infection early. Early intervention can prevent minor illnesses from worsening and allow for timely adjustments to immunosuppressive therapy if necessary.

**6 Adherence to medications:** Following prescribed antibiotic and antiviral medications exactly as directed is vital. This adherence helps prevent infections and ensures that potential infections are treated

promptly and effectively.

### Innovations in infection prevention :

Ongoing research and advancements in medical science have led to innovative approaches to prevent infections in transplant recipients. These innovations offer new hope in reducing infection-related complications and improving the quality of life for transplant patients.

**1. Vaccine development:** Developing vaccines specifically tailored for immunocompromised patients is a promising area of research. These vaccines aim to provide adequate immunity without triggering adverse reactions, thereby protecting transplant recipients from common and severe infections.

**2. Prophylactic antiviral therapies:** Innovations in antiviral therapies are helping to prevent viral reactivation in high-risk patients. Prophylactic use of antiviral medications can significantly reduce the incidence of viral infections such as cytomegalovirus (CMV) and Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), common in transplant recipients.

**3. Advanced diagnostic tools:** The development of advanced diagnostic tools allows for the early detection of infections at a molecular level. Techniques such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and next-generation sequencing (NGS) enable healthcare providers to identify pathogens quickly and accurately, facilitating prompt and targeted treatment.

**4. Personalised immunosuppressive therapy:** Personalised medicine approaches are being explored to optimize immunosuppressive therapy. By tailoring immunosuppressive regimens to the individual patient's immune response and infection risk profile, healthcare providers can minimize the risk of infections while preventing organ rejection.

**5. Microbiome research:** Emerging research on the microbiome is uncovering its role in infection resistance. Modulating the gut microbiota through probiotics, prebiotics, and diet adjustments could enhance the immune function of transplant recipients and reduce their susceptibility to infections.

Preventing infections in transplant recipients is a complex challenge that demands a comprehensive approach. By understanding risk factors and implementing effective prevention measures, the infection risk can be significantly reduced. Ongoing research and advances in medical science provide hope for improved outcomes and quality of life for transplant patients. Integrating best practices and innovations is essential for ensuring their long-term success and well-being.

(The author, Dr. P. Vikranth Reddy, is the Head of the Department & Chief Consultant Nephrologist, at Care Hospital in Hyderabad.)





# WRESTLER AMAN ENTERS SEMIFINALS

PTI ■ PARIS

Young Indian grappler Aman Sehrawat rekindled India's hopes of a medal in wrestling, demolishing former world champion Zelimkhan Abakarov of Albania by technical superiority to seal a place in the 57kg free-style semifinal at the Paris Olympics here on Thursday.

Aman was in imperious form as he toyed with Abakarov in the second round. The 21-year-old Indian locked his legs at the start of the second round and turned him over multiple times to earn eight straight points to secure a 12-0 victory. The bout started with Aman earning a passivity point after his Russian-turned-Albanian opponent did not initiate any attacking move. Moments later, the Indian effected a left-leg hold to earn two more points to showcase his dominance by going 3-0 up at the end of round 1.

Aman was on song in round 2 and Abakarov, world champion in 2022, bore the brunt. The Indian's superb agility against the 31-year-old Albanian was on display as he attacked the left leg to bring him down.

He then effected a 'fitley' (leg lace), turning the Albanian around several times to end the contest with more than two minutes to go. Abakarov contested the last two points awarded to Aman but the referee ruled in favour of the Indian and awarded him a point. Aman will meet Japanese top seed Rei Higuchi in the last-four round later in the day.

Earlier, Aman ensured himself an easy passage into the quarterfinal with a dominating performance against North Macedonian rival Vladimir Egorov.

The 21-year-old Indian, an Asian Championship gold medalist and the only male wrestler from the country to qualify for the Olympics, was amazingly agile as he kept his defence intact while regularly overpowering his 29-year-old former European champion with leg holds to win the bout on technical superiority (10-0). Egorov seemed to be in a bit of bother after the first round, requiring medical attention on his knee following Aman's all-out attack.

But the Macedonian could not stage a comeback with Aman effecting a takedown to earn two



more points and go 10-0 up with more than two minutes remaining on the clock.

**ANSHU MALIK LOSES:** Woman grappler Anshu Malik displayed great determination but could not breach the defence of USA's vastly experienced Helen Louise Maroulis, losing 2-7 in the 57kg pre-quarterfinals.

It was a rematch of the 2021 World Championship final in Oslo where Anshu had to settle for silver against the American.

Anshu's hopes of qualifying for the bronze-medal bout now hinge on 'repechage' provided Helen, the 2016 Rio Olympics gold medalist and Tokyo Games bronze medalist, reaches the final.

Anshu was up against one of the most reputed wrestlers in the world, but she fought with a lot of gumption to concede just two points in the first round. Helen attacked Anshu's left leg and then pushed the Indian to the mat to take a 2-0 lead.

The Indian then held Helen, a three-time world champion, at bay in the first round before the American came back to showcase her pedigree in the second and win despite getting a warning.



## Panghal likely to get three-year ban for indiscipline: Source

PTI ■ PARIS

Wrestler Antim Panghal, who caused embarrassment to the Indian Olympic contingent by trying to facilitate her sister's entry into the athletes village through her accreditation card, is likely to be banned for three years by the IOA, a source told PTI on Thursday.

Panghal had crashed out of the Olympics after losing her opening bout in the women's 53kg category on Wednesday. "IOA (Indian Olympic Association) officials discussed the issue that caused embarrassment to all. It is considering a three-year ban on everyone involved, including the coaches," a source in the Indian contingent told PTI.

"First, we need to ensure that she reaches home. The decision will be announced only after she reaches India," the source added.

Panghal is set to take a flight to Delhi this evening.

The IOA decided to send her and her support staff back after the disciplinary breach was brought to its notice by the French authorities. The body, however, asserted that the ban has not yet been imposed.

"A ban has not been imposed as yet," said an IOA official. Speaking with PTI before her flight back to India, the 19-

year-old said, "I did not intend to do anything wrong. I was not well and there was confusion. All of this happened due to confusion."

Later, in a video, she admitted that she had to go to the police station but only for the verification of her accreditation card.

"It was not a good day for me. I lost. A lot is being spread about me, that's not true. I had high fever, and had taken permission from my coach to go to the hotel with my sister. I needed some of my belongings which were in the Games Village. My sister took my card and asked the officials there if she could take my belongings. They took her to the Police Station for accreditation verification."

She also denied that her coaches were drunk and got into an altercation with a taxi driver over fare.

"My coaches had stayed back at the venue and when they wanted to come back, we booked a cab for them. My coaches did not have enough cash and due to the language issues, led to an argument with the taxi driver."

"Since they came to collect some Euros from the hotel room, it took some time and led to the situation. I already have had a bad time, please don't spread rumours. Please support me," she said.

AP ■ LE BOURGET (FRANCE)

For many athletes at the Paris Olympics, the fun was just beginning after they were done competing.

During the second full week of the 2024 Olympics, going home wasn't an option. Now that the pressure of having to compete is gone, it was time to become a fan: Enjoy Paris and watch other sports.

"I'm a huge track fan," said triathlete Morgan Pearson, who won the silver medal with the U.S. Team in the mixed relay on Monday. "I hope to go to some of those races. I'm a huge Olympic fan in general."

American sport climber Zach Hammer, who was finished competing on Tuesday, also was headed to the track.

"I would definitely be excited to watch the men's 200(-meter) with (Noah) Lyles. He's one of my favorite athletes," he said. "I'm definitely excited to get the full Olympic experience, and I'll go watch whatever there is to watch. It will definitely be cool to see Americans competing on the

## Athletes stick around Paris Games to watch other sports, get full experience

biggest stage."

U.S. Rower Jacob Pihaj was among those who stayed in town after competing during the first week.

"Hopefully I can watch a little handball if that's still going, maybe 3x3 basketball," he said. "I don't know what the schedules are. I've been focused on the racing but I'm excited to stick around and watch other sports, cheer Team USA on and get to know some athletes at the (Olympic) Village."

Another American sport climber, Sam Watson, who broke the speed world record in an elimination heat on Tuesday, was making the most out of his stay at the village. He was challenging fellow athletes to chess games and trying to get selfies with a member of



every delegation at the Games. Some of the American women rowers who competed last week were at the women's basketball game between the U.S. and Nigeria on Wednesday.

Molly Thompson-Smith, a British sport climber, was interested in watching some of the other smaller sports that don't often get much attention. She said "it's been really cool to kind of learn how they work and all the weird things about them."

Thompson-Smith added that she "did see a bit of beach volleyball" but "I think everyone wants to see the athletics, just to see something like that and feel the atmosphere of the crowd would be incredible. But I'm open to seeing anything now ... I'm here to make as many memories and see as much as I possibly can."

Rower Viktorija Senkute, who won Lithuania's first medal at the Games last week, was sticking around to watch her boyfriend, Simonas Maldonis, compete in canoe sprint.

Athletes can watch their own discipline with their accreditation, but need tickets for other sports. Some said they can get them through their national Olympic committees, or with the

International Olympic Committee, which gives each athlete one free ticket per day.

There was an additional Olympic experience for athletes this time in Paris, as for the first time in the Summer Games organizers gave them a place to be closer to fans and celebrate their medals. In the new Champions Park, athletes got a chance to parade with their medals and interact with fans.

"I feel as if this year you've done a really good job of treating after winning athletes with memories that we're going to cherish forever," French rugby player Aaron Grandier Nkanang said after going to the Champions Park. "We're just in front of the Eiffel Tower, and there's thousands of people out to come and cheer us on.

## Weinberg helps US beat Australia 11-10 in men's water polo quarters

AP ■ NANTERRE

Adrian Weinberg made two blocks in a penalty shootout to help the United States beat Australia 11-10 in the quarterfinals of the men's water polo tournament at the Paris Olympics.

Hannes Daube and Alex Bowen each scored two goals in regulation as the U.S. Reached the semifinals at the Olympics for the first time since 2008. Daube and Bowen also converted their penalty shots in the tiebreaker.

"It was exhausting," U.S. Attacker Marko Vavic said. "Both of us fighting for our country, each trying to get to the semifinal. It's what we've been dreaming about since we were kids. Everyone put it down on the line."

It was the third straight win for the U.S., which will play Serbia on Friday at Paris La Defense Arena. Serbia is trying to become the third men's team to win three consecutive Olympic gold medals.

Croatia will face Hungary in the other semifinal. Croatia beat Spain 10-8 in the first quarterfinal of the day, and Hungary edged Italy 12-10 in another game that went to a penalty shootout.

Serbia advanced when captain Nikola Jaksic skipped home a perfect shot from deep with 3 seconds left, lifting his country to a 12-11 victory over Greece.

"We finally looked like the team that came here to win it," Jaksic said. "We didn't give up from the first to the last moment."

Angelos Vlachopoulos had just tied the game for Greece with 6 seconds remaining.

"In this moment, I really hope this is a dream right now, just a nightmare and I will wake up and play again," Greece's Dimitrios Skoumpakis said. "Every guy on this team really tried a lot. We worked very hard, but this is the sport."

The U.S. Rallied after a tough sequence in the first quarter. Max



Irving had a goal waved off when the game was stopped for a video review and U.S. Attacker Johnny Hooper received a brutality foul, taking him out for the rest of the contest.

Luke Pavillard converted a penalty shot to give Australia a 3-1 lead.

Australia also got a 4-minute power play that it turned into two more goals and a 5-2 advantage.

But the U.S. Went ahead 6-5 when Daube scored with 6:03 left in regulation. After Pavillard scored two straight for Australia, Bowen's man-

up goal with 32 seconds remaining tied it at 7.

Irving also connected for the U.S. In the tiebreaker before Vavic closed it out for the U.S., beating Australia goaltender Nic Porter after they played together in college at Southern California.

"I didn't even look at him until I went up to shoot," Vavic said. "He was trying to eye me down and talk to me about the pressure before I got there. "He was chirping me, but I just tried to keep my composure and luckily I stuck it."

Pavillard scored four times for Australia in regulation on four shots. He also converted his penalty shot in the tiebreaker.

"Full credit to the U.S.," Porter said. "They really pulled it out of the fire there. It was our game to win, and they snatched it from us for sure."

Krisztian Manhercz scored five times for Hungary in its quarterfinal win, and Gergo Zalanki had three goals. Manhercz and Zalanki also made their penalty shots in the tiebreaker.

Francesco di Fulvio and Gonzalo Echenique each scored three goals in the loss. When it was over, Italy's Nicholas Presciutti directed a middle finger toward Hungary's players.

AP ■ PARIS

## Oleksandr punches his way to Paris Gold

Oleksandr Khyzhniak was one minute away from winning an Olympic gold medal three years ago when he was rocked by one miraculous punch. Khyzhniak went down, the fight was stopped and the most fearsome boxer in Tokyo had to settle for silver.

The middleweight from Ukraine decided he would wait three years to make it right. Khyzhniak got his epic redemption Wednesday night at the Paris Games with a gold medal finally around his neck - but only after he paid for it in time, sweat and pain.

Khyzhniak beat Nurbek Oralbay of Kazakhstan 3:2 in a thrilling final at Roland Garros, securing the championship that evaded him in heartbreaking fashion in Tokyo. The fighters unloaded on each other for three action-packed rounds, but Khyzhniak clinched the win by dominating a final three minutes filled with a jaw-dropping number of uppercuts, combinations and power punches for an Olympic fight.

When Khyzhniak's hand was

raised, the 29-year-old dropped to his knees in cathartic relief. Even though he is an obvious blue-chip professional prospect, Khyzhniak put any other chapters of his life on hold because he was determined to do what he couldn't in Tokyo.

Khyzhniak spent the last three years thinking about his loss to Hebert Sousa of Brazil, a game competitor who clearly wasn't the best middleweight in a stacked division in Tokyo. Khyzhniak was up 20-18 on all five cards after two rounds in their gold medal bout, meaning he only had to avoid a stoppage or a point deduction to win.

But Khyzhniak simply couldn't stop himself from coming forward relentlessly. He knows no way to fight other than to throw as many punches as his arms can muster for nine minutes of bruising, bleeding pressure.

So Khyzhniak kept coming forward, and the artful Sousa floored him with what might



have been just a flash knockdown in the pros but was enough to persuade the Olympic referee to stop the

bout. After the loss, Khyzhniak devoted himself to an Olympic comeback, winning every

amateur bout he took since Tokyo. When the Olympics eliminated the 75-kilogram division in which Khyzhniak

fought in Tokyo, he even moved up to 80 kilograms - now called middleweight. Although he has been probably

the most exciting fighter in his second Olympics, Khyzhniak didn't steamroll through his four bouts in Paris. He was tested in his early fights before he reached the semifinals against Arlen Lopez, the two-time Olympic gold medalist from Cuba.

The veteran amateurs put on a memorable show worthy of their combined star power, but Khyzhniak won with another phenomenal third round. He simply wouldn't stop pressuring Lopez, who finally ran out of stratagems to keep the Ukrainian star off him.

In the final, Khyzhniak faced a dynamic prospect in the 24-year-old Oralbay, whose twin brother also fought at Paris. Oralbay had ample skill and punching power to challenge Khyzhniak, and the fighters were essentially even on the scorecards heading to the third round.

And what a round it turned out to be.

Oralbay bled from a cut near his right eye early in the third,





# Niharika Konidela: My true passion lies in acting

K. RAMYA SREE

Niharika Konidela is making her feature film debut as a producer with the movie *Committee Kurrollu*, all set to hit theatres on August 9. Produced by Pink Elephant Pictures LLP and Sreedha Damodhar Studios and directed by Yadu Vamsi, this much-anticipated film is making a lot of noise as it is introducing many young actors to the Tollywood film industry.

Ahead of the film's release, Niharika Konidela shared insights about the film and her evolving role in the industry.

Reflecting on her transition from acting to producing, Niharika revealed, "After hearing the story, I was determined to have my name associated with this film. The script

Niharika Konidela, ahead of the release of her much-anticipated project, *Committee Kurrollu*, shares insights on her transition from acting to producing and more insights around the film.

came to me through Ankit while I was considering a feature film. Along with the music, Anudeep had already crafted a score that added depth to the story. Though I was born and raised in the Hyd and had never experienced a *Jathara* (traditional festival), Vamsi brought it to life for me as if I were witnessing it firsthand. His narration was exceptional. Whether for OTT or theatres,

the filmmaking process remains consistent, and that's why I was resolute about producing this film."

The film centers around a *Jathara* that occurs once every twelve years and spans three generations, incorporating elements from Vamsi's personal experiences. "Vamsi, being a fan of Pawan Kalyan, has infused the narrative with his own style and a touch of satire, including events from the 2019 election campaign," Niharika explained.

Niharika also touched upon her previous experiences, stating, "I acted in *Muddapappu Avakai* and even invested in it. That's how my journey as a producer started. My true passion lies in acting."

She continued, "I envisioned myself among the eleven boys in the film. Every audience member will find a character they connect with, which is crucial for engaging storytelling."

"I was initially worried that having an entirely new crew might affect the business. However, Vamsi asked me to listen to the story before making any judgments."

On the subject of discipline in the industry, Niharika quoted Chiranjeevi Garu, who often empha-

sizes that success requires more than just talent—it demands discipline. "I've seen that discipline in Vamsi. He has worked exceptionally hard on this film," she noted.

Niharika also mentioned how Vamsi's storytelling impressed her father, a tough critic. "Vamsi gave a narration to my father, who usually leaves if he doesn't like something. However, he was genuinely impressed by the story Vamsi presented."

Her family's feedback was equally positive. "My brother and sisters-in-law watched the film and loved it. I don't focus too much on external praise or criticism. My brother, who is always straightforward, called me immediately after watching the film to congratulate me. The censor board also responded well to it."

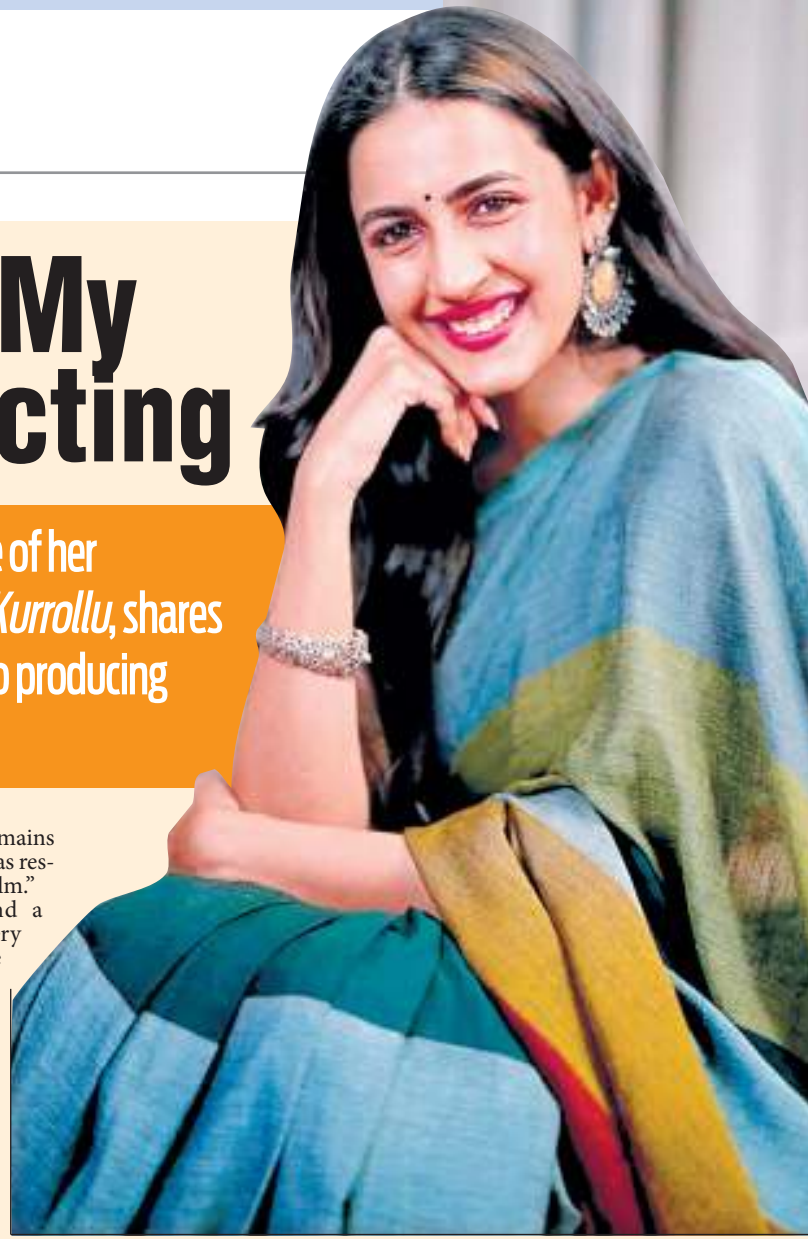
Addressing concerns about working with a new team, Niharika said, "I was initially worried that having an entirely new crew might affect the business. However, Vamsi asked me to listen to the story before making any judgments. Prasad is the only familiar name, but everyone involved has been dedicated to the project for three years. None of them held a dialogue paper on set, and they chose to work with me."

Finally, Niharika clarified the meaning behind the film's title.

"The title *Committee Kurrollu* was decided early on. I didn't initially understand it, but Vamsi explained that committee members are always at the forefront during festivals, feasts, or conflicts," she laughed.

She concluded, "Every character in the film has significant scenes, and Anudeep's music is the lifeblood of the movie. He has delivered fantastic songs and a remarkable

background score. I prioritise good stories and scripts. If a role is well-written, I'm more interested in it, regardless of its size. Legacy alone doesn't ensure success in the film industry. Passion, interest and hard work are essential to achieving success."



## Anupam Kher joins Hari Hara Veera Mallu

Renowned Indian actor Anupam Kher has signed on to join the cast of the highly anticipated action epic *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, starring Pawan Kalyan. Kher, celebrated for his illustrious career and impactful performances, will play a pivotal role in this magnum opus.

In an exciting development, *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* marks the first on-screen collaboration between Power Star Pawan Kalyan and the legendary Anupam Kher. Fans are eagerly anticipating the dynamic chemistry between the two stars, with the film's makers promising a captivating cinematic experience.

The buzz around *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* has intensified following the release of a special teaser by the film's young director, Jyothi Krishna. The teaser has generated significant excitement and elevated expectations among the film's dedicated fan base.

The project has also welcomed ace cinematographer Manoj Paramahansa, who joins the talented team alongside legendary production designer Thota Tharani and *Baahubali*'s VFX supervisor Srinivas Mohan. Together, they are craft-



ing a visually stunning epic. Oscar-winning composer M.M. Keeravani is providing the film's score, adding another layer of grandeur to the project. As production continues, the team is actively scouting locations and finalising post-production and VFX work.

*Hari Hara Veera Mallu* will be released in two parts, with Part 1 titled *Sword vs. Spirit*. The release date for the first installment will be announced soon. Fans can look forward to more details from the makers in the coming weeks.

## Pushpa 2: The Rule: Fahadh's character-centric poster squealed

Icon Star Allu Arjun's highly anticipated film *Pushpa 2: The Rule* is shaping up to be one of his most exhilarating projects to date. The pan-Indian action extravaganza has been generating buzz with its meticulously crafted promotional content and the teaser has already made a major impact, showcasing the prowess of director Sukumar.

In the film, versatile actor Fahadh Faasil takes on a high-profile role as a compelling cop. To celebrate his birthday today, a striking new poster has been unveiled, featuring Faasil's character, Bhanwar Singh Shekhawat, in a menacing and intense pose.

The sequel promises to be as thrilling and unpredictable as the first installment, with Sukumar infusing the role with unexpected twists. The film's climactic action sequence is currently being filmed at Ramoji Film City, reflecting Sukumar's grand vision for the project.

Produced on an opulent scale by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings, the film is being overseen by producers Naveen Yeneni and Y Ravi Shankar, who are dedicated to delivering a top-quality product. Cinematographer Mireslow Kuba Brozek is expected to showcase his finest work yet, while S. Rama Krishna and N. Monica's production design and the efforts of the entire technical team aim to achieve unprecedented acclaim.

*Pushpa 2: The Rule* is set for a global release in multiple languages on December 6, 2024, promising to be a blockbuster event for audiences around the world.



## Big Bull from Double ISMART catches bull's eye!



The countdown has officially begun for the release of the highly anticipated Pan-India film *Double ISMART*. Starring Ustadd Ram Pothineni and directed by the dynamic Puri Jagannadh, the film is set to hit theatres on August 15. With Sanjay Dutt playing the antagonist and Kavya Thapar as the leading lady, *Double ISMART* is generating an exceptional buzz. On Thursday, the filmmakers unveiled a special song titled *Big Bull*, highlighting Puri Jagannadh's knack for giving his villains memorable roles.

In this film, Sanjay Dutt takes center stage as the character *Big Bull*, and the song celebrates his powerful presence.

Composed by Mani Sharma, *Big Bull* is an energetic and vibrant track that promises to be both a visual and auditory feast. The song features a high-energy, festive backdrop, with Kavya Thapar adding a glamorous touch as she joins the ensemble in a dazzling dance sequence.

The lyrics, penned by Bhaskarabhatla Ravi Kumar, capture the essence of the *Big Bull* character, enriching the

song's narrative. Vocals by Prudhvi Chandra and Sanjana Kalmanje infuse the track with additional vitality.

Produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur under the Puri Connects banner, *Double ISMART* boasts cinematography by Sam K Naidu and Gianni Gianneli. The film will be released globally on Independence Day in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi, promising to be a major cinematic event.



## Naga Chaitanya, Sobhita Dhulipala are officially engaged!

In a heartwarming update, actor Naga Chaitanya and actress Sobhita Dhulipala have officially announced their engagement. After a few years of dating, the couple has taken the significant step of making their relationship public.

The news was shared by Naga Chaitanya's father, actor Nagarjuna, who took to social media to reveal the joyous occasion. "We are delighted to announce the engagement of our son, Naga Chaitanya, to Sobhita Dhulipala, which took place this morning at 9:42 a.m.! We are overjoyed to welcome her into our family. Congratulations to the happy couple! I wish them a lifetime of love and happiness. God bless! 8.8.8—A beginning of infinite love," Nagarjuna tweeted.

The engagement ceremony was held at Naga Chaitanya's residence in Hyderabad on Thursday, featuring a private gathering with close family members in attendance. Despite persistent rumors about their relationship over the past few years, both actors had previously kept details about their personal lives under wraps.

With the engagement now officially confirmed, fans and well-wishers are celebrating this new chapter in the couple's lives, extending their heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for their future together.

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Jagapathi Babu, Anasuya starrer *Simbaa* is all set to hit theatres on August 9. Rajender Reddy, the producer behind the film, sheds light on his latest project and its deeper societal impact. With *Simbaa*, coinciding with International Adivasi Day, Reddy's commitment to blending entertainment with social responsibility is clear. The producer explained, "This film isn't just concept-oriented; it incorporates various elements. I have a deep appreciation for nature and Sampath Nandi shared this story with me during the pandemic. I wanted to create a film that served societal benefits and *Simbaa* resonated with me. While I've heard many stories before, this one stood out."

reflects the film's essence. Murali Manohar, who has previously collaborated with Sampath Nandi and trained at a film school in London, was entrusted with this project due to our mutual faith in his abilities." The pandemic had a significant impact on the production schedule. The producer recalled, "Initially, conceived before the pandemic, shooting was halted due to COVID-19, but we gradually resumed production. My longstanding relationship with Jagapathi Babu, who is deeply connected to this story and worked with great dedication, has been integral to this project."

Addressing the film's environmental themes, he noted, "Given the current environmental challenges, raising awareness about environmental protection is crucial. We have conveyed this message through the film while incorporating commercial elements. My passion for nature and forest conservation is reflected in *Simbaa*. I even participated in the *Green Challenge* program and our work received support from the government." *Simbaa* ventures into new territory within Indian cinema as a sci-fi thriller, a genre that Reddy believes adds a fresh perspective. "Although

Sampath Nandi is known for commercial concepts, this film explores a genre not previously seen in Indian cinema. The trailer might not reveal much about the characters, but the censors have appreciated it and predicted awards for the film." Reflecting on his career, he said, "I entered the industry with a focus on social impact, having worked in media 25 years ago. My aim is to produce films that offer something valuable to society. I felt satisfied with *Simbaa* and only proceed with projects when I am entirely content." Looking ahead, he teased, "After *Simbaa*'s release, I will announce new projects. My focus remains on producing films that not only entertain but also contribute positively to society."

## 'Simbaa is a film with social conscience'

## Vikram heaps praise on GV Prakash Kumar

National Award-winning composer GV Prakash Kumar is set for a major release with his latest project, *Thangalaan*. The pan-India film, directed by Pa Ranjith and starring Chiyaan Vikram, is slated to hit worldwide cinemas on August 15, 2024.

At the recent audio launch event for *Thangalaan*, Chiyaan Vikram praised GV Prakash Kumar's contribution, stating, "GV Prakash Kumar is another hero for *Thangalaan*. His music doesn't just accompany the story; it enhances it, making you not only watch but truly hear it." Vikram continued, reflecting on their past collaborations, "I previously worked with him on *Thaandavam* (2012) and *Devathirumogal*, and even now, those songs remain

exceptional. In *Thangalaan*, GV Prakash Kumar has brought an incredible depth of emotion and pain to every frame. The new sounds and powerful execution are remarkable. I have immense respect for him and his craft!" *Thangalaan* marks GV Prakash Kumar's third collaboration with Chiyaan Vikram, following *Thaandavam* and *Devathirumogal*. The duo is also set to collaborate on the upcoming *Veera Dheera Sooran Part 2*.

