

Modi stresses value addition in agriculture

'AN ATTACK ON SEBI'S CREDIBILITY'

'The message we are conveying in Aay is nothing greater than FRIENDSHIP'

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
Sanjay should reveal why KTR should be arrested. Should KTR be arrested for developing Hyderabad city? Is Sanjay giving orders to Revanth to arrest KTR? The Congress and the BJP are engaged in conspiracy politics in Telangana. KCR has faced big leaders and the current leaders are not fit for KCR's toes. The Congress and the BRS are working in tandem to ensure that BRS ceases to exist.
 — KP Vivekanand, BRS' Quthbullapur MLA, TG

DON'T MISS...
160 temples to be renovated with...
 Endowments Minister Anam Ramnarayana Reddy has said that 160 temples would be renovated at a cost of Rs 113 crore CGF funds. The Endowments Minister entered his modernised chamber in the Secretariat on Sunday. He made the first sign on the file about the modernisation of 160 temples at a cost of 113 crore CGF funds and made a sign on the second file about the modernisation of Sri Agastheswara Swamy temple at a cost of Rs 1 crore CGF funds. The Minister said that out of the 160 temples to be modernized, 147 are...
 —PAGE: 4

'May give rise to same old...
 While the Supreme Court has asked the NTA to overhaul the way it conducts NEET, calls for a return to the old system have seen a revival even as some experts remain apprehensive about states' ability to take care of the logistics and adhere to the domicile rule. According to the NEET domicile rule, 85 per cent of medical seats are reserved for students who are bona fide residents of the state and have completed their class 12 from a school there. The rest 15 per cent are earmarked for aspirants from...
 —PAGE: 5

Adopt guidance while dealing...
 Income-tax department officials should make renewed efforts to come across as responsible, responsive, transparent apart from undertaking an approach of "guidance over intimidation" while dealing with taxpayers, the CBDT chairman has said. Ravi Agrawal, the head of the direct taxes administration body of the country, suggested a "PRUDENT" approach to be followed by the taxmen as the income tax regime completed 164 years in India. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief spoke to his colleagues...
 —PAGE: 8

It's a dream to compete with...
 Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra hoped to compete with other prominent international names in India sooner than later following his silver medal-winning effort in the Paris Olympics. Chopra bagged the silver at the Paris showpiece with a throw of 89.45m behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who hurled the javelin to 92.97m, an Olympic record. Anderson Peters of Grenada came third with a throw of 88.54m among the field that included some high-profile javelin throwers like Julian Webber, Jakub Vadlejch and...
 —SPORTS

Tungabhadra Dam gate gives way

AP CM Naidu asks officials to alert residents in low-lying areas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Tungabhadra Dam, a critical source of water for both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, has experienced a major issue following the loss of Gate No. 19 on Saturday night. The incident occurred when the chain attached to the crest gate broke due to rising flood levels, causing the gate to be washed away. This event has led to a substantial wastage of approximately 75,000 cusecs of water daily, totalling 9 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of water per day.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has urgently addressed the situation, expressing deep concern over the potential risks posed by the incident. In response, he has instructed officials to immediately alert residents in low-lying areas of the erstwhile Kurnool district, including Kauthalam, Kosgi, Mantralayam, and Nandavaram, to remain vigilant.

The Chief Minister's directive aims to ensure that local communities are prepared and can take necessary precautions to mitigate any potential impact from the ongoing flood conditions.

State Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu has been actively involved in the response, communicating with Sai Prasad, the Special Chief Secretary of the Water Resources Department.



- The damaged gate was old and poorly maintained, raising concerns about the dam's upkeep
- Seven additional gates have been raised, and experts are placing iron sheets to minimise water wastage.
- A new gate can only be installed after releasing 60 TMC of water from the reservoir.
- AP's previous govt failed to allocate funds for the dam's maintenance, complicating the response.
- Both Central and state governments are working together to address the situation and repair the damage.
- Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Anantapur MLA Kaluva Srinivas have visited the site to assess the damage and raise concerns.
- Experts recommend installing 4x4 feet gates under supervision for a robust repair solution.

Prasad informed the Chief Minister that the washed-away gate was old, unused, and poorly maintained. This revelation highlights concerns about the dam's maintenance and raises questions about oversight.

To address the immediate issue, the Chief Minister has recommended that a design team be dispatched to the site without delay. Officials

Unutilised Krishna water flowing wastefully into sea

C PRADEEP KUMAR
 cpk007@gmail.com
 ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the wake of recent floods in Andhra Pradesh, massive quantities of Krishna River water are flowing wastefully into the sea. Despite the potential for utilising this floodwater, the government has failed to implement effective measures, drawing criticism from observers who feel that current leaders are neglecting future generations in favour of short-term gains.

Despite the construction of major projects like Nagarjunasagar, Dowleswararam, Prakasam Barrage, and Srisailem, which have alleviated some water scarcity issues, the drought situation persists in Rayalaseema. Projects intended to address water needs in the region are hindered by delays and maintenance issues. For example, the Srisailem Right Main Canal (SRMC) and the Telugu Ganga Canal are both undergoing repairs, and the Gorukullu Reservoir remains incomplete.

When the Srisailem Dam reaches full capacity, it can channel up to 44,000 cusecs of water to Rayalaseema through the Pothireddyppadu head regulator. However, ongoing repairs and mismanagement of the canals, including the Malyala lift scheme, have prevented effective water diversion. Additionally, Telangana's recent power generation initiatives from the Srisailem left bank, undertaken without the Krishna Board's approval, have led to the diversion of 31,784 cusecs of water, with Andhra Pradesh officials remaining passive.

Since early August, approximately 300,000 cusecs of water from Srisailem have been released into the sea daily through Nagarjunasagar. This week alone, around 2.5 lakh cusecs of floodwater was released from Srisailem, while 250,000 cusecs of inflow are reaching the Prakasam Barrage daily.

AP to encourage power consumers to opt for star-rated appliances
 Bojja Dasharadha Ramieddy, president of the Rayalaseema Tagu Neeti Sadhana Samiti (RTNSS), has criticised the government's neglect of essential repairs and upgrades to canals and reservoirs. He expressed frustration that despite having ample water in Srisailem, the existing infrastructure remains underutilised, highlighting a critical need for maintenance and better management.



YSRCP MLC Duvvada's aide Madhuri hurt in car crash

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Divvala Madhuri, a prominent YSRCP leader from Tekkali and close associate of YSRCP MLC Duvvada Srinivas, sustained severe injuries in a car accident near the Lakshimpuram toll gate on NH-5 in Kothajagadevapuram, Palasa mandal, on Sunday afternoon. The incident has shocked the district, sparking widespread speculation about the circumstances surrounding the crash.

According to reports, Madhuri was on a Zoom call when the accident occurred. Her vehicle overturned after colliding with a parked car. Residents quickly responded, rushing her to the Palasa Government Hospital.

The accident comes at a time of heightened tension between Srinivas and his wife, Vani. Vani, a Tekkali ZPTC member, has publicly accused her husband of infidelity and neglecting their family in favour of a relationship with Madhuri. These allegations have stirred significant controversy and media attention.

From her hospital bed, Madhuri spoke to the media, revealing the emotional strain she has been under. "The relentless trolling and negative comments I've faced over the past three days have deeply hurt me," Madhuri said. "I felt so overwhelmed by the situation that I thought the only way out was to end my life."

The police are currently investigating the accident, and the exact circumstances remain unclear. While some view it as a tragic accident, others are questioning whether it might have been a deliberate act. As this dramatic situation continues to unfold, the people of Srikakulam are watching closely, eager for clarity on these shocking events.

Bhogapuram Airport work on fast lane: Min

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has announced that the construction of Bhogapuram Airport is moving faster than expected and will likely be finished six months ahead of schedule. After inspecting the site on Sunday, he shared that the airport, originally set to be completed by December 2026, is now expected to be ready by June 2026.

The Minister visited the site with State Tribal Welfare Minister Gummidi Sandhyarani and State MSME, SERP, and NRI Affairs Minister Kondapalli Srinivas to check on the project's progress. He expressed pride in the airport project, calling it a major boost for the North Andhra region. He also promised to keep a close watch on the construction, with regular inspections and meetings.



HM Anitha escapes unhurt in accident

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Minister Vangalapati Anita was unharmed in a road accident on Sunday in Eluru district. Her car collided with an escort vehicle in her convoy after the escort vehicle's driver braked suddenly to avoid a motorcycle.

Ex-foreign minister Natwar Singh no more

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh passed away on Saturday night after a prolonged illness, family sources said. He was 93. He breathed his last at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram near Delhi, where he had been admitted for the past couple of weeks, they said.

Singh was born in 1931 in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan. He was a career diplomat, who brought a wealth of experience in diplomacy to his political career and a prolific author on subjects ranging from the life of a maharaja to nuances of foreign affairs.

During his distinguished career, he wore many hats, and for his service to the nation, the former external affairs minister was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1984.

"His son is there at the hospital, and many more family members are coming to Delhi from his native state for the last rites planned in Delhi."

'Name Telugu University after NTR'

Rs 50 cr sanctioned by CM, says Yarlagadda
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Writer and politician Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad praised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for sanctioning Rs 50 crore for the establishment of a Telugu University in Rajamahendravaram.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Yarlagadda urged that the new university be named after the late Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), honouring a promise previously made by Chandrababu Naidu.

He said that Telugu University was originally conceived by NTR during the time of undivided Andhra Pradesh, with NTR serving as the university's first chancellor.

Yarlagadda also mentioned that the government is taking concrete steps toward establishing both Telugu and Ambedkar universities in the State.

He highlighted the hardships faced by students due to the delay in establishing these institutions following the State's bifurcation.

Fire at Vizag hospital; no casualties

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

"A fire broke out on the fifth floor of Seven Hills Hospital in Visakhapatnam's Ram Nagar on Sunday afternoon, raising concerns about hospital safety. The fire, which started around 2:00 pm, was quickly controlled by emergency services. Fortunately, all patients and staff were safely evacuated, and no injuries were reported. The fire is suspected to have been caused by a short circuit, though investigations are ongoing.

City Police Commissioner Dr. Sankhabrata Bagchi, who visited the site, emphasised the need for stricter adherence to fire safety protocols in hospitals, citing the increasing frequency of such incidents. He



stressed that patient safety should be the top priority for hospital management, calling for regular safety audits. The incident highlights the critical importance of maintaining rigorous safety measures in medical facilities, where there is no room for error.

Heavy rain likely in Rayalaseema

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy rain is expected at isolated places in Rayalaseema on August 14 and 15, according to the latest weather report. The Southwest monsoon has been normal over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema. The forecast for the next five days includes thunderstorms with lightning and strong surface winds of 30-40 km/h in isolated areas of both Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely at various locations in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Hindenburg triggers political heat

□ Oppn demands SEBI chief's resignation, JPC probe
FRESH ALLEGATIONS
Adani terms charges malicious, manipulative
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US-based short seller Hindenburg Research's allegations against SEBI chief Madhabi Buch triggered a political slugfest on Sunday with the Congress and other INDIA bloc parties demanding her removal and a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe and the ruling BJP accusing the opposition of being a part of a conspiracy to create financial instability and chaos in India.

The opposition parties also urged the Supreme Court to step in after Hindenburg Research on Saturday alleged that the SEBI chairperson and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the alleged Adani money siphoning scandal.

Madhabi Buch and her husband Dhaval dismissed the charges as baseless and alleged that Hindenburg Research is attacking capital markets regulator SEBI's credibility and attempting a character assassination of its chief instead of replying to a show cause notice served to it for "violations in India".

SEBI said allegations against the Adani Group have been "duly investigated", and its chairperson disclosed and recused herself from time to time when dealing with matters.

Adani Group on Sunday termed US short-seller Hindenburg Research's latest allegations as malicious and manipulative of select public information, saying it has no commercial relationship with the firm.

The Adani Group also termed the allegations malicious and based on manipulation of select public information. The company said it has no commercial relationship with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) chairperson or her husband.

Special university needed for aquaculture: Kollu Ravindra

Stress on need for adopting modern, technological, and international methods

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra has emphasised the need for modern, technological, and international methods to be adapted in order to make significant progress and increase production in aquaculture. He added that aquaculture will play an important role in providing aqua marine fishing for future generations. Minister Ravindra suggested that a special university should be established to achieve these goals.

As part of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-8 Project on Sustainable Aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh, a delegation from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) visited the fishing harbour at Gilakaladindi near Machilipatnam on Sunday. The team observed the environmental conditions and later, held a meeting with aquaculture farmers to address their issues. They enquired about the favourable conditions required to continue aquaculture in the region.

The delegation included GEF-8 Project India Assistant Representative Dr. Konda Chevva, bio-diversity expert and FAO Project National Coordinator Sim Bhat, Lead



Minister Kollu Ravindra with the delegation of the GEF-8 Project on Sustainable Aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh at the Gilakaladindi Fishing Harbour near Machilipatnam Sunday

Technical Specialist CM Muralidharan, aquaculture specialist Vishnu Bhat, private sector, value chain and sustainable finance specialist Neelakhanta Mishra, environmental management specialist Neena Koshi, and gender, stakeholder engagement, and safeguards specialist Salom Yesudas.

Minister Kollu Ravindra welcomed the team and urged

the members to protect the endangered species of sea fish. He pointed out the need to conserve mangroves for coastal protection and emphasised the establishment of a special university. He further mentioned that once the modernisation works at the Machilipatnam Fishing Harbour are completed, it will develop as an aqua hub. He highlighted the importance of

protecting mangroves to safeguard sea fish species and support their reproduction.

Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the new concept of 'Mother Fish' and its potential to overcome the issues faced by fishermen in storing fish products. He also spoke about the need to make solar boats available for fishermen to use. Stressing this point not just as a minister but as an aqua cul-

tivator, he emphasised that the 'Mother Fish' concept would be more helpful to the fishermen once implemented in the State.

Prior to this, the team described their project as an expansion of investment in sustainable aquaculture management, linked to land-based practices impacting freshwater and coastal ecosystems, as well as marine ecosystems. They noted that aquaculture has experienced significant annual growth since 1950, with the share of aquaculture products in overall Indian fish products increasing by 68 per cent. They pointed out that more than 28 million fishermen and aquaculture workers are involved in fishing aquaculture.

The Central team lauded Andhra Pradesh for being the biggest aquaculture producer in the country, naming it an aquaculture hub. The project aims to encourage fishermen to engage in sustainable aqua production and to address challenges posed by weather changes.

Fisheries Commissioner Tammu Dola Sanka, Additional Director Dr Anjali, Joint Director A Chandrasekar, and Krishna District Forest Officer K Rajasekar were also present during the visit.

Free schemes may lead to laziness: Venkaiah Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Vice-President of India M Venkaiah Naidu has emphasised the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and good eating habits as key contributors to better health. He attended a free medical camp sponsored by the EVR Super Speciality Hospital, Gudivada, at the Swarna Bharathi Trust at Atkuru near Gannavaram on Sunday.

In his address, Venkaiah Naidu highlighted the ongoing efforts of the Swarna Bharathi Trust, which operates in Hyderabad, Nellore, and Atkuru, to support rural poor students by providing them with lodging and boarding facilities. He also mentioned that the Trust is actively involved in empowering the unemployed youth by offering free training in 17 different trades, helping them secure self-employment opportunities.

Venkaiah Naidu expressed concern over the free schemes provided by the government, suggesting that they may lead to laziness among the people. He urged the government to focus instead on offering free education and healthcare services, which he believes will have a more positive and lasting impact on society.

He also advised parents to encourage their children to



Former Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu addressing the gathering at a medical camp at the Swarna Bharathi Trust at Atkuru on Sunday

learn about Indian culture and traditions, urging them to focus on these values. He suggested using social media for educational purposes rather than wasting time on it.

Besides, he expressed his concern over the growing dependence on mobile phones, which he believes is affecting people's ability to think independently. He encouraged people to remain health-conscious by practising yoga and engaging in other physical exercises.

Venkaiah Naidu com-

mended Alluri Rama Raju, a 75-year-old resident of Ambapuram in Vijayawada Rural, for his noble act of donating his organs to the NTR Trust Cancer Hospital. He praised Raju as an inspiration for others to follow.

The event was attended by Swarna Bharathi Trust CEO Sarath Babu, along with doctors from EVR Super Speciality Hospital, including Rajendra, Satish Chandra, Rajya Lakshmi, Revanth Kumar, Amritha, Raghavaran, Suman Kumar, and Jaya Sri.

'Road accident prevention everyone's responsibility'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Transport Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy has said that road accidents are the most tragic incidents. The Minister unveiled posters issued by the Road Safety Voluntary Organisation at the Camp Office in Vijayawada on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that it is everyone's responsibility to prevent road accidents.

He requested voluntary organisations to come forward to spread awareness among people to prevent them.

After unveiling the poster, the Minister appealed to the people not to drive vehicles under the influence of alcohol, wear helmets and follow the line display on national highways.



State president of Road Safety NGO RK Durga Padmaja, Venkateswara Rao and Bangaraiha and others were present.

Allocate funds for Upadhi scheme: CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State committee of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) has demanded that funds be allocated for the Upadhi scheme and for conducting gram sabhas across the State.

The party also demanded 100 days of employment for

those holding job cards.

Furthermore, the CPM State committee has said that work should not be assigned to contractors and requested an increase in person-days to expand the scheme's scope.

In a press release issued on Sunday, priny State secretary V Srinivasa Rao stated that the State government is

planning to conduct gram sabhas in all 13,326 panchayats.

During these gram sabhas, the government should ensure 100 days of employment for job card holders, he emphasised.

He also stated that this responsibility falls on the State government.

Moreover, he mentioned that the proposed gram sabhas should involve discussions with the public about the type of work to be undertaken and their priority.

He stressed that the government should implement all 29 types of works recognised by the Central government.

SEB seizes liquor worth Rs. 1.12 lakh; 2 held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) sleuths in Jaggaiahpet seized 163 liquor bottles worth Rs. 1.12 lakh at the Chillakallu Toll Plaza in NTR district. The liquor bottles belonged to Telangana State. The SEB also arrested two individuals, Jalleddu Manikanta and Shaik Ijaz, who hail from Guntur district.

According to SEB Inspector S. Manikantha Reddy, the accused purchased the 163 liquor bottles from wine shops at the Ramapuram Cross Road in Telangana. They made the purchase through a mobile order.

Acting on a tip-off, the SEB checked the toll plaza and found the two illegally transporting the 163 liquor bottles in an auto. During the interrogation, they admitted to purchasing the Telangana liquor to sell in Guntur.

Inspector Manikantha Reddy stated that transporting liquor from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh is banned. He warned that purchasing liquor in Telangana and attempting to transport it to Andhra Pradesh is a crime.

An auto and two smartphones were also confiscated by the police. Inspector Manikantha Reddy commended SEB Constable S. Kishore Babu for the arrest.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As India prepares to celebrate its 77th Independence Day, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has taken a proactive step to ignite a sense of pride and patriotism among the city's residents. Commissioner P. Sampath Kumar has called upon all citizens to actively participate in the HarGharTiranga movement, a nationwide initiative aimed at fostering unity and celebrating the enduring spirit of freedom.

Sampath Kumar has urged residents to hoist the tricolour at their homes and, more importantly, to capture these moments of pride through photographs. Citizens are encouraged to upload these images to the official website, hargharranga.com, as a way of sharing their love for the country with the wider community. "This is more than just a symbolic gesture; it is a celebration of our shared history, values, and aspirations as a nation," the Commissioner stated.

He emphasised the role of

GVMC chief urges citizens to join #HarGharTiranga



every individual in strengthening the fabric of national unity. "The #HarGharTiranga movement is a powerful reminder that every citizen has a role to play in nurturing our national pride. By displaying the flag and sharing

your snapshots, you are not just participating in a campaign, but contributing to a collective expression of love for our country," he said.

The GVMC Commissioner also highlighted the importance of digital engagement in

today's interconnected world. He encouraged the people to not only hoist the flag but to actively participate in the digital movement by sharing their photos on social media platforms, using the hashtag #HarGharTiranga. "Let Visakhapatnam shine with the colours of our national flag. Let us proudly show the world our unity and love for India. When we share these moments online, we are creating a ripple effect of patriotism that transcends boundaries," he added.

This call to action is expected to resonate deeply with the people of Visakhapatnam, known for their strong sense of community and civic responsibility. The Commissioner's appeal is not just about celebrating a day but about reinforcing the values that the tricolour represents—freedom, diversity, and unity.

'Research should adopt multidisciplinary approaches'

Orientation programme on Benchmarking research processes in higher education opportunities held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Loyola Institute of Engineering and Technology, Vijayawada, organised a Faculty Orientation Programme on the college premises on Sunday. The event featured Dr Manimozhi Theodore-Teuder, an Outstanding Scientist and Emeritus Chief Coordinator of the ISRO-DRDO Gaganyaan Programme, and former Director of the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR) and Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL) at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), as the resource person.

Dr Theodore shared her valuable insights on various aspects of benchmarking, emphasising that 21st-century research should adopt multidisciplinary approaches to address high-impact societal challenges. She highlighted the importance of developing both immediate short-term solutions and long-term strategies to systematically tackle these issues.

Besides, Dr Theodore pointed out that the benchmarking process, along with



Andhra Loyola Institute of Engineering facilitating Dr Manimozhi Theodore-Teuder on the college campus in Vijayawada on Sunday

setting targets, can often be misunderstood due to its quantitative nature. She stressed the importance of establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to effectively guide this process.

During the interactive session, Dr Theodore encouraged the faculty members to focus their research on unsolved problems, addressing all questions related to quality and the role of acad-

emics. She also discussed the significance of teamwork and drew from her extensive experience at DRDO and DEBEL to illustrate these points.

The event was attended by Andhra Loyola Institutions Rector Dr PR John, Director and Secretary Dr B Joji Reddy, Assistant Director Balaswamy, Principal Dr O Mahesh, and IQAC Coordinator Dr Candy D Chunha.

Young skater sets sights on international glory

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

At an age when most teenagers are captivated by digital games and social media, 16-year-old Chandaka Venkata Naga Murari is carving out his own path in the world of roller skating. The junior men's category skater has already amassed an impressive collection of medals, including six golds, two silvers, and a bronze at various national competitions in inline alpine skating. Now, he sets his sights on bringing international glory to India.

Balancing a rigorous academic workload with an equally demanding training schedule, Murari, currently in his second year of Intermediate studies, demonstrates a discipline far beyond his years. "My focus extends beyond just skating; I'm also preparing for

Chandaka Venkata Naga Murari's tally includes nine national-level awards and over a dozen State-level medals

the NEET exam," Murari shared with The Pioneer. "I spend most of my time either studying or training at the rink."

Murari's journey into the world of skating began at the tender age of six, sparked by a passion that has only grown stronger over the years. Under the watchful eye of his father, Ch VAE Suresh Kumar, a national referee and his first coach, Murari has honed his skills with relentless dedication. "It's been a journey of passion and perseverance," Suresh Kumar remarked. "Venkata's commitment to skating, despite the rigors of academics, is truly commendable. His ability to maintain



high standards in both areas is nothing short of extraordinary."

This dedication has not gone unnoticed. At the recent 61st National Roller-Skating Championship, Murari's talent shone brightly as he clinched the gold medal, a testament to his growing prowess in the sport. His medal tally now includes nine national-level awards, over a dozen State-level medals, and 23 district-level victories—a remarkable achievement for someone so young. But Murari is far from complacent. "Winning at the national-level was a big milestone, but my ultimate goal is to compete and win on the international stage," he said,

his eyes gleaming with determination. "I want to bring pride not just to my family, but to the entire nation."

Training both in the early mornings and late evenings, Murari continues to hone his skills with the support of his father. "I believe in my son's potential, and I am confident that he will bring international laurels to our country," Suresh Kumar assured.

Beyond the medals and the accolades, Murari's story is one of sheer willpower and resilience. In a sport that demands not just physical agility but also mental fortitude, Murari has shown that he possesses both in abundance. His achievements have inspired many young skaters across the region, proving that with dedication and the right guidance, dreams can indeed become reality.

ACROSS THE STATES



Downpour in Delhi, traffic crawls, several areas waterlogged

Heavy rain lashed many parts of the national capital on Sunday afternoon, leading to waterlogging and traffic snarls in several areas as the weather office predicted more showers in the Delhi-NCR area in the evening.



Next round of Assam-Mizoram border talks by January: Bora

Assam Minister Atul Bora said on Sunday that the next round of discussions to resolve the state's border dispute with Mizoram will be held in Guwahati in January next year.



CPI(M) expresses concern over attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh

The Politburo of the CPI(M) on Sunday expressed concern over the attacks on Hindu places of worship in Bangladesh, and demanded that the country's interim government ensure safety of minorities.



Modi stresses value addition in agriculture

Releases seed varieties to increase productivity, farmers income

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient and biofortified seed varieties of agricultural and horticultural crops, aiming to enhance farm productivity and farmers' income.



new varieties with farmers. Farmers present on the

According to an official statement, Modi stressed on the significance of value addition in agriculture while discussing the importance of these new varieties with farmers

occasion said that these new varieties would be highly beneficial to them because of lower input cost. The Prime Minister discussed the importance of millets and underlined how people are moving towards nutritious food.

organic foods. Farmers appreciated the efforts of the government in promotion of natural farming. They also lauded the efforts played by Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) in creating awareness, the release said.

Maldives key partner for India in Indian Ocean region: EAM

PNS ■ MALE

The Maldives is a key partner for India in the Indian Ocean region and the two nations aspire to turn their cooperation into a modern partnership, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Sunday.



heart of our "Neighborhood First Policy" and it is therefore very natural that the cooperation between our two countries has moved beyond the traditional role and today really aspires to be a modern partnership, Jaishankar said.

Oppn part of conspiracy to cause financial instability in India: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday alleged that the Congress and other opposition parties are part of a conspiracy to create financial instability and chaos in India, as the ruling party rejected Hindenburg's charge against the SEBI chairperson as an attempt to discredit the financial watchdog.



that many such critical reports emanating from foreign soil are released just ahead of or during Parliament sessions, he said opposition leaders were aware that the report was coming when Parliament was scheduled to meet.

short by one working day and got over on Friday. BJP leader and former union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the short-selling firm has clearly attacked market regulator SEBI in an "obvious partnership" with the Congress and has an ominous motive and goal.

Centre asks states to focus on schemes for women and children's nutrition, safety

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

WCD Minister Annapurna Devi on Saturday met her counterparts from states and union territories and other administrators, urging them to focus on three missions of the ministry i.e. on children's protection, women's safety and their nutrition.



During the meeting, Devi emphasised the importance of collective efforts and strategic planning to enhance the ministry's schemes. She said the states should focus should on the three ver-

ties with the states, which will not only foster the development of individual states but also contribute to the overall progress of our nation, aligning with the prime minister's vision of a developed India, she said.

Vote for AAP to build 'new Haryana': Sunita Kejriwal

PNS ■ HISAR

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal on Sunday accused the BJP government in Haryana of "not undertaking any development work" in the last 10 years and asked the people to vote for the AAP in the upcoming assembly polls to build a "new Haryana".



'jhadu' (AAP's poll symbol) symbol on election day to build a "new Haryana" while asserting that the AAP government in Delhi has "transformed" government schools and hospitals and made electricity free.

'May give rise to same old problems' Say experts over demand for decentralised medical entrance tests

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While the Supreme Court has asked the NTA to overhaul the way it conducts NEET, calls for a return to the old system have seen a revival even as some experts remain apprehensive about states' ability to take care of the logistics and adhere to the domicile rule.



The rest 15 per cent are earmarked for aspirants from other states. In the wake of the NEET fiasco, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka,

conduct their own medical entrance exams. Such a proposal also found mention in the Lok Sabha, when DMK member Rani Srikumar slammed NEET, alleging that it has shattered the dreams of many students.

Opposition must apologise to VP: Scindia

PNS ■ GWALIOR (MP)

Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia on Sunday demanded that the Opposition apologise to Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President Jagdish Dhankhar, referring to a spat between the chair and Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan.



also said even a celebrity has to follow the House decorum. The Opposition had then walked out calling the matter "disrespect to democracy and Constitution".

of the Constitution and our tricolour," he said. Scindia said that the people of the country understand everything about the noise and insults in the House. The public taught them a lesson in 2014, 2019 and now in 2024, and will teach them in the coming times too, he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Catastrophe revisited

Prime Minister Modi visits Wayanad, pledges full Central Government support for recovery efforts

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited Wayanad, Kerala, which was devastated by landslides that left more than 200 dead. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a review meeting after conducting an aerial and ground survey of the landslide-hit areas in Wayanad. Recalling the devastating 1979 Morbi dam disaster in Gujarat, Modi empathised with the affected residents, assuring them of full support from the central government. During his day-long visit to Wayanad, Modi surveyed the destruction caused by the July 30 landslides. Modi's visit included a trek through the severely impacted Chooralmala region, where he assessed the damage and interacted with rescue personnel, officials, and residents. He also visited a relief camp in Meppadi, offering comfort to survivors, including children who had lost family members. PM Modi emphasised the need for better preparedness and resilient infrastructure to mitigate the impact of such natural disasters in the future.



Wayanad is perhaps the worst hit as the incessant rains triggered landslides, damaging homes and infrastructure and causing extensive agricultural losses. The region's economy, heavily dependent on agriculture and tourism, has been severely impacted, with farmers facing significant losses and tourists staying away due to the adverse weather conditions. However, Wayanad is not the only place that has endured losses. This year's monsoon has brought unprecedented destruction across the country. From north to south, no region has been spared from the monsoon fury. The Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also endured losses. Torrential rains, landslides, and flash floods have resulted in significant loss of life and property. In Himachal Pradesh, an entire village was tragically wiped off due to a deluge after a cloudburst. The heavy rainfall has also caused rivers to overflow, leading to widespread flooding and disruption of daily life in the plains. Roads have been washed away, leaving many remote areas inaccessible, and thousands of people have been displaced from their homes. The increasing frequency and intensity of monsoon-related disasters in India can be attributed to a combination of factors, including climate change, deforestation, and unplanned urbanisation. India must continue to invest in and implement strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy sources. International cooperation is also crucial in addressing the climate change. Besides, ensuring that development projects, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas like the Himalayas must be properly evaluated before being commissioned. This includes stricter regulations on construction and deforestation. In the given scenario what is of utmost importance is preparedness—strengthening disaster management capabilities at the local, state, and national levels. This includes improving early warning systems, enhancing infrastructure resilience, and conducting regular disaster preparedness drills.

PICTALK



An elderly woman spins tricolour yarns ahead of the Independence Day in Nadia district

When heroes defy their legacies

History is a tapestry of contradictions and ironies, offering few clear heroes or villains. Instead, it presents figures whose actions and legacies are deeply intriguing



SANTOSH MATHEW

History, much like a tapestry, is interwoven with threads of contradiction, paradox, and irony. It refuses to offer a simplistic narrative of heroes and villains, instead presenting us with figures whose actions and legacies are often at odds. Even as we try to categorize these individuals within neat labels, the complexities of their lives and the contexts in which they lived often defy such easy classifications. In delving into these paradoxes, we uncover the profound dichotomies that have shaped our world. Here, we explore some of the most striking examples of such contradictions.

The Pulitzer Prize is one of the most prestigious awards in journalism, representing the pinnacle of recognition for investigative reporting, public service, and literary achievement. It stands as a symbol of journalistic integrity and excellence. Yet, the man behind this esteemed award, Joseph Pulitzer, was a pioneer of "yellow journalism"—a style characterized by sensationalism, exaggeration, and a sometimes tenuous relationship with the truth. Pulitzer's newspapers, including the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the New York World, became synonymous with this sensationalist style, prioritising scandal, shock, and spectacle over factual reporting. Pulitzer was, in many ways, a shrewd businessman who used his media empire to captivate, excite, and often inflame public opinion. Yet, despite his role in fostering yellow journalism, Pulitzer's legacy is paradoxically one of promoting journalistic excellence. The award that bears his name has honoured countless journalists who have exposed corruption, championed the underdog, and stood as defenders of truth against tyranny. The irony is profound: a man who built his career on sensationalism is now celebrated as a patron of journalistic integrity. This duality highlights the complexities of human nature and the ever-evolving landscape of media. The Nobel Prizes, particularly the Nobel



Peace Prize, embody the highest aspirations of humanity. They honour individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the betterment of the world through science, literature, and the pursuit of peace. However, the man behind these prestigious awards, Alfred Nobel, accumulated his wealth from an invention that has caused immense destruction: dynamite. Nobel's invention revolutionized construction and engineering, but it also became a powerful tool in warfare. The devastating impact of dynamite weighed heavily on Nobel's conscience. It is said that his decision to establish the Nobel Prize was influenced by a premature obituary that labelled him "the merchant of death" after his invention became synonymous with violence and destruction. By creating the Nobel Prizes, particularly the Peace Prize, Nobel sought to reshape his legacy from one of destruction to one of hope and progress. Yet, the contrast between his contribution to the proliferation of powerful weapons and his desire to reward peacemakers serves as a poignant reminder of the paradoxes that can define a person's life. A recent example of this paradox can be found in the story of



JINNAH'S PERSONAL LIFE WAS FAR REMOVED FROM THE STRICT RELIGIOUS VALUES THAT WOULD LATER COME TO DEFINE THE COUNTRY HE FOUNDED. JINNAH WAS A HIGHLY WESTERNISED INDIVIDUAL WHO ENJOYED THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019. Abiy was recognized for his efforts in resolving the long-standing conflict with neighbouring Eritrea, earning international acclaim as a peacemaker. However, within two years of receiving the prize, Abiy found himself leading his nation into a brutal civil war. The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has been marked by atrocities, displacement, and a humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions. The United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights are celebrated as monumental achievements in the history of human rights, enshrining the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. Thomas Jefferson, one of the Founding Fathers and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, played a crucial role in shaping these foundational documents. Yet, Jefferson was also a slave owner who, during his lifetime, owned over 600 enslaved people. This glaring contradiction between his public advocacy for liberty and his private practice of slavery has sparked intense debate among historians and scholars. Jefferson's writings espoused ideals of freedom and human dignity, yet he continued to benefit from an institution that deprived others of these very rights. Similarly, Muhammad Ali Jinnah is revered as the founding father of Pakistan, the world's first Islamic republic. He is celebrated for his role in establishing a nation for Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, based on the idea of Muslim nationalism. However, Jinnah's personal life was far removed from the strict religious values that would later come to define the country he founded. Jinnah was a highly Westernised individual who enjoyed the finer things in life. He was known to smoke cigars, drink alcohol, and reportedly favoured pork—a practice contrary to Islamic teachings. His second wife, Maryam, was a Parsi, and his only daughter, Dina, married a Parsi as well, sparking considerable controversy given his public role as a Muslim leader. These episodes remind us that even the greatest leaders are not without their contradictions. In the end, history reminds us that even the greatest of icons are not immune to contradiction—it is in their complexity that their true humanity shines through. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A world in turmoil



The world seems to be in flames. In the UK, violent clashes between communities are intensifying, with immigrants gaining

ground in the conflict. Across Europe, a similar surge sees immigrants clashing with native populations. But the most alarming development this week has been the chaos and coup in our neighboring country—once a close friend and an Islamic nation that upheld peaceful coexistence among all religions, now plunged into turmoil. These are difficult times where unrests and upheavals have become order of the day.

Amidst this global unrest, our own opposition leaders are calling for insurrection, openly demanding the removal of our elected Prime Minister. These are the same voices that champion democracy and preach about love. Yet, we believe that Indians will never tread that destructive path. We stood strong during the Emergency, showing our love for the nation and our willingness to fight for it if necessary.

C K Subramaniam | Bengaluru

Manu, Sarabjot, Swapnil Kusale, wrestler Aman Sehrawat and the hockey team for the 5 bronze medals, star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra for the silver medal (for the athletic 89.45 m throw).

PV Srinivas Sreelekha | Secunderabad

NEERAJ WINS SILVER

Madam — India's star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra clinched a silver medal at the Paris Olympics, performing in front of an enthusiastic crowd at Stade de France. Neeraj's throw of 89.45m earned him second place on the podium. Although it was his best performance of the season, it wasn't enough to secure gold, which went to Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem with a throw of 92.97m, (will be hard to beat in the near future) setting a new Olympic record. It's a pity for 145 crore Indian that we have not won a single gold but we plan to hold the Olympics in India! It is quite evident that Neeraj Chopra has given his best (though too much pressure of expectations was put on the guy). But the most important thing to note is that India is very poor in succession planning and finding alternatives,

not just in sports but in every field. If the sports administration could not find a single alternative between Tokyo and Paris then it's an utter failure (sadly Vinesh Phogat's golden hope mar by 100 gram over weight) for the sports authority. Among Indians Neeraj Chopra is a champion player but what he failed to do is to up his game and cross 90m during the last four years. It is a classic case of a person sitting on his laurels and not pushing himself. Last 4 years he has not even crossed 90m marks once and the government has spent (Rs. 5,21,72,457 crore) so much money on him. One has to agree that 8th August was the Pakistani's day but fact is that Nadeem crossed 90m earlier and today in the crucial moment he did it twice while winning the gold. He had not even half the support that Neeraj got. India stands behind Pakistan in the medal tally at Olympics. What else, wondering, though it's sports!

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A Heartfelt reflection on the changing face of Nainital

Over the decades, relentless deforestation and unchecked construction have turned Nainital's once verdant landscapes into tinderboxes

Summers were harsh this year. Fire rained from the skies. Cities were burning. So were the mountains. My first holiday to the mountains was in the summer of 1970. We boarded the train in the evening, excited about the trip. The first glimpse of the distant mountains the next morning kept us awake for the remaining journey, as the faint outlines turned prominent. The bus ride from the railway station was equally exciting. Sometimes we travelled hugging the mountains, and at other times we looked down with fear, as the bus moved literally at the edge of the road.

After what felt like an impatiently long time, as we turned a bend, I gasped looking with awe at the majestic lake spread out before me. We had arrived at Nainital. I had fallen in love with the hills. I would return several times in the following years, till I realised that there were many other equally beautiful hills to explore. Things started changing fast. My first view in the summer of 1970 faded into a fond memory, which I would often draw upon to mourn a lost



time. I still remember very vividly the green shades covering the hills, even in the summers, much before the onset of monsoons. There was not even a speck of brown visible beneath the thick curtain of foliage. I also do not remember the presence of fans, coolers, refrigerators, much less air conditioners. The only cooling devices were the soft ice-cream machines along the Mall road. The high and mighty of the land are seldom blamed. Wildfires in the mountains are not new; but not to the extent that they now ravage. A trickle in the previous century is now a raging river. Fires in the Nainital region alone engulfed vast tracts of land even entering residential areas. Other mountains in the north also faced the same fate. Even the plains are not immune to the rapid march

of unplanned urbanisation and the greed of the unscrupulous. I remember going to view Ram Lila wearing half-sleeved sweaters. We would wait with baited breaths for Diwali. However warm it was the previous day, we would invariably take out heavier woollens from Diwali. With time, winters started setting in later than we were used to. Our beautiful planet is nudging us with innumerable omens to wake up and look after her.

Hills are sinking under the heavy burden of unplanned construction of houses, hotels, and resorts. Sea levels are going up. Many coastal cities may submerge over the next few decades. Water tables are fast going down resulting in conflicts for drinking water. We need to act to live a better future for the coming generations. Let us remember British historian, explorer and activist Robert Swan, "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

BAIL NOT JAIL SHOULD BE THE NORM

Madam — Recently, while an assistant director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was swiftly remanded to CBI custody over a bribery charge involving Rs 20 lakhs from a Mumbai-based jeweler, the ongoing case of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia raises serious concerns. Despite being accused of money laundering in the Delhi excise policy scam, Sisodia has languished in jail for 17 months without any progress toward a trial, as observed by the Supreme Court.

The Court emphasised that personal liberty is paramount, and delaying bail without commencing the trial is unacceptable, leading to Sisodia's release on bail. This case highlights a troubling disparity in the justice system: while some accused individuals evade legal consequences due to the laxity of investigative agencies and courts, others, potentially innocent, remain imprisoned for years, leaving their families to suffer. As we have seen in numerous cases, delayed justice is effectively denied justice.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

HATS OFF TO INDIAN OLYMPIC SQUAD

Madam— Hats off to the Indian Hockey team for regaining its past international glory via winning a medal in the Paris - Olympics - 2024. Their defeating the great - proven - teams such as Australia and England elucidates their resolve, dedication, determination. It could not enter the final and had to settle for bronze (due to sheer bad luck of the day). This is the 13th Olympic medal for India in hockey (8 gold, 1 silver, 4 bronze). Arman Sherawat's bronze in wrestling, cooled the hearts of Indians, which otherwise wallowed in pain over the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat, (the gold medal sure shot). Hats off to the Indian magnificent 6, who won 5 bronze medals and 1 silver in the Paris Olympics - 2024. Also kudos to all the national and international participants of the prestigious grand gala Olympics (sports festival). Kudos to Indian winners: 3 shooters:



FIRST COLUMN

HAVE A INTREPID AND ROBUST MINDSET

Through spiritual practices, one can find strength to continue the journey of life



RAVI VALLURI

Always be associated with people who are good at heart. This is what Swami Vivekananda said. My mother shares her birthday with Swami Vivekananda who was born on 12th January 1863. Association, Sangha, and Satsang were her strong points. She nurtured strong bonds with all religious faiths and spiritually inclined people. She wanted to pursue medicine but life did not take that trajectory instead she became a qualified medical social worker. She used to tell patients and their children, 'Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.' Thus, patients afflicted with TB, but not bedridden, participated in the projects. This was what she called 'Diversionary Therapy'.



Normally, a patient suffers from such a condition owing to emotional upheavals, physical exhaustion, deep anxiety, and consumption of caffeine or alcohol. I saw my mother suffering from this condition on several occasions and being admitted to the ICU. It was a distressing and disturbing sight. While it is not a life-threatening affliction, it certainly disorients the psychology and attitude of the patient. During her suffering, we saw her clutching onto her rosary as a lifesaver, while we prayed fervently for her recovery. She was administered medication but it worked only to an extent. The real help came in the form of a pentagon-shaped talisman. That is through Siddha Healing, Pranic Healing, the ten-day Vipassana Course and the Part 1 and Part 2 Art of Living courses. This is the unique, amazing and scientific power of the breath. Breathing techniques, meditation, medication, and proper diet changed the trajectory of the life of the patient and brought back the mojo in her life. 'When you take a breath in, let it become your meditation that all the suffering of all the beings in the world is riding on that incoming breath and reaching your heart, and see a miracle happen,' says Osho. Till her final days, she continued with these practices. Senior citizens, those in pain and agony and even the able-bodied should undertake the courses mentioned. Swami Vivekananda took Yoga to America and spread the Ramakrishna Mission. He was the Arjuna of Shri Rama Krishna Paramhansa. My mother imbibed the trait of service to mankind by reading extensively about Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda and the Almighty God blessed her with an intrepid mind. (The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Populism will not let food subsidy reforms take off



UTTAM GUPTA

Leakages can be curbed if the subsidy is given directly to the beneficiaries using 'direct benefit transfer' mode. The potential for reducing food subsidies is immense



In the full Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, the government has pegged the budget estimate (BE) food subsidy for FY 2024-25 at Rs 205,250 crore which is no different from the estimate given in the interim Budget. Though slightly lower than the revised estimate (RE) of Rs 211,394 crores for FY 2023-24, this is no consolation as invariably, the RE for any financial year turns out to be higher than the BE. For instance, while presenting the budget for FY 2023-24, Sitharaman kept the BE for food subsidy at Rs 197,000 crore. Against this, RE has turned out to be Rs 14,394 crore more. The moot point is that the expenditure incurred by the Central government during the last five years under this head has been consistently over Rs 200,000 crore mark every year 2020-21: Rs 529,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 372,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 287,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 211,394 crores and 2024-25: Rs 205,250 crore (BE). During 2024-25, food subsidy will account for 4.2 per cent of its budget (Rs 4820,000 crore), 5.5 per cent of its revenue expenditure (Rs 3709,000 crore) and consume nearly 8 per cent of its estimated net tax receipts (Rs 2583,000 crore). Reining in food subsidy is no less important than the goal it seeks to achieve namely providing 'food security'. The uncontrolled rise in the former leads to an unsustainable increase in fiscal deficit (excess of total receipts over total expenditure) which can injure the economy in multiple ways through high inflation, high interest rates, a slowdown in growth, fewer jobs, low incomes and so on. This, in turn, can lead to a demand for higher financial assistance including food subsidies from the government thereby exacerbating the vicious cycle. There exists a huge scope for reducing food subsidies. To assess this, at the outset, let us see how it is administered. Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Centre asks the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to around 820 million people for free.



REINING IN FOOD SUBSIDY IS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE GOAL IT SEEKS TO ACHIEVE NAMELY PROVIDING 'FOOD SECURITY'. THE UNCONTROLLED RISE IN THE FORMER LEADS TO AN UNSUSTAINABLE INCREASE IN FISCAL DEFICIT (EXCESS OF TOTAL RECEIPTS OVER TOTAL EXPENDITURE) WHICH CAN INJURE THE ECONOMY IN MULTIPLE WAYS

The entire cost i.e. MSP paid to farmers plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) is reimbursed to the FCI/other state agencies as a subsidy. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food subsidy'. While, the PMGKAY has been in force since January 1, 2023, before that, the Centre was giving food to 820 million persons (7 kg of cereals per person per month to 120 million poorest of the poor persons covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana or AAY families and five kg of cereals per person per month to the remaining 700 million) at a heavily subsidized price of Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). In addition, since April 2020, it has given 5 kg of food per person per month for "free" to all 820 million beneficiaries under PMGKAY to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. From January 1, 2023, it merged the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA. Now, food is available to all 820 million beneficiaries for free under the new incarnation of NFSA namely the PMGKAY. This arrangement will continue for five years till the end of CY 2028 as per the announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2023. Avenues for saving in subsidy First, fundamentally, subsidized food is meant for the poor. The number of poor isn't more than 15-20 per cent of India's population. Yet, the number of beneficiaries under the PMGKAY at 820 million works out to nearly 59 per cent of the population. Even as per the Shanta Kumar Committee (2015), the number of people eligible for subsidized food under NFSA shouldn't be more than 40 per cent. The excess of 19 per cent comes to around 270 million.

Further, during the last nine-and-a-half years of the incumbent government, 250 million persons have come out of poverty (as per a recent report by Niti Aayog). These persons can be excluded from the list of beneficiaries. Doing a back-of-the-envelope calculation, giving free food to a million persons entails a subsidy of Rs 200 crore per annum. Excluding 250 million will help save Rs 50,000 crore. The existing beneficiaries list of 820 million is based on 2011 Census estimates while the Supreme Court (SC) has directed that the Centre should take into account the population during 2021. On this basis, it needs to give free food to an additional 100 million. That will cost Rs 20,000 crore. Even after providing for this, it will save Rs 30,000 crore annually. Second, why every beneficiary should get free food? The Shanta Kumar Committee had recommended that non-AAY persons should pay 50 per cent of the MSP. Other than AAY are 700 million persons. Minus 250 million (who shouldn't get a subsidy at all) and adding 100 million (as per SC order), we get 550 million. Making them pay 50 per cent of MSP or Rs 11.4 per kg (wheat), will save Rs 37,600 crore annually. Third, the NFSA legislation enacted in 2013 required beneficiaries to pay Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals. It froze these rates for three years. Since 2016, there has been no legal bar on increasing the price. Yet, far from increasing, the Modi-government has reduced the price to zero. Are they all (read: 820 million persons) so poor that they can't pay even a fraction of the cost (in the case of wheat at Rs 2 per kg, it is 1/15th)? Even if you make them pay a notional Rs 1 per kg, this will yield savings of Rs 5000 crore per annum. Fourth, the initial idea under the

Scheme was that FCI et al would buy only the quantity needed for meeting beneficiaries' requirements under NFSA plus maintain some 'strategic' buffer to meet emergencies. It was never meant to be an 'open-ended' procurement which it has become today. This has also contributed to the avoidable increase in subsidy besides stocking problems. Shunning 'open-ended' purchases can yield significant savings. Fifth, currently, FCI/state agencies are paid HDC on an 'actual' basis. This leads to payment for inefficiencies in the system and even cost padding. The stories of loaders being paid hefty salaries by the FCI are still fresh in memory. A shift from 'actual' to reimbursement of cost to agencies on a 'normative' basis can save a lot of subsidy. Finally, the availability of a mammoth of around 60 million tons (the quantity distributed under the PMGKAY) in the supply chain with zero price tag is an open invitation to dubious operators to siphon off and sell in the open market raking in a moolah. The PDS scam in West Bengal involving the diversion of subsidized food grains worth tens of thousands of crore currently under investigation by the central agencies provides a classic example. This can be curbed if the subsidy is given directly to the beneficiaries using DBT (direct benefit transfer) mode. The potential for reducing food subsidies is immense. The government can go for any of the above measures or all of them depending on how much savings it targets. But, ALAS under the current political scenario, Modi won't dare to take even a baby step like charging a notional price of Rs 1 per kg. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Implications of upheaval in Bangladesh on its trade relations with India

The sudden turn of events have raised concerns about the potential impact on trade, economic stability, and the broader geopolitical dynamics of the region

Since Sheikh Hasina assumed office as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 2009, the country has been a key ally of India. Her leadership has seen significant progress in bilateral relations, with a focus on infrastructure, connectivity, and trade. However, the recent political crisis in Bangladesh has raised concerns about the future of this partnership. On January 8, 2024, Sheikh Hasina declared that boosting the country's economy would be her top priority for the next five years. Yet, by August 2024, the nation was engulfed in violent demonstrations over a quota system for government positions, leading to a deepening domestic political crisis. As tensions escalated, Sheikh Hasina resigned and sought



ADITYA PRATAP SINGH

refuge in India, raising concerns about the stability of Bangladesh and its impact on Indo-Bangladesh relations. The Evolution of Indo-Bangladesh Relations Over the past decade, India and Bangladesh have fostered strong economic ties, with infrastructure and connectivity projects playing a crucial role in strengthening their relationship. Since 2016, India has extended \$8 billion in

credit to Bangladesh for the development of road, rail, shipping, and port infrastructure. The two nations have also engaged in various areas of commerce, including medical tourism, business expansion, and the international garment trade. Bangladesh, a major player in the global garment industry, relies heavily on cotton imports from India. The textile and garment sectors account for 56% of Bangladesh's total exports to India, making it a vital trading partner in South Asia. In the financial year 2023-24, bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$13 billion, according to the Union Ministry of Commerce. The Impact on Trade Sheikh Hasina's leadership saw a flourishing of commerce between India and Bangladesh, leading to a significant trade surplus for India. However, the ongoing political turmoil in Bangladesh threatens to disrupt this economic partnership. The civil unrest and worsening economic situation have created security concerns that could impact Indian exports, commerce, and infrastructure projects in the neighboring nation. One of the major challenges will be on the bilateral trade front. After reaching \$12.21 billion in 2022-23, India's exports to Bangladesh dropped to \$11 billion in 2023-24. Similarly, Bangladesh's imports decreased from \$2 billion in the previous year to \$1.84 billion in the most recent fiscal year. Indian exporters have



voiced concerns about the situation in Bangladesh, fearing that the instability in the country will negatively affect commerce between the two nations. A significant scarcity of dollars in Bangladesh, as noted by the think tank GTRI, has already curtailed the country's ability to import goods, particularly from India. Uncertainty Surrounding the Free Trade Agreement

In October 2023, India and Bangladesh discussed the possibility of a free trade agreement (FTA) during a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Trade meeting in Dhaka. An FTA could streamline regulations, encourage investment and commerce, and potentially remove customs tariffs, boosting trade between the two countries. According to a 2012 World Bank working paper, a full-product FTA could enhance Bangladesh's exports to India by 182%, while a partial FTA might grow them by 134%. This would contribute to strengthening Bangladesh's trade transport infrastructure and commerce links, leading to a significant rise in exports. However, the current political crisis has cast doubt on the

future of the FTA proposals. Sheikh Hasina's exit might slow or pause this development, affecting the expansion of commerce and trade in new areas between the two nations. Challenges for the Textile and Garment Industry The ongoing crisis in Bangladesh could also have a negative impact on other sectors, particularly the textile and garment industry. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, Bangladesh exported garments worth \$42.613 billion, solidifying its position as the second-largest apparel exporter globally. However, the recent incidents of factories being set on fire have raised concerns about the future of this industry. Many of these textile units are owned by traders associated with the Awami League Party, making them particularly vulnerable in the current political climate. While India has the potential to step in and provide garments to developed economies, there are certain drawbacks to this shift. Bangladesh, as a Least Developed Country, benefits from zero-duty advantages, while Indian goods face tariff barriers. If borders remain closed and duty-free export-import activities are suspended, there is a possibility of increased demand for Indian garments. However, it is still too early to make definitive predictions about the opportunities and gains that might arise from this situation. (The author is a PhD scholar at HBTU, Kanpur; views are personal)

SRK HONoured WITH LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD AT LFF

Global Icon Shah Rukh Khan was celebrated at the 77th Locarno Film Festival, receiving the Pardo Alla Carriera award, recognising his immense contributions to the world of cinema. The event, held in the stunning Piazza Grande, saw an 8,000-strong crowd gather to witness the legendary actor's acceptance speech. Dressed impeccably in a black ensemble, Shah Rukh Khan radiated his signature charm as he took to the stage. Addressing the enthusiastic audience, SRK opened with a lighthearted quip: "Thank you all for welcoming me with such wide arms—wider than the ones I do on screen," he joked, referencing his iconic open-armed pose that has become synonymous with his persona. SRK reflected on the unique atmosphere of Locarno, remarking, "It's a very beautiful, very cultural, very artistic and extremely vibrant city," he said, smiling at the crowd. "So many people crammed into a little square. It's just like being home in India." Shah Rukh Khan's journey in cinema has been marked by unparalleled success and range. From his early roles in films like *Darr* and *Deewane Dulhania Le Jayenge* to his recent hits, Khan has redefined the art of storytelling in Bollywood. This achievement at Locarno not only highlights his global appeal but also his impact on cinema, where he has consistently blurred the lines between commercial success and artistic excellence. During his speech, SRK didn't miss a beat in embracing the moment and joking about the weight of the award, much to the delight of the audience. "This award here, which, for the life of me, I've been trying... I can't pronounce," he joked, playfully calling it the "Leopard award for being the

most awesome in the world, in the history of humility, kindness and goodness." SRK then shared his deep admiration for the art of cinema, calling it the "most profound and influential artistic medium of our age." He continued, "Art is the act of affirming life above all. It transcends every man-made boundary into a space of liberation. It doesn't need to be political, polemical, or even moralising. Art and cinema only need to express their truth from the heart." Meanwhile, reflecting on his 35-year career, SRK encapsulated the diversity of his filmography by stating, "I've been a villain, a champ, a superhero, a zero, a rejected fan and a very resilient lover." Amidst the cheers from the crowd, a fan's loud declaration of love prompted a quick response from SRK. "I love you also. All dramatics continue after the serious speech," he said with a grin, bringing the moment full circle with his trademark wit. He continued, sharing a bit of his day in Locarno: "My day has been wonderful, the food has been nice, my Italian is improving and so has my cooking." Khan then switched to Italian, translating his words: "I can cook pasta and pizza also. I'm learning here in Locarno." Concluding his speech, SRK expressed his gratitude, saying, "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart and from India. *Namaskaar* and *dhanyavaad* (Hello, thank you). God bless you all."



H'wood's finest to rock Paris Olympics closing ceremony

The Paris Olympics 2024 are nearly over and anticipation grows for the ending celebration. The event will occur at Stade de France in the early hours of August 12 (Monday), with 80,000 attendees. Additionally, what else is there? Several celebrities are scheduled to take part in the traditional end-of-year event. Among the celebrities, Tom Cruise has been regularly present at the Olympics for many years and he continued to show his support again this year. He was seen showing support from the sidelines at several events, most recently when the USA competed and emerged victorious in the women's football competition at the Olympics. According to reports, the actor from *Mission Impossible* will descend into the Stade de France by rappelling before jumping out of a plane for the closing ceremony. Variety has also reported that Billie Eilish, who has won an Academy Award, will also be performing at the closing ceremony. What was the reason for her being selected? The identical report forecasts that 'the musicians affiliated with L.A.' will shift their focus to the upcoming Olympics scheduled for 2028 in Los Angeles. Billie's concert movie, *Happier Than Ever: A Love Letter to Los Angeles* honoured the iconic landmarks and culture of her city. The singer verified it in her most recent Instagram post, stating, "LA28 Handover performer." Rapper Snoop Dogg has recently gained a strong online presence due to his frequent appearances as a host on NBC's coverage of the Olympics, along with his charming responses to the athletes. The deadline announced that H.E.R. will sing the US national anthem live, followed by performances from various musical stars.

'To date, I have to convince studio heads to fund my process'

Actor John Abraham has opened up about his obstacles to getting producers to back his film ventures. In a podcast, he admitted that he frequently struggles to communicate with them, as they often reject his ideas and raise concerns about the budget being too high. During a conversation on his podcast with Ranveer Allahbadia, John Abraham mentioned, "I produced *Vicky Donor*. I did films like *Madras Cafe* and *Batla House*, but till today I have to convince studio heads that this is a different film and please fund my process. Till today, they don't have 100 percent faith and they tell me that the budget is too much." John, who is preparing for the release of his upcoming project *Vedaa*, emphasised that he never charges more than his 'aukaat'. "As an actor, my fee doesn't put a load on the film. I feel that if the film makes money, I will make money. I don't want to load the film. *Toh meri jo aukaat hai, jo mera standard hai*. I make films according to that. I am very proud of my content." Meanwhile, he also reveals, "Value creation is more important than wealth creation... I always say that I'm a middle-class person, not to romanticise my struggles but to highlight the strength that comes from middle-class values. Being middle-class is an advantage... make money, generate wealth, but mentally, you should always remain middle-class. Nothing wrong with that." John says he isn't someone who likes to create an impression about himself. "I don't have many clothes; you can ask my stylist; even today, all my clothes can fit into a single suitcase. I usually wear slippers. I have a pick-up truck that I drive around



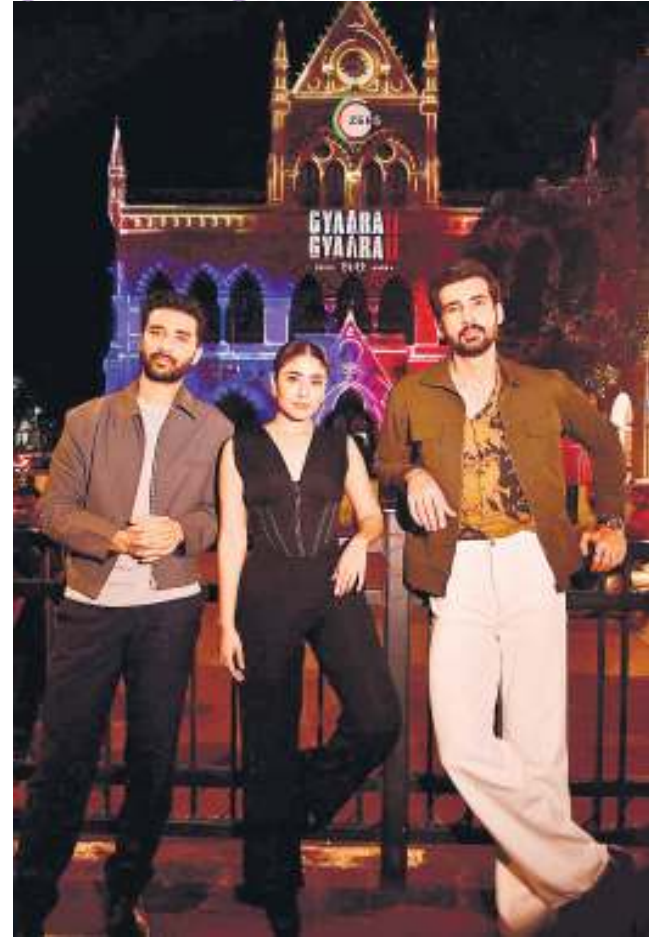
in. My driver would often suggest that I buy a more expensive car, but I'd ask him why. When I go for shoots, the production sends an Innova and my office is just a kilometre away from my house. What would I do with a car worth Rs 4-4.5 crore? It's a depreciating asset and it will have no bearing on my work... in my life state, I'm afraid of spending because of where I come from. I would be scared to spend so much money on shoes and bags. And that's why I hold back." In the podcast, John Abraham also stated that he avoids using WhatsApp because he thinks it hampers communication with studio heads and could be impacting their response time. "I had texted a studio head and he told me that he would circle back, but it has been 4.5 months and he hasn't responded. I don't feel bad, but I deserve a reply. I believe that if people believe in me a little, I would want to try and change Indian cinema a little. I am not saying I am a game changer, but I want to try," he said.

AVATAR 3 TO DELVE INTO ENIGMATIC NA'VI'S DARKER SIDE

James Cameron, the creator of the popular movie franchise *Avatar*, has announced the name of the third movie in the series. During the D23 convention, the director announced that *Avatar 3* will be named *Avatar: Fire and Ash*. According to reports, the title reveal was greeted with a "big round of applause." *Avatar* came out in 2009, with its sequel, *Avatar: The Way of Water*, debuting in December 2022. The third film in the series is set to be released worldwide in December 2025. James Cameron mentioned that the upcoming *Avatar* movie will introduce new cultures, settings, creatures and biomes, allowing viewers to explore more of Pandora, the tropical planet where the films take place. He added that the new movie is not what you anticipate, but it is certainly what you desire. *Avatar: Fire and Ash* is already in production, with Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana as the main actors. Two additional *Avatar* movies will come out after that, with the fourth one set to premiere in December 2029 and the fifth one in December 2031.



STANDALONE



Mumbai's iconic David Sassoon Library's clock tower was the centre of all attention as ZEE5 held a captivating 3D projection of its just-released mystery thriller *Gyaarah Gyaarah*. 'Mumbaikars' were in for a spectacular surprise as the multilingual storyteller enthralled commuters and bystanders with a sneak peek into the highly anticipated mystery drama. The showcase offered a visually stunning preview of the series, bringing its time-bending narrative to life against the backdrop of one of Mumbai's most historic landmarks.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



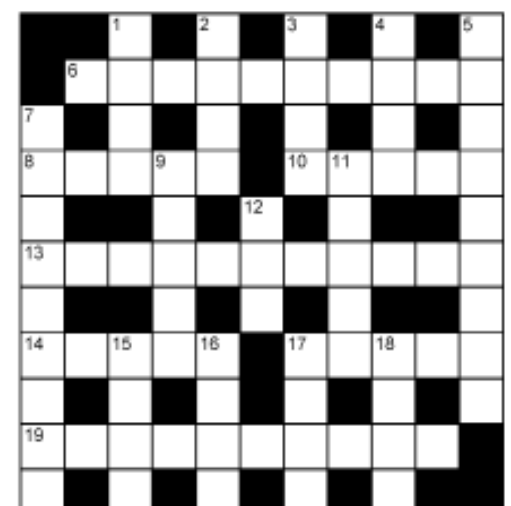
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



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Yesterday's solution

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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 team game
 - Foe
 - A bamboo-eating animal
 - Measure temperatures with this
 - Player of bagpipes
 - Stairs
 - Book of word meanings
 - A radio code that uses dots and dashes
 - Wide awake and ready for anything
 - An animal kept for milk
 - Choose
 - Spoil completely
 - Gritty stuff on a beach
 - Your hearing organs
- DOWN**
- Not in danger
 - All right, but not especially good
 - Halt
 - A sign of tiredness
 - A big sea bird
 - A many-legged creature
- SOLUTION**
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GINGER MEGGS



'RANG'ING WORLD WITH HIS SOUL-STIRRING RHYTHM

AARTI SREENATH

Ram Sampath, a name synonymous with innovation in the Indian music industry, is a composer who has consistently pushed the boundaries of creativity and emotion. With a body of work that spans advertising jingles, film scores, and independent music, Ram's compositions are known for their ability to capture the essence of a brand or narrative. His latest work on the *Make Life Beautiful* jingle for Birla Opus Paints is a shining example of his artistic genius, blending the vibrancy of colour with the soul of music.

The story behind the creation of this jingle is one that Ram recounts with passion and fondness. He describes it as one of the most beautiful briefs he has ever received in his career. "As musicians, we dream in colour," he says, reflecting on the project. The brief wasn't just about promoting a product; it was about capturing the beauty of wonder, the curiosity of magic and the essence of colour—all deeply connected to paint. For him, this project was more than just work; it was a journey into the emotional landscape that colour can evoke, a rare opportunity to explore the intersection of music and visual art.

His connection to colour and paint is deeply personal, rooted in his earliest memories. He recalls a vivid experience from his youth when he decided to paint his first home studio a bright reddish-pink. His parents and everyone around him were horrified—they thought he had lost his mind. But for Ram, that bold choice of color symbolises something much deeper. It was a statement of creativity, freedom and a break from the conventional. "I've



Gaining much accolades for his latest jingle, *Make Life Beautiful*, Ram Sampath has been ecstatic of the response he has received.

In a fun chat with *The Pioneer*, he discusses the making, his approach to this jingle and more

always had a strong connection to colour and paint and this project tapped right into that," he reflects.

The brief for the jingle was centered around the tagline "Duniya ko rang do," which translates to "Colour the world." For Ram, this tagline was more than just words; it was an invitation to celebrate life itself. He believes there's a universal emotion tied to the act of painting, whether it's a wall, a canvas, or even a room. "I don't know a single person whose heart doesn't flutter at the thought of getting something painted. It's an act of transformation and that's what made this project so special," he shares.

When it comes to composing a jingle meant to go viral, Ram emphasises the importance of staying true to classic values while infusing the composition with freshness. "I believe that to create something that touches people, it must come from the heart. If you don't feel it, how can you expect the audience to feel it?" he asks. For him, the

music isn't just for listening—it's meant to be sung, hummed and lived with. The idea that people might hum 'Ooh Opus Opus' in their daily lives brings him immense joy. "I love the idea that my jingles become a part of people's lives," he says, clearly delighted by the thought.

Ram's approach to creating a jingle often involves crafting a first draft that is more intimate and personal, which then evolves into a more expansive and polished final product.

He describes the first draft as a close conversation—intimate and focused. As the project progresses, the final version becomes more expansive, like opening your arms wide to embrace the audience. Working with Sachin Kamble, the creative director of the agency, was a particularly rewarding experience for Ram. Their visions were so aligned that they never found themselves at cross purposes. He also credits Munna, his long-time collaborator and lyricist, for his ability to distill profound ideas into simple, impactful words. Together, they have worked on many projects, from Sonu Mohapatra's first album to songs for *Delhi Belly* and *Satyamev Jayate*. Munna's contribution to the jingle was invaluable, helping to ensure the final product was both powerful and relatable. When the team reviewed the final project, the feedback was straightforward—just a few minor tweaks and they were good to go.

Staying relevant in an industry as dynamic as music requires an acute awareness of evolving trends, but Ram remains steadfast in his belief that the foundation of any great composition lies in its melody and lyrics. "Melody and lyrics are like the body of a person and the trend, the production, are the clothes. You have to keep track of the latest clothes and the latest trends, but it's more about perspective—who are you talking to right now? What's the audience you're trying to reach?" he explains.

Whether it's a song like *Sajni* from *Laapata Ladies*, which did exceptionally well, or a viral jingle, clarity of mind is crucial. The composition needs a strong melody and simple lyrics that convey something profound yet accessible.

With the *Make Life Beautiful* campaign gaining millions of views during the ICC World Cup, Ram reflected on the impact such success has on his future work. He understands that each new project begins with a blank slate, requiring humility and a willingness to explore. "You need to have the humility of looking at a blank page and saying, 'Okay, buddy, any reputation is out the window right now. You have to be answerable to the people and be as truthful and sincere as possible,'" he says. For Ram, each new composition is an exploration, a journey into the unknown, driven by curiosity rather than fear.

Looking back at his career, Ram remains as curious and passionate as ever. Whether working on advertising jingles or film scores, he approaches each new project with a sense of humility and exploration. "The most important thing is to stay true while evolving," he said. "I'm still the same guy who was trying to make *Wadaa Raha* and *Dil Dooba in Khakee* and I'm still curious about what's ahead."

As for the future, Ram is excited about several new ventures, including a romantic comedy with Aamir Khan Productions and an upcoming interview with maestro A.R. Rahman. "I've been fortunate to have a career that allows me to explore different facets of music and I'm looking forward to what's next," he concluded, leaving us eager to see where his musical journey will take him next.



Revolutionising quality healthcare!

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY

Motivated to make a difference in the world, particularly in healthcare, Aparna Jain has transformed herself into an exemplary leader. Hailing from Lucknow, Aparna Jain completed her B.Tech in Biotechnology at Amity University and received merit-based scholarships throughout her undergraduate and postgraduate education. Upon finishing her studies, she joined a financial services firm and took part in a three-month training program to enhance her industry expertise. However, she still lacked hands-on industry experience. In order to bridge the divide, she sought assistance from an experienced colleague who provided training to improve her technical abilities. She also obtained two national certifications from the National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) in investment advisory and equity derivatives markets.

This resulted in a five-fold increase in her portfolio and an annual growth rate of 10 percent. Being the team's youngest member, she achieved the highest client acquisitions and revenue goals. Apart from her professional career, she has been engaged in social services by taking classes and personality development classes for slum children during weekends.

"Eventually, I realised that I wanted to work full-time helping these children access education. This was when I joined the Sarthak Foundation full-time as a fundraising manager, taking up the leadership role of the entire department. Within five years, I have increased the funding by 15 times, ensuring that all 5000 children from slums and villages did not drop out of school," cheerfully shared Aparna in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*.

Through her Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, campaigns and digital marketing, she maintained a 100 percent child retention rate. Throughout the pandemic, she spearheaded the effort to raise funds for the *COVID Community Care Project*, obtaining Rs 50 lakhs in resources to assist 10,000 individuals with both their livelihoods and education. Furthermore, she secured jobs in the corporate sector for 60 percent of young women of working age. Following her time at the financial services company, she transitioned to a health tech startup, where she was instrumental in establishing the business from the ground up. She was in charge of the go-to-market (GTM) strategy and sales planning in three cities in North India, creating a network of more than 100 doctors. Being involved with the health tech startup was crucial in honing her abilities and knowledge, which eventually enabled her to establish various organisations and departments, showcasing her innovative skills. Upon finding out that she required more skills to expand her business, Aparna chose to pursue an MBA to enhance her leadership skills.

Throughout her time at the startup, her main obstacle was persuading doctors in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to utilise their digital platform, Electronic Health Records. Aparna then enrolled in a full-time PGP program at ISB, focusing on marketing. Sharing her experience at ISB, she shares with great enthusiasm, "My primary motivation for joining ISB was to work with larger organisations where I could scale up with the same entrepreneurial spirit as I demonstrated in smaller setups. Joining ISB opened a world of opportunities, allowing me to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and geographies, which significantly broadened my perspectives and enhanced the quality of my learning. The hands-on experience through experiential learning programs and case competitions honed my ability to tackle challenging problems and arrive at structured solutions."

In spite of the obstacles, she achieved notable success in the healthcare startup by overseeing the partnership and functioning with Uber. The idea behind this project was to educate drivers on managing basic first aid and handling emergencies, whether it be for a passenger or someone on the road in crisis. Drivers were provided hospital emergency contact information and received basic health assessments and screenings. This comprehensive method made sure that drivers were adequately equipped to effectively and confidently deal with emergencies, ultimately improving passenger safety and community welfare. Under her guidance, her team provided first aid and emergency services training to more than 500 drivers. This project assisted in kickstarting the organization for a couple of months. Initiating preventive health counseling for women from low-economic backgrounds also led to a 35 percent increase in patient enrollment in her program.

"With my professional skills and education, I aim to work in a healthcare organisation and transform it into a more efficient and automated entity. I envision a system where high-quality healthcare is accessible to all, especially those who cannot afford it," signs off Aparna on a concluding note.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Aparna Jain, who is on a mission to provide accessible healthcare for all, shares her journey and how different roles molded her into a perfect leadership figure.

'All of them were in a state of shock; they had not even clapped when I won'

TEJAL SINHA

Pass, grace, fiery vibes and hair flips—well, Sana Makbul has been all about it! There are no two ways about the fact that her audacious aura has made her emerge as the winner of *Bigg Boss OTT 3*, holding the trophy rapturously. 'Rishton ki ek jeeti jaati missal, Sana Makbul', just as *Bigg Boss* had aptly defined her just a few moments before the finale episode, her journey in the house truly spells out the same.

"The crown is already heavy (we laugh)," shares the ravishing Sana as we have her onboard. Hot as hell, setting trends and breaking all the spells at the *BB House*, the trophy for her was everything beyond. Just as in King Khan's acclaimed dialogue, 'Kehte hain agar kisi cheez ko dil se chaho...to puri kainaat usse tumse milane ki koshish mein lag jaati hai...' and since the day she had entered the house, everyone knew her only target was the trophy.

We've often heard that *Bigg Boss* is a controversial show and people in talks are the ones who generally enter the show. But that wasn't the case with the *Dikkulu Choodaku Ramayya* actress!

In fact, she too remembers how her close ones asked her, "Sana, you are a non-controversial person; why *Bigg Boss*?" However, being a low-key person, she has a different look to it. "I wanted to come back with a bang. For the past year, *mera kaam kaaj utna kuch high mai nahi tha*. I used to work, but it was tiny little ones," she affirms as she also confesses, "This was not the first time that I got a call for *Bigg Boss*. It has been happening for a few years and if I remember, I have been getting calls even before I did *Khatron*. I started getting the call after I did *Vish* on Colors. They started approaching me for *BB*, even for the main one. During the pandemic, when I was approached, I wanted to do *Khatron Ke Khiladi*. I wanted to get rid of the animal fear I have had. Then, in the first OTT season, I still did not feel like doing it. However, over the years, I somewhat got convinced and had this attitude that whenever I did *Bigg Boss*, I would be all in."

Keeping all the other things aside, every season of *Bigg Boss* does see a celebration when the winner gets announced. But as a shock to many, none of the contestants had gotten on stage to congratulate Sana. With all the talk around it, let's hear what she had to tell us about it: "A lot of people have been clarifying their side of it. Of course, the whole team and makers wanted to capture my moment and I really appreciated this and went with them. They were instructed, apparently. But I would like to say that it was not about 'kaun aaya and kaun nahi'. Even if you weren't involved in my happy moments at that time, you could have been happy for me. They weren't even clapping for me. I felt bad. *Aapko itni kya najrat hogayi*. All of them were in a state of shock. How did I win the show? That was really unexpected for me, but at the end, the people who mattered to me—my mom, sister and my three friends who were sitting there—were very happy. Lovekesh was like, 'Arey Chori' in his Haryanvi language. Vishal and Shivani were very happy. Naezy, with whom I was standing at the stage, was happy. So people who mattered were happy and the ones who did not were cold to me, which is okay."

While she, on one side, was clear about her target, on the other hand, was also targeted by the housemates who often called her 'fake', 'selfish' and 'snake'. These tags did not end there. Post-season, she was termed the 'fixed winner' of the season. "I really don't know why they said that. If I am emerging as a star outside, then you are call-

ing that star a 'fixed winner'. I know my personality. When I walk into that room, people do look at me. Yes, I have that in me and my personality is like that. Even when I was nothing, people used to notice me. All of us were chosen there; the makers had chosen us. I am just not talking about me, but all of us were selected. Out of those contestants, I too was one of them and shone amongst them. I was just being me; that was in my hand and I was showing and being myself. It was the realness that people loved. In fact, if I had been the most favoured, *meri itni nahi bajate they Weekend Ke Vaar main*. I was questioned for what not, even on my character. The whole season and *Weekend Ka Vaar*, things were against me."

"*Joh tutt ke bikhra jaaye woh Sana Makbul kaisti*," said *Bigg Boss*. And her strong personality and mind proved it. We've often seen her during this season and how she stood boldly against the housemates, especially Ranvir Shorey. She further addressed Ranvir Shorey's decision to hold grudges against her sharing, "See, I'll tell you honestly, while we were in the house, even I felt that I would hold my grudges against him. Even though I was like, I am not going to see him outside, I still stand by it. He is not somebody I like or somebody I will sit with. Somebody had asked me if I would work with him. Back in the show, I was like, No, but now I would contradict it. Why should I get the work in between? It's a small world and while working, if we'd meet, I'd certainly have only that professional attitude. If he is holding it against me, then I would say that man is obsessed with me and has to move on. The show is over and Sana has become the winner. This is something that you need to accept now. I know it is difficult for him, Sai and Armaan. For them, the winner was either them or Ranvir. It's their call, but I don't hold any grudges against anybody."

She goes on to recall how her formative years taught her lessons, making her who she is today. On the one hand, she is kind and sympathetic; on the other hand, she also has a cold and different side to her. In her *Bigg Boss* journey, "I have been myself and real. When all of us entered the show, we had come to win and were very diplomatic. They had no self-love and didn't have the zeal that I had. I had the jigra to say that I had come here to win. My mindset when I entered the show was that I was not here to make relationships. My focus and vision were to win it. But some people cornered me, and again, I did not want people to fight and speak on my behalf. I can do that myself. If people point a finger at me, I'm like, *aap apne aap ko bhi dekho chaar ungli aapke taraf bhi hai*. I had that attitude that I was not going to take anyone of them back home."



After a lot of controversies yet again, the third season of *Bigg Boss OTT* has come to an end, with Sana Makbul emerging as the winner. *The Pioneer* has her onboard for a quick interview, as she goes on to share her emotions about being crowned the winner and also speaks her heart out on a few controversies

It's a dream to compete with other international stars in India: Neeraj

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra hoped to compete with other prominent international names in India sooner than later following his silver medal-winning effort in the Paris Olympics. Chopra bagged the silver at the Paris showpiece with a throw of 89.45m behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who hurled the javelin to 92.97m, an Olympic record. Anderson Peters of Grenada came third with a throw of 88.54m among the field that included some high-profile javelin throwers like Julian Webber, Jakub Vadlejch and Julius Yego. "It's a dream of mine to compete with other international stars in India. Hopefully, there will be an international competition soon in India and I can do that," Chopra said during an interactive session with fans organised by the Olympics.Com But before that, Chopra, whose silver was his second successive Olympics medal after the gold in Tokyo, said he wanted to work on certain areas of his game. "I am entering a new season now. So, I don't have that much time to change training



methods or technique. But I hope to improve upon a couple of areas, especially the line of the javelin. "You know, the correct angle of throwing so that I get more power in my throw. I will certainly work on it," he said. Chopra said he wanted to give it all in the Paris Games final despite being below his best physically. "The body conditions (of his) were tough. But when Arshad made that throw...I was able to hit my season's best

because the thought was set in my mind that I had to give the best throw because the competition had already become very tough." Mothers of Chopra and Nadeem had taken the social media by storm as they showered affection on each other's son. Chopra said his mother always spoke from her heart as she to date remained a simple rural soul. "My mother...she always stayed in a village before and

after her marriage. She is not familiar with social media and things like that. She often speaks from her heart. But she understands what families of athletes, even from different countries, feel towards them." **Praise for Sreejesh, Manu** Chopra lauded shooter Manu Bhaker for showing perseverance to grab two bronze medals in the Paris Games after experiencing the utter disappointment in the

Tokyo edition. "The way Manu Bhaker prepared her mind and came from her Tokyo setback is impressive. Her mindset appeared to be very strong this time while taking part in back-to-back competitions. I think it's just a start for her because I saw even people over 50 (age) were participating in shooting. "I hope Manu will play in a lot more competitions, bring a lot more medals for the country and change the colour of the medal too," he said. The 26-year-old also hailed Indian hockey team's goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who retired from top-level competition with a bronze at Paris. "Sreejesh is a very relaxed and funny person. He motivates younger players a lot. Sreejesh bhai had said that he would retire after the Olympics. The players, I think, also felt that they should win it for Sreejesh bhai after doing so many great things for the team." Chopra said Sreejesh offers a fine example in tackling pressure situations. "He has so many years of experience and he knows how to tackle the pressure situations. He seemed to be in his zone when I met him before the bronze medal match," he added.

ssAfter another gold, US men's basketball programme will now catch its breath

PTI ■ PARIS

The first practice for the US men's Olympic basketball team after arriving in Paris was one of those workouts that those who were there, watching behind closed doors, will talk about for a long time. Players were split up evenly. Go play, they were told. What happened next set the tone for the rest of the team's time at the Paris Games. "We warmed up and then it became competitive," US assistant coach Erik Spoelstra said. "And, that's when you realized, one, that this team really cares and that it felt the responsibility to play and compete at the highest level. And then secondly, the level of talent on that floor ... we knew it could exceed all expectations." A couple of weeks later, they won gold. The mission was completed Saturday night when the U.S. won gold for the fifth consecutive Games, holding off France - in Paris, no less - 98-87. Stephen Curry scored 24 points, all on 3-pointers, while Kevin Durant won his fourth Olympic gold and LeBron James won his third gold and fourth medal overall. And then, the party started. Before long, it'll be time to start thinking about how to do it again in 2028 when the Olympics return to Los Angeles. Grant Hill will be



back as managing director for the men's national team, and he's already excited about what is looming. "I've done a lot of things in my life," Hill said. "And, this is a thing that certainly consumes you, but it is incredibly rewarding." Especially when the team wins. There will be changes between now and 2028. James will be 43 and likely retired by then (though with James, never say never). It might seem iffy for Curry and Durant to still be playing in four years, but again, who knows? Some players like Anthony Davis and Bam Adebayo already have said they want in; others like Anthony Edwards, Devin Booker, Jayson Tatum and Tyrese Haliburton seem to be locked if they want to continue. No decisions are set, and that won't change for a while. Hill is going to take a well-earned break. The next major international tournament is

the World Cup in Qatar in 2027. It's safe to say that it'll be sometime in 2025 when he even starts getting serious about putting together a group for that. "Over four years, a lot can and will happen," Hill said. "Now, getting away from it a little bit, just letting things play out and see how guys continue to develop and see what kind of season guys have over the next year or so. And then, at some point, you start that process all over again." When he took over, Hill said he wanted a pipeline for both players and coaches. People leave the program, others move up. Steve Kerr made clear when he agreed to replace Gregg Popovich as US coach, it would be for the 2023 World Cup and the Paris Olympics. It would seem likely that the next national team coach will be either Spoelstra or Tyrone Lue, given how both were assistants under Kerr the last two summers.



Gymnast Jordan must return bronze medal after court mandates score change: IOC

PTI ■ PARIS

American gymnast Jordana Chiles must return the bronze medal she won in the Paris Olympics floor exercise after sport's highest court said her score was judged improperly, the International Olympic Committee confirmed Sunday. The IOC announced early Sunday it was reallocating the bronze from Monday's women's floor final to Romanian Ana Barbosu after the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) said Saturday night it would respect the court's decision and elevate Barbosu to third. The decision came less than 24 hours after the Court of Arbitration for Sport voided a scoring appeal made by Team USA coach Cecile Landi during the competition that had vaulted Chiles onto the podium. CAS ruled Saturday that the on-floor appeal by Landi to have 0.1 added to Chiles' score came outside the 1-minute window allowed by the FIG. The ad hoc committee wrote that

Landi's inquiry came a minute and four seconds after the score was posted. The IOC said in a statement it will be in touch with the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee regarding the return of Chiles' bronze and will work with the Romanian Olympic Committee to discuss a reallocation ceremony honouring Barbosu. CAS wrote Saturday that the initial finishing order should be restored, with Barbosu third, Romanian Sabrina Maneca-Voinca fourth and Chiles fifth. The organization added the FIG should determine the final ranking "in accordance with the above decision," but left it to the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) to decide who would get the medal behind gold winner Rebeca Andrade of Brazil and silver medalist Simone Biles of the US. The FIG said it was the IOC's call on whether to reallocate the medal. The IOC confirmed Sunday it would respect FIG's decision and seek to have Chiles' medal returned.

After coach's life was saved backstage, Uzbekistan dominate Olympic boxing

PTI ■ PARIS

Uzbekistan's beloved head boxing coach was revived from apparent cardiac arrest by two members of Britain's training staff after celebrating his team's first gold medal of the Paris Olympics, his fighters confirmed. The Uzbek team went on to win five golds - more than any Olympic team in the last 20 years - in tribute to Tulkin Kilichev, who is recovering in a Paris hospital. "Kilichev is more than a coach or a father, in fact," Bakhodir Jalolov said after winning his second super heavyweight gold medal. "He

has raised us. He educated us. He has transmitted the sports spirit to us. He has been with me in my heart, and tomorrow we will be going to visit him in the hospital." Kilichev fell ill backstage after flyweight Hasanboy Dusmatov won Uzbekistan's first gold medal Thursday. According to GB Boxing, team doctor Harj Singh and physical therapist Robbie Lillis found Kilichev in life-threatening distress. They performed CPR on the coach, and Lillis also used a defibrillator, the team said. Jalolov said Kilichev remained in contact with the team over the past two days while recovering, and his



fighters responded with a historic performance. Jalolov was the last of Uzbekistan's five Paris champions to climb the podium Saturday night in the

best Olympic performance since Cuba also won five golds at the 2004 Athens Games. Uzbekistan won the final five men's gold medal bouts contested at Roland Garros, starting with Dusmatov on Thursday - a victory followed by that frightening moment for Kilichev. "This is history for Uzbekistan, and I'm emotional because becoming a two-time Olympic champion was my dream," Jalolov said. "Now I feel very happy, and I will continue my career as a professional boxer." Lazizbek Mullojonov won the heavyweight title Friday night, joining a remarkable Olympic lineage at that weight including Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Teofilo Stevenson, Felix Savon and Oleksandr Usyk.

"We are building a new generation of boxers," Mullojonov said. "This is the result of all the federation's work." Indeed, Uzbekistan has responded sharply to its twisting fortunes in the past two Games under Kilichev's leadership. The team claimed three gold medals in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 to signal its arrival as an international power, but won just one gold medal - Jalolov's first - five years later in Tokyo. With Jalolov and Dusmatov returning alongside a new crew of gifted young boxers, Uzbekistan has returned to dominance.

Sifan wins women's marathon

PTI ■ PARIS

Sifan Hassan traded elbows with Tigst Assefa with 150 meters left in the women's marathon, then passed her along the railing to win the race for her third distance medal of the Paris Games on Sunday. Hassan finished in an Olympic record time of 2 hours, 22 minutes, 55 seconds. She also won bronze in the 5,000 and 10,000. By simply completing the marathon, she ran more than 62 kilometres. She now has six Olympic medals. In Tokyo, Hassan won the 5,000 and 10,000 and finished third in the 1,500. Assefa got silver, and Kenya's Hellen Obiri took the bronze. Breaking



tradition, the women's Olympic marathon was held on the final day instead of the men's race. Hassan, an Ethiopian-born

racer who runs for the Netherlands, used the same tactic in the hilly, 26.2-mile course as on the oval. She lingered behind the leaders for most of the race before summoning up the energy for a late-race kick that would go down as one of the best of the sport has seen. This one, amazingly, had more the look of a crowded race on the oval down the stretch. As Hassan gathered to make her last pass, Assefa, from Ethiopia, tried to block her path. Hassan moved to the inside around a bend. Assefa tried to squeeze her against the barrier separating the course from the cheering fans. The runners traded elbows, and then, Hassan took off past Assefa and sprinted in for the win.

World Boxing to announce major increase in membership after Paris Olympics

PTI ■ PARIS

The nascent governing body of the Olympics is about to get a major membership boost. World Boxing expects to expand its membership base to 50 national federations or more in the weeks after the conclusion of the tumultuous Paris Olympics, President Boris Van Der Vorst told The Associated Press. The organization already has 37 members, including most of the top Western national federations. Van Der Vorst said he is leaving Paris even more confident his sport can pull off "the greatest comeback story ever in the Olympic



movement." Van Der Vorst has spent the Games speaking to boxing leaders and federation officials as World Boxing attempts to unify the sport under the only practical alternative to the Russian-dominated International

Boxing Association, which has been banished from the Olympic movement. World Boxing must court each federation individually to accomplish this seismic change to the sport - and the clock is ticking. Boxing is not currently on the program for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, and the International Olympic Committee has repeatedly said the sport must find a suitable new governing body - likely by early 2025 - to be restored to the lineup for the Games. An IOC unit ran the past two Olympic boxing tournaments. "There's only one reason to join (World Boxing), and that's to save our sport," Van Der Vorst told the AP on Saturday.

Boxer Lin Yu-ting wins gold, concludes an Olympics filled with scrutiny

PTI ■ PARIS

Lin Yu-ting fought to remain poised and calm throughout the Paris Olympics boxing tournament, even when it seemed like most of the chattering world was maligning her, misrepresenting her and questioning the very nature of her being. The flyweight shut off her social media, kept up her training and focused on earning one proficient victory after another. But when she heard Taiwan's anthem while standing on the top podium at Roland Garros with a gold medal around her neck, Lin suddenly broke down in cathartic sobs. She cried not only for the tumult of the past two weeks, but for a lifetime in boxing that

culminated in this gold-medal victory over previously unfathomable challenges. "I saw images flashing, and I thought about the beginning of my career when I started boxing," Lin said. "All the difficult practices, the times that I got injured, the competitors I fought against. All these images flashed in my head. There are times of great pain. There are times of great joy. I cried because I was so touched." Lin completed her domination of her division Saturday night, following Imane Khelif's lead a day earlier by giving a glittering response to the intense scrutiny faced by both fighters inside the ring and around the world over misconceptions about their womanhood. Lin routed Julia Szeremeta of

Poland 5-0 in the final, capping her four-fight unbeaten run through Paris by winning Taiwan's first Olympic boxing gold medal. On Friday, Khelif won Algeria's first women's boxing medal with a decisive victory in the welterweight division final, beating Yang Liu of China. Both fighters persevered through an avalanche of criticism and uninformed speculation about their sex during the Paris tournament to deliver the best performances of their boxing careers. "Every fight is not easy," Lin said. "Winning 5-0 might seem easy, but behind that is a lot of practice and hard work." World leaders, celebrities and online critics attempted to make it about something other than the boxers' years of work. The detractors either



questioned their eligibility to be in women's competitions or falsely claimed they were men, forcing both women to take unwanted starring roles in a debate over changing attitudes

toward gender identity and safety regulation in sports. Lin said she minimized this potentially enormous distraction by managing to avoid learning about it almost

entirely. She also said she'll speak with her team about whether to take legal action against some of the claims. "As an elite athlete, during the competition it's important to shut myself off from social media," she said. "That's extremely important. Some of the noises or some of the news articles, of course I heard some of the information through my coach, but I didn't pay too much mind to it. And I was invited by the IOC to participate in the Games. This is what I focused on." Both fighters were disqualified last year from the world championships organized by the International Boxing Association, a Russian-dominated governing body that has been banished from the Olympics since 2019. The IBA said they failed an

eligibility test for women's competition, but it has struggled to defend its claims since they resurfaced at the Olympics, occasionally giving contradictory information or saying they were asked not to give details by the boxers' national federations. The two boxers' detractors included former U.S. President Donald Trump, "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling and Italian Premier Giorgio Meloni. Their presence in Paris became a weapon in a largely Western culture clash over eligibility for women's sports. Khelif said a gold medal would be the "best response" to the uproar. Both fighters got the last word in Paris, although the chatter and scrutiny could persevere for the rest of their careers. Lin hadn't been as dominant or

as dynamic as Khelif in Paris, but she steadily rolled toward the final as the top seed in the women's 57-kilogram division. The 5-foot-9 (1.75 meter) Lin is usually taller and more slender than her opponents, and she uses those advantages to pick them apart with skill and angles, rather than strength or power. That's exactly what Lin did to Szeremeta after taking the ring Saturday to loud cheers and dozens of Olympic-style Chinese Taipei flags waving in the stands, with millions more cheering back home. After having her hand raised and holding open the ropes for Szeremeta's departure in a typical boxing gesture of sportsmanship, Lin went to the center of the ring, knelt on the Paris 2024 logo and touched her head to the canvas.

'THE MESSAGE WE ARE CONVEYING IN *AAY* IS NOTHING GREATER THAN FRIENDSHIP'

PNS | HYDERABAD

The actor Narne Nithin starer *Aay* is heading for a grand theatrical release on August 15. Bankrolled by GA2 Pictures, the film will see Anji K. Maniputra make his directorial debut. Ahead of the film's release, the actor shared insights about the movie and its journey during a recent media interaction in Hyderabad.

"We initially did not consider the title *Aay* for the film. It was Allu Aravind's idea to use this title. The reason is that the word *Aay* is commonly used in the Godavari slang. You'll also see this term used in various contexts throughout the movie. Hence, we decided to fix this title," Nithin revealed.

The actor emphasised the film's lighthearted nature, saying, "The movie will be full of fun. That's why we used the tagline 'Fun Bath' in the posters. This was the director's idea. On the day of the movie release, everyone will clearly understand this aspect."

As Narne Nithin's upcoming film *Aay* is nearing its release, the lead actor speaks to the Hyderabad media, sharing more insights about the film



With numerous films scheduled to release on the same day, Nithin expressed confidence in their project: "Many movies are releasing on August 15. However, we believe that the audience that is meant for us is ours. It has been a long time since a good, fun movie with a Godavari backdrop has come. We firmly believe that the audience will enjoy it."

Reflecting on his role, Nithin mentioned his familiarity with the Godavari slang: "From a young age, I have interacted with my Godavari friends and listened to them speak. Hence, I did not find it difficult to speak in the Godavari slang in *Aay*."

On working with debut director Anji K. Maniputra, he shared, "Director Anji K. Maniputra is a young man from Amalapuram. The film *Aay* is a combination of his frustrations and everything he has seen in life. He is a person who gets along easily with anyone and is friendly with everyone on the set."

Nithin also shared that Jr NTR had seen the trailer and enjoyed it: "NTR Garu watched the trailer. He liked com-

edy a lot. He enjoyed it. It would be great if we got such a response from him after he watched the movie."

On choosing projects, Nithin stated, "I have no particular preference to work only with debut directors. I choose films based on the story. Whether it's *Mad* or *Aay*, I acted in films whose stories I liked. Regarding music, Ram Miryala provided music for three songs, while Ajay Arasada provided music for two songs and the background score. Music plays a crucial role in the success of a film." He also praised his co-star, Nayanthara: "Heroine Nayanthara is a Marathi girl, but she fits in well like a Telugu girl. Her role will connect well with everyone."

Nithin concluded with a message from the film: "Friendship is far greater than caste and religion. The message we are conveying in *Aay* is that nothing is greater than friendship."

Looking ahead, Nithin mentioned, "The shooting of the sequel to *Mad* is ongoing. It might be released within this year. No new projects have been finalised yet."



'It's surreal to receive such compliments so early in my career'

Actor Krishna Vamsi, currently gaining much accolades for his movie *Alanaati Ramachandrudu*, shares the love he has received for his character, being tagged as the 'Cute Lover Boy' of Telugu cinema and more

AARTI SREENATH

In the ever-evolving landscape of Telugu cinema, every now and then, a character comes along that resonates deeply with audiences—someone who feels familiar and relatable yet refreshingly new.

Enter Krishna Vamsi, the breakout star of *Alanaati Ramachandrudu*, whose portrayal of 'Siddhu' has not only captured hearts but also sparked a wave of admiration, particularly among his female fans and making a heartthrob.

In a candid interview with the *Alanaati Ramachandrudu* fame and what initially drew him to the role of 'Siddhu,' Vamsi's eyes lit up with enthusiasm. "The moment I heard the narration, I felt an instant connection," he shares. "Siddhu is someone we've all encountered in our lives, whether it's that quiet kid in class with a secret crush or the introverted neighbour who speaks more with his eyes than his words."

He realised that Siddhu wasn't just an introvert. He was emotionally layered, a true ambivert and that complexity excited him the most about the character. The challenge was to bring out those subtle nuances and expressions that are more felt than seen. "In a way, it was a blank canvas, with no prior reference and I relished the opportunity to paint it with my own strokes," he shares.

The success of *Alanaati Ramachandrudu* has also given rise to a new tag for Vamsi, the 'Cute Lover Boy' of Telugu cinema.

Vamsi is humbled by the comparison. "Honestly, it's such a flattering compliment. When I first saw Siddhu on screen, I even thought he had this charming, relatable quality. The way he smiles at his loved ones—that's something I think audiences took home with them. It's heartwarming to know that people of all ages found something endearing in him," he said.

Comparisons to iconic characters like R. Madhavan's 'Karthik' from *Sakhi* have naturally followed. But while Karthik was all extroverted passion, Siddhu's charm lies in his subtlety. "Madhavan Sir is a legend and it's an honour to be mentioned in the same breath," Vamsi says with a smile. "Karthik was bold and direct, while Siddhu was shy and reserved, yet deeply committed. I think today's generation appreciates that kind of quiet intensity, a love that doesn't shout but speaks volumes through a simple glance or a smile. Maybe that's why girls have taken to Siddhu; they can feel those same butterflies he feels on screen," he said.

When asked about his best feature, his captivating smile or his natural screen presence, Vamsi is thoughtfully reflective. "It's surreal to receive such compliments so early in my career," he admits.

"Growing up, everyone told me I had a charming smile and I've definitely used it to get out of trouble a few times!" he laughs. "But now, when people see Siddhu in me, they recognise that natural ease I tried to bring to the screen. It's a validation that keeps me grounded and motivated to give my best in every role." If he had to choose,



though, he'd say it's his smile, it's something that instantly connects with people and he is incredibly grateful for that.

Blushing slightly, Vamsi turns his attention to the fans who have showered him with love and support. "I'm overwhelmed by the affection, especially from my women fans. During our promotional tours, the energy and the love from college girls were unbelievable; it boosted my confidence like nothing else." He thanks every-

one from the bottom of his heart and promises to reciprocate that love through his work, bringing characters to life that his audience will continue to adore. "Please keep supporting me on this journey; I wouldn't be here without you," he requests.

As Krishna Vamsi steps further into the spotlight, it's clear that his journey has only just begun. With a blend of natural charm and raw talent, he's set to carve out a niche in Telugu cinema, one smile at a time.

VIJAY SETHUPATHI'S TRAIN GEARS UP FOR 10 DAYS OF SHOOTING

The highly anticipated dark thriller *Train*, starring Vijay Sethupathi, is nearing the final stages of production.

Despite significant progress, the film's shooting is not yet complete. The team is gearing up for an additional ten days of shooting, which is scheduled to take place next month.

Train promises to be an intense and gripping thriller, adding to the excitement among Vijay Sethupathi's fans. Starring Shruti Haasan as the female lead, the film's release is set to precede the debut of *Pisasu 2*, another eagerly awaited project. With the shooting expected to wrap up soon, anticipation for *Train* is building. The film is set to deliver a captivating narrative and has already garnered significant attention due to its dark and thrilling storyline.



Varun Tej's Matka first look makes a bold impression

Mega Prince Varun Tej is set to make his pan-India debut with *Matka*, which is also his most ambitious film to date. Directed by Karuna Kumar and produced by Dr. Vijender Reddy Teegala and Rajani Thalluri under the banners of Vyra Entertainment and SRT Entertainment, the film is being crafted on a grand scale. Production is currently underway in Hyderabad.

On Sunday, the team unveiled the first look poster for the film, showcasing Varun Tej in two distinct avatars—one as a young man and the other as a middle-aged individual. The film will span the protagonist's journey over 24 years, featuring him in four different looks. The poster highlights two contrasting facets of his character: from an underdog to a powerful overlord, capturing his rise to dominance.

In one image, Varun Tej exudes youthful intensity and style, smoking a cigar with a vintage look. On the other hand, he appears aged and affluent, also smoking a cigar but with spectacles and grey hair, and a gun on his desk. The background features a king card from a deck of playing cards. The impressive first look creates a strong visual impact, hinting at Varun Tej's return to roles his fans are eager to see. The film also stars Meenakshi Chaudhry and Nora Fatehi, set against a period backdrop. The cinematography is handled by A Kishor Kumar, with GV Prakash Kumar composing the music and Karthika Srinivas R editing the film. *Matka* will be released in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada.

Bekkam Venugopal reveals *Radhe Krishna* climax was reshot for perfection

The teaser for the film *Radhe Krishna*, which was unveiled, is finally out now. Produced by Voodugu Sudhakar under the banner of SV Creations and directed by Ismail Shaik, the film stars SS Saikulu in the lead role, with Bramarambika and Arpita Lohi as the heroines and music composed by ML Raja. The movie will be released in both Telugu and Banjara languages.

The teaser launch event was attended by several prominent guests, including producers Bekkam Venugopal and Ram Talluri and heroes Sohel and Auto

Ramprasad. Producer Ram Talluri remarked, "This film is a product of our district. The teaser looks impressive and the songs are excellent. If newcomers are well guided, we will see even better films in the future. I sincerely hope that this film brings financial success to the producer and a good name to the actors."

Producer Bekkam Venugopal praised the film's production, stating, "I always support small films. When I saw this movie, I felt the climax could have been better. After sharing my feedback, the team revisited the shoot and edited it for three

more days, reflecting their passion for cinema. They have created a high-quality film on a modest budget. I hope it brings success and recognition to the producer."

Hero Sohel expressed his support, saying, "The film's team feels like family to me. Cinema is often seen as a world of colors, but we operate in black and white while delivering those colours. We never know which films will resonate with audiences, but we understand the effort behind making them. This team has worked hard and I hope everyone enjoys the movie and it succeeds."



STANDALONE

The city of Hyderabad witnessed a spectacular event as Tollywood cine actress Sreeleela attended the CREDAI Hyderabad Property Show at the Shree Convention Centre in Kompally. The event has been a resounding success, drawing an overwhelming response from attendees and participants alike.

