

# sunday pioneer

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

Let's work unitedly to confront **pressing** challenges: Modi



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From jingles to **JAI HO** and beyond



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

AI could add great value to any social media campaign by getting better insights into voter behaviour, optimising content delivery and personalising interaction with the electorate. AI tools can analyse vast amounts of data to understand trending issues, get an idea of the public pulse, and create more palatable content for particular demographic groups. The Congress will be able to design much more effective messages and ensure that the right content reaches the right audience at the right time.

— Uttam Kumar Reddy, Irrigation Minister

**DON'T MISS...**

**Embrace economic nationalism...**

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar here on Saturday called upon the nation to embrace economic nationalism, urging the industry, trade, and commerce sectors to prioritise local production over avoidable imports. Emphasising the concept of economic nationalism as a facet of Swadeshi and a reflection of being vocal for locals, Dhankhar highlighted the negative impact of unnecessary imports on the economy, including the drain of foreign exchange and the loss of job opportunities for Indian workers...

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**Genetic links between...**

A new study has uncovered genes that could be related to heart conditions and Alzheimer's disease, suggesting that the two could have similar origins. Researchers said that evidence increasingly links people having the heart condition with a quicker cognitive decline and a 26 per cent increased risk of dementia, affecting one's memory and thinking, and interfering with daily activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia...

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**'Majority blue-collar jobs pay less than..'**

Majority of blue-collar jobs in India pay within the salary range of Rs 20,000 or less per month, suggesting that a substantial portion of the workforce is grappling with financial strain, struggling to meet essential needs such as housing, healthcare, and education, a report has said. Over 57.63 per cent of blue-collar jobs fall within the salary range of Rs 20,000 or less per month, indicating that many workers earn close to the minimum wage, tech-enabled blue collar recruitment platform WorkIndia said in a report. In addition, the report revealed that about 29.34 per cent of blue-collar...

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**From South hits to vogue success!...**

The movie Maharaj, which starred Shalini Pandey with Jaideep Ahlawat, Junaid Khan and Sharvari (in a special appearance), received great acclaim. Making it a worldwide, not just in India, must-watch! Thus, how could we have overlooked the interview featuring the prominent actress from the same movie? Our very own South fame from Arjun Reddy is still being praised for her delicate handling of Netflix's Maharaj narrative. Her portrayal undoubtedly brought up significant issues, leaving us wondering where it all started. "I worked on this movie about 2.5 years ago. The power it offered was what spurred me on to..."

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## CM meets PM, seeks funds for Amaravati & Polavaram

Naidu expresses gratitude for the AP announcements in the Union Budget

- Need for Backward Region Grant funds for development in specific regions of AP and industrial incentives reiterated
- Discussions with Amit Shah focus on pending issues related to the AP Reorganisation Act.
- Naidu and Nirmala Sitharaman discuss financial assistance for Amaravati and Backward Region Grant funds.
- Expedited approvals from the Central Water Commission (CWC) urged for the diaphragm wall and associated project works.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat during his visit to New Delhi on Saturday.

The Chief Minister brought several important issues to the attention



of the Prime Minister and the Union Ministers. Some issues were discussed in individual meetings. During his meeting with the Prime Minister, Naidu expressed gratitude for the announcements regarding Andhra Pradesh in the Union Budget.

In an earlier meeting with the PM, the Chief Minister had requested

intervention on several matters and appealed for early action on issues including the Polavaram project. Naidu also requested that a proposal related to the release of funds for the Polavaram project be passed in the forthcoming Cabinet meeting. "This will aid in utilising the construction period effectively and enable early completion of the project," he informed the Prime Minister.

The Chief Minister requested the early release of multilateral support, as indicated in the annual budget, to kick-start works in Amaravati. Naidu reiterated the provisions of the AP Reorganisation Act and requested Special Assistance for Capital Investment (SACI) to undertake various capital projects in Andhra Pradesh, as well as Backward Region Grant funds. He also reiterated the request for the release of funds under the Backward Region Grant to support development in Rayalaseema, Prakasam, and North Coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh, and urged the Prime Minister for funds to support industrial incentives for the growth of the industrial ecosystem in the state.

During the meeting with Amit Shah, various pending issues related to the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act were discussed. Both leaders expressed their commitment to the development of Andhra Pradesh and to strengthening the NDA Government to meet the aspirations of the people of the state.

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## New diaphragm wall for Polavaram on the anvil



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources Development, Nimmala Ramanaidu, has announced that experts have recommended the construction of a new diaphragm wall for the Polavaram project, as repairing the existing one is not advisable.

Discussions have also taken place regarding the design of this new wall.

The experts pointed out that the current situation arose after the sudden suspension of the agency previously overseeing the work, which led to a 13-month halt in the project, according to Nimmala.

The Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) questioned who would be held accountable if an issue arose from having two agencies working on the same task.

This concern is documented in the PPA minutes, the Minister noted.

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## Files related to land acquisition set on fire



PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

In a troubling incident, files related to the Polavaram project land acquisition were allegedly set on fire by miscreants at the Polavaram Project Authority Office in Dowleswaram, near here. This incident follows a similar occurrence in Madanapalle last month, raising concerns among officials.

According to sources, the files were burnt in the early hours of Saturday. Some documents related to the land acquisition for the Polavaram project's Left Canal and the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) package were destroyed, while others were partially damaged.

Continued on Page 2

## MUDA SITE ALLOTMENT 'SCAM' Jolt to K'taka Cong govt

Guv accords sanction for CM's prosecution Won't quit, asserts Siddaramaiah

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Governor Thaaarchand Gehlot on Saturday accorded sanction for prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in connection with Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam', giving a major jolt to the nearly 15 month old Congress government.

Hours later, the Karnataka Cabinet, at a specially convened meeting this evening under the leadership of Siddaramaiah, condemned the Governor's decision, termed it as "politically motivated", and vowed to wage a legal fight.

Following the backing of the cabinet and the party, the Chief Minister questioned as to why he should resign, and said the Governor has to quit, because he acted like a 'puppet' in the hands of the Government of India.

The Governor accorded sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions of activists Pradeep Kumar S P, T J Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna.

The Governor's sanction is expected to pave the way for investigating agencies to initiate a probe into the allegations against the Chief Minister. In the MUDA 'scam', it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to



Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout. Under the controversial scheme, MUDA allotted 50 per cent of developed land to the land losers in lieu of undeveloped land acquired from them for forming residential layouts. Opposition and some activists have also claimed that Parvathi had no legal title over 3.16 acres of land.

BJP leaders have claimed that the MUDA 'scam' is of the magnitude of Rs 4,000 crore to Rs 5,000 crore. Shivakumar slammed the Governor's move as 'unconstitutional' and 'undemocratic', and asserted that the entire party and the government solidly stood behind Siddaramaiah as he categorically dismissed BJP's demand for Chief Minister's resignation.

Continued on Page 2

## Kesineni Chinni to lead ACA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas (Chinni) has been elected as the president of the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) for the remaining term until 2025. He, along with other office-bearers, was elected unanimously, with no opposition.

Sana Satish has been chosen as the Secretary, Venkata Prashant as the Vice President, and Dandamudi Srinivas as the Treasurer. Additionally, Visakhapatnam North MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju has been elected as Joint Secretary. Although the elections have concluded, the official announcement of the newly elected office-bearers will be made on September 8 by ACA Electoral Officer Dr Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar.

The elections were necessitated following the resignation of the previous office bearers and Apex



Committee Counselor after a change in the Andhra Pradesh government. In a recent general body meeting, the ACA accepted these resignations and decided to elect new office bearers for the remaining term. Dr. Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, the former State Election Commissioner, was appointed as the Electoral Officer.

The elections were necessitated following the resignation of the previous office bearers and Apex Committee Counselor after a change in the Andhra Pradesh government.

According to ACA sources, only one nomination was filed for each of the five key positions: President, Vice President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as for the Apex Council Counsellor post. Consequently, all positions were filled without any contest.

Continued on Page 2

## Govt issues guidelines for transfer of employees



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has given the green light for the transfers of government employees in some departments here on Saturday.

The government has released the guidelines for the transfers and has approved the transfers of employees in 12 departments. The government has also issued orders lifting the temporary ban on transfers of employees. The approved transfers include the Revenue, Panchayat Raj, Municipality, Mines, Civil Supplies, Endowments, Forest, Transport, Electricity, Commercial Taxes, Stamps and Registration, and Village and Ward Secretariats departments.

Continued on Page 2

## RAILWAYS HINTS AT SABOTAGE

20 coaches of Sabarmati Express derail



PNS ■ KANPUR

Twenty coaches of the Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express passenger train derailed near Govindpuri station in Kanpur early Saturday after the engine hit an "object placed on the track". Agencies are investigating the possible involvement of anti-social elements in the incident, railway officials said. There were no casualties in the derailment that occurred between Kanpur and Bhimsen railway stations at around 2.35 am, disrupting traffic on the route. According to the Railways, seven trains were cancelled and three were diverted due to the derailment.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said that the Intelligence Bureau and Uttar Pradesh police were looking into the incident and arrangements were being made for the onward journey of passengers.

## KOLKATA RAPE-MURDER

## IMA's 24-hour strike cripples OPDs nationwide

Govt to form panel to propose safety measures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday said a committee will be formed to propose safety measures for healthcare professionals even as OPD services were hit across the country as doctors joined the 24-hour nationwide strike called by the IMA to protest the alleged rape and murder of a trainee medic in Kolkata.

Resident doctors at government hospitals in different parts of the country, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra, and Haryana among others, have been protesting since Monday.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) had given a nationwide call



for the withdrawal of non-emergency services for 24 hours from 6 am on Saturday to protest the grie-

ism at the facility. The IMA also sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in realising their five demands, including a central law to check violence against healthcare personnel and declaring hospitals safe zones with mandatory security entitlements.

On Saturday, the Union health ministry said representatives of all stakeholders, including the state governments, will be invited to share their suggestions with the committee as it urged the doctors to resume their duties in the larger public interest and in view of the rising number of dengue and malaria cases.

**OBTUSE ANGLE**



# KCR's 'chit chat' with scribes: An elusive affair?

These days, it's almost a given that after a press meet, there's a quick 'chit chat' session. Even the CM joins in on this trend. Recently, after a press conference, Congress leader Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy turned to the room full of reporters and asked, "So, has anyone here ever had a casual chat with KCR?" The room was silent — apparently, none of the seasoned reporters had. Ponguleti went on to share that KCR's meetings are marathons, lasting up to 15 hours, with him doing most of the talking. He joked that if someone else dares to speak for even 30 minutes, KCR gets a bit irritated. The reporters sighed, thinking, "First let him finish the press meet, then maybe we can look forward to a casual chat!"

KTR's quick comebacks are his way of firing back, but it's not a new tactic. The BJP kicked off this trend a couple of years ago, dubbing him Twitter Tillu. While Twitter Tillu was a social media hit, it didn't exactly keep the momentum going.

**Seasoned politico Sridhar Babu in 'no hater' zone**  
Industries Minister Sridhar Babu seems to be in a 'no hater' zone. It's rare to see him trolled or targeted by the

somewhere other than Golconda Fort. But Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has chosen to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, K. Chandrasekhar Rao, by selecting Golconda Fort as the venue. On August 15, 2024, Revanth Reddy hoisted the National Flag at this historic site.

It's worth noting that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had previously pledged to erase all traces of KCR's administration. He's even considering changing the State emblem, claiming it reflects a royal insignia. Revanth Reddy has been keen to brand his government as the 'People's Government' with 'People's Rule'. Yet, he opted for Golconda Fort — a symbol of royal heritage, built between the 14th and 17th centuries by the Bahamani Sultans and later the Qutub Shahi Dynasty, who made it their capital — to mark the Independence Day celebrations.

One journalist, bemused by Revanth Reddy's decision to mirror KCR's choice, quipped that whether in power or not, many seem to fancy themselves as 'Kings', regardless of the era — monarchic or democratic. Some may even try to give the impression that they are democrats at heart.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate & K Venkateshwarlu)

## REPORTERS' DIARY

Opposition. Among the ministers, he's got quite the reputation. Even during his US trip, despite handling some clean-up work, he managed to stay out of controversy. Rumour has it that Sridhar Babu might be in the running for TPCC chief, given his seasoned political background. His recent travels to the US and Delhi have only fuelled this speculation.

**Flag-hoisting: Revanth follows in KCR's footsteps**  
There were plenty of folks who thought the 78th Independence Day celebrations might take place at the Parade Grounds or, at the very least,

### From minister to 'Pappu' in Oppn's playbook

The Opposition seems to be on a mission to paint KTR as a "Pappu." What's amusing is that KTR is in on the joke and mentioned in a recent chit chat that he's proven his mettle as a minister. He joked that they were trying to make him look like a dimwit. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy keeps saying, "Don't take KTR seriously — he's not exactly a brainy chap, more like management quota material."



## Woman, her two kids charred alive

PNS ■ KADAPA

A woman and her two children were charred alive in their home at Kothapet village in Rayachoti mandal, Annamayya district on Saturday.

DSP Ramachandraiah reported that the deceased, Yanagudi Ramadevi (34), along with her son Manohar (8) and daughter Manvitha (5), were found dead with severe burn injuries inside their house. Ramadevi's husband, who works in Kuwait, had reportedly been having marital issues with her.

According to the DSP, neighbours noticed flames erupting from the house and found the doors locked from the inside. They immediately alerted the police and fire personnel, who rushed to the scene, broke open the doors, and extinguished the flames. Unfortunately, the bodies were burnt beyond recognition.

The DSP visited the scene, registered a case, and arranged for the bodies to be shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem. He stated that the cause of the incident, whether a gas leak or suicide, is still under investigation.

The police are currently reviewing CCTV footage as part of the inquiry, he added.

# Govt cracks down on ganja peddling

## DIG Jatti leads 100-day action plan

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a concerted effort to eradicate ganja cultivation and trafficking within its borders, the Andhra Pradesh Police has launched a crackdown. A high-level meeting chaired by the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Visakhapatnam Range, Gopinath Jatti, brought together Superintendents of Police from five districts to review the progress of the 100-day action plan. DIG Gopinath Jatti, emphasising the urgency and scale of the mission, stated, "We have formed 27 special teams with a singular focus to track down and apprehend absconding ganja offenders, both within Andhra Pradesh and beyond its borders. These teams are operating under stringent timeframes to dismantle trafficking networks, especially those that stretch across state lines."

As part of the enhanced enforcement measures, nine strategic check posts have been set up on key trafficking routes, with trained personnel, CCTV, and dynamic vehicle checks. DIG Jatti stated, "We have initiated 59 Preventive Detention Act proposals to curtail notorious offenders and opened suspect sheets to monitor their movements." Specialised



canine units are deployed in Anakapalli and Narsipatnam to detect ganja concealed in containers.

The DIG highlighted the substantial progress made under the action plan, revealing that "in 2024, we registered 223 cases in Visakhapatnam Range, seized 9,517 kg of ganja worth Rs 4.75 crore, arrested 545 offenders, including 249 interstate criminals, and seized 155 vehicles." He noted that efforts to trace ganja origins, identify destinations, and dismantle the network are ongoing.

Providing critical insights into the trafficking operations, DIG Jatti disclosed that "Satellite imagery and data confirm that most ganja is cultivated in Odisha's border districts, with Andhra Pradesh as a key transit point." To address cultivation, he visited Alluri Seetharama Raju District, stating, "We are using drones to monitor for new cultivation, forming committees to promote alternative crops, and conducting awareness pro-

grams." So far, 8,585 farmers have received alternative crops, including 31,49,116 silver oak plants on 4,498.5 acres.

DIG Jatti emphasised that public awareness is central to the state's ganja eradication efforts. "We've conducted 416 campaigns reaching 26,000 people. Officers regularly visit villages to inform the public about the severe legal consequences of ganja-related activities. We're also using 'Burrakatha' and 'Kalajathara' performances at markets, along with LED screens and hoardings at key locations, schools, and colleges to raise awareness," he said.

DIG Jatti voiced strong confidence in the state's efforts, saying, "Our coordinated actions are effectively targeting ganja trafficking from the Andhra-Odisha Border region to other areas. We aim to make Andhra Pradesh ganja-free and will persist in our efforts to ensure a safer and more secure community for everyone." The meeting was attended by SPS M. Deepika Patil (Anakapalli), Amit Bardar (ASR), Vakul Jindal (Vizianagaram), S.V. Madhav Reddy (PVP Manyam), K.V. Maheswara Reddy (Srikakulam), and NDPS Special Public Prosecutor V. Govinda Rao.

### Kesineni Chinni...

Continued from Page 1

The nomination process took place at the ACA office in Machilipatnam on August 16, followed by the scrutiny of nominations on August 17, where all were found to be valid. As a result, Kesineni Srinivas, representing the Kurnool District Cricket Association, was elected as president, and P. Vishnu Kumar Raju, representing the Visakhapatnam District Cricket Association, was elected as joint secretary. Alongside them, P Venkata Ramana as vice president, Sana Satish as secretary, Dandamudi Srinivas as treasurer, and D. Gowru Vishu Tej as counsellor were all elected unanimously.

### Govt issues...

Continued from Page 1

No decision has been made regarding the transfers of teachers and health department employees. The Government has instructed officials to complete the transfer process by the end of this month.

# 'TDP-led NDA govt committed to resolving public issues'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Revenue, Stamps, and Registrations, Anagani Satya Prasad, has emphasised that the State government, led by the TDP, is actively working to resolve the issues faced by the public. He assured that immediate solutions would be provided to petitioners through a transparent system.

On Saturday, Minister Satya Prasad, along with M.L.C.P. Ashok Babu, MLA Nakka Anand Babu, Bapatla MP T. Krishna Prasad, and TDP Politburo Member Varla Ramaiah, received grievances from petitioners at the TDP Central Office in Mangalagiri, Guntur district. Upon receiving these petitions, Minister Prasad and other leaders contacted the relevant officials by phone and instructed them to address the



issues as soon as possible.

Minister Satya Prasad highlighted that such a transparent, accountable, and responsive system was absent during the previous YSRCP government, where he claimed that police station work was only carried out for

those affiliated with the YSRCP.

He emphasised that under the current government, petitions are accepted from everyone, regardless of political affiliation, and the government is genuinely committed to resolving these issues. He further explained that

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision is focused on the overall development of the state, and the petition system at the party office is part of this vision. He assured that all petitions would be forwarded to the relevant ministers and officials for prompt action.

TDP Politburo Member Varla Ramaiah expressed satisfaction with the initiative and praised Chief Minister Naidu for involving them in several significant programmes within the state.

He also reiterated the TDP-led NDA government's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of women, particularly women doctors, referencing a recent incident in Kolkata.

Ramaiah noted that the state government is taking all necessary measures to prevent such incidents.

## Jr doctors stage protests in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Junior doctors across the State staged rallies to protest the brutal murder of a female doctor at RG Kar Medical College Hospital in Kolkata.

In response to a call from the Indian Medical Association, students from NRI Medical College organised a rally in Mangalagiri on Saturday. The demonstration began at NRI Medical College and concluded at the Ambedkar Centre. The students staged a sit-in outside the hospital, chanting slogans and demanding justice. They also called for the arrest of the accused.

In West Godavari district, doctors held a protest rally in Narasapuram, leading to the suspension of OP services at some hospitals. The rally started at the Gandhi statue and proceeded to the sub-collector's office. In Guntakal, Anantapur district, government hospital doctors and medical staff participated in a large rally protesting the murder of a junior doctor at RG Kar Medical College Hospital in Kolkata. The participants wore black badges, carried placards, and chanted slogans demanding justice. The rally began at the GGH and ended at the NTR statue. They also formed a human chain at Gandhi Chowk.

## ELECTRICAL ACCIDENTS

# Prevent loss of life: Gottipati to officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Minister for Energy, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, has emphasised the importance of taking proactive measures to prevent the loss of life due to electrical accidents and has directed officials to focus on reducing such incidents across the state. He requested a detailed report on the loss of lives caused by electric shocks, stressing that the government's goal is to prevent accidents rather than merely providing compensation to victims.

During a virtual review meeting with Energy Department officials on Saturday, Minister Ravi Kumar



inquired about the causes of deaths related to electric shocks that have occurred so far. He instructed the officials to prepare a comprehensive report detailing these incidents and the factors con-

tributing to them.

The minister also highlighted the numerous complaints he has received regarding incidents involving electric shocks from low-height high-tension lines. He urged officials to prioritise the identification of problematic areas with such lines and take the necessary steps to address these hazards.

Additionally, Minister Ravi Kumar emphasised the importance of completing repairs to electricity lines across the state as soon as possible. He asked the officials to compile full details of various incidents, reports, and new lines to be discussed in the next review meeting.

# CM meets PM, seeks...

Continued from Page 1

In his meeting with Nirmala Sitharaman, the Chief Minister expressed gratitude for the announcements regarding Andhra Pradesh in the Union Budget. Discussions also centred on structuring multilateral financial assistance for Amaravati Capital City. Naidu reiterated his request for the release of funds under the Backward Region Grant to support development in Rayalaseema, Prakasam, and North Coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh. Both leaders also discussed the release of funds for capital works under SACI. In his meeting with

C.R. Patil, Minister of Jal Shakti, Naidu requested that, in light of the report from the panel of experts appointed by the Government of India, the Union Minister direct the officers of the Government of India to coordinate with the State Government officers to finalise the right contractual arrangements for the early and safe completion of the diaphragm wall and other project components.

Additionally, the officers of the Central Water Commission (CWC) were requested to expedite approval of methodologies for the construction of the diaphragm wall, ECRF Dam, and associated works.

# New diaphragm wall for Polavaram...

Continued from Page 1

Nimmala criticized the decision to replace the agency under the guise of "reverse tendering," stating that it effectively disregarded the Polavaram project. He recalled that the previous TDP government, between 2014 and 2019, spent Rs 11,720 crore on the project without waiting for central assistance, though the Centre later reimbursed only Rs 6,764 crore. The TDP government valued every moment and thus chose to spend funds from the exchequer to ensure the project's progress.

"However, the Centre released Rs 8,382 crore for your government, yet you have spent only Rs 4,167 crore. What happened to the remaining funds intended for the Polavaram project? The YSRCP leaders should answer this," Nimmala demanded. He further criticised the YSRCP leaders, accusing them of diverting funds meant for Polavaram and engaging in a misinformation campaign. Nimmala claimed that the people had delivered a verdict on this by granting the YSRCP just 11 seats in the recent elections, despite the party coming to power in 2019 on false promises.

"We are committed to completing the project on time, and we are also working to rectify the mistakes made by the YSRCP," the Minister remarked. Nimmala also accused the YSRCP of setting fire to files in government offices to cover up their misdeeds, citing the incident at the RDO office in Punganur as an example. He assured that action would be taken against those responsible for revising the Polavaram project's estimates.

"We are formulating an action plan to ensure that the project work continues without any seasonal interruptions," Nimmala observed. He condemned the previous YSRCP government for undermining the Polavaram project and accused the same leaders of now diverting public attention from their five years of ineffective rule through malicious campaigns against the TDP-led NDA's efficient governance. Nimmala Ramanaidu told reporters in New Delhi.

# Jolt to K'taka Cong govt...

Continued from Page 1

"The INDIA bloc has also expressed its solidarity with the CM. These are false allegations and we will fight it legally and politically," he said. Siddaramaiah too ruled out his resignation and said he has done no wrong to step down. Stating that such a decision by the Governor, who is "functioning like a puppet in the hands of the central government," was expected, the Chief Minister said, adding, it will be questioned in the court, and that he will battle it out legally.

Later speaking to reporters after the special Cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister said that the Cabinet has condemned the Governor's decision to sanction prosecution against him as "illegal and anti-Constitution."

"The Governor has functioned as the representative of the central government and the Cabinet condemned it," he said.

"Tell me why I should resign. According to me the Governor has to resign, because he acted like a puppet in the hands of the Government of India... Tell me, what is the offence that I have committed?" he ques-

tioned. Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge said "BJP-appointed" Governors are creating trouble for non-BJP-ruled States. He, however, maintained that he had to see why Gehlot granted permission to prosecute Siddaramaiah.

Congress workers and supporters of Siddaramaiah staged protests in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Mandya and several other parts of the state against the Governor's move.

In Bengaluru, a massive protest was organised by Congress workers and members of 'Karnataka Pradesh Kurubara Sangha' demanding removal of the Governor. Raising anti-Gehlot slogans, they burnt his effigies and carried placards saying "Remove Governor, Save State".

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	Chaturdash: Aug 18 05:51 AM to Aug 19 03:05 AM
Purnima:	Aug 19 03:05 AM to Aug 19 11:55 PM
Nakshatram:	
Uttara Ashadha:	Aug 17 11:48 AM to Aug 18 10:14 AM
Shravana:	Aug 18 10:14 AM to Aug 19 08:10 AM
Rahukalam:	5:02 PM to 6:36 PM
Yamagandam:	12:19 PM to 1:53 PM
Variyam:	01:54 PM to 03:21 PM
Gulika:	3:28 PM to 5:02 PM
Amritakalam:	10:40 PM to 12:08 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:54 AM to 12:45 PM

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy  
Temp: 36°C  
Humidity: 71%  
Sunrise: 5:52 AM  
Sunset: 6:30 PM  
Updated: August 17, 2024 5:00 PM



### Three-day 'Pavitrotsavams' at Durga Temple from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop the Indrakeeladri in the city will host the 'Pavitrotsavams' from August 18 to 20. In a statement released on Saturday, Kanaka Durga Temple Executive Officer K.S. Rama Rao announced that the event is being organized for the well-being of the people and the promotion of Hindu Dharma. The temple priests will perform Snapanabhishekam following Suprabhatam on Sunday. Devotees will be allowed to have darshan of Goddess Durga Devi starting at 9 a.m. However, due to the Pavitrotsavams, all direct and indirect Arjitha Sevaks will be suspended for these three days. Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh High Court Judge, Justice M. Kiranmayi, visited the Durga temple with her family, offering special pujas to the Goddess. Executive Officer Rama Rao extended a warm welcome to her and facilitated the darshan.

## Steps for 'Nava Harathulu' inspected

COLLECTOR INSTRUCTS OFFICIALS TO COMPLETE WORKS BY DASARA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has instructed the officials concerned to expedite the preparations at Pavitra Sangamam, located at the confluence of the Krishna and Godavari rivers. She stated that these preparations must be completed before the upcoming Dasara Sarannavaratri festivities. She also emphasised that the State government plans to develop Pavitra Sangamam into a significant spiritual and tourism destination.

On Saturday, Collector Srijana, along with other officials, visited Pavitra Sangamam at the ferry in Ibrahimpatnam mandal to inspect the ongoing arrangements for reinstating the Navaharathulu at the site. She provided the necessary instructions to ensure the timely completion of the preparations. Following the inspection,



**Collector Srijana also stressed the need to quickly develop the 1.7 km road from Ibrahimpatnam to Pavitra Sangamam and suggested that future requirements, including strengthening canal bunds on both sides, be considered**

Dr Srijana held a review meeting at the Collectorate in Vijayawada with officials from various departments, including Endowments, R&B, Revenue, Irrigation, Tourism, Police, CRDA, APTRANSCO, and others. During these meet-

ings, Dr Srijana highlighted the state government's intention to reinstate the Nava Harathulu before the start of the Dasara festivities and urged all departments to collaborate to meet the deadlines. She noted Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's keen interest in developing Pavitra Sangamam into a spiritual and tourism centre. Dr Srijana also stressed the need to quickly develop the 1.7

km road from Ibrahimpatnam to Pavitra Sangamam and suggested that future requirements, including strengthening canal bunds on both sides, be considered. She emphasised the importance of prioritising sanitation and the safety of devotees. She further informed the officials that a large number of devotees are expected to visit Pavitra Sangamam, not only from the district but also from neighbouring areas, including

Telangana. To accommodate this influx, the site should be adorned with electrical lighting, she said. Additionally, a sound system should be arranged for devotional songs during the Nava Harathulu period. She also directed the police department to ensure the necessary security arrangements.

Dr Srijana reiterated that the district administration should make all required arrangements at Pavitra Sangamam, and she emphasised the importance of setting up temporary health camps by the health department. She advised officials to submit appropriate proposals if any additional requirements are needed to further develop Pavitra Sangamam.

Joint Collector Nidhi Meena, DRO V. Srinivasa Rao, Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam Executive Officer K. Rama Rao, Irrigation EE P.V.R. Krishna Rao, R&B SE K.V. Vijaya Sri, Kondapalli Municipal Commissioner B. Ramya Keerthana, CRDA CE P. Siva Prasad Raju, and others accompanied Dr Srijana during her visit.



Irrigation officials briefing Krishna District Collector DK Balaji about the desilting work in the Lazzabanda drain at Konkepudi near Pedana on Saturday.

### Speed up desilting work in drain: DC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji has instructed officials of the Water Resources Department to expedite the completion of silt removal in the Lazzabanda drain in the district. This measure is essential to ensure the free flow of floodwater and prevent any potential blockages, he opined. On Saturday, Collector Balaji inspected the ongoing desilting work in the Lazzabanda drain at Konkepudi in Pedana Mandal. He inquired with the irrigation officials about the progress of the work and emphasised the need to complete the silt removal as quickly as possible. During his visit to the drain at the 15th km mark of the

Lazzabanda drain, Collector Balaji personally observed the desilting work and asked the work agency for details about the drain's design and specifications. He also inspected the drain at the 7th km mark in Nandamuru. Collector Balaji highlighted that the desilting project for the Lazzabanda drain is being carried out with an estimated budget of Rs 7 crore. He stressed the importance of maintaining quality in the work and warned that any violations or lapses would result in action against the responsible officials. Drainage Division Gudivada EE Vijaya Lakshmi, DEE Murali, and other officials accompanied Collector Balaji during the inspection.

## Justice JK Maheshwari lauds Araku Valley's cultural heritage

PNS ■ PADERU

Supreme Court Justice JK Maheshwari, during his visit to the picturesque Araku Valley on Saturday, expressed deep admiration for the region's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.

Accompanied by his spouse, Justice Maheshwari arrived at Araku by train, where they were graciously received by Joint Collector Dr MJ Abhishek and ITDA Project Officer V Abhishek.

Upon arrival, the couple visited the Railway Guest House before heading to the Tribal Museum. Immersed in the local culture, Justice Maheshwari remarked, "The traditions of the tribal communities here are truly mesmerizing. The preservation of such cultural heritage is vital for future generations."

Their visit continued to the



Giri grama darshini of Pedalabudu Gram Panchayat, where both Justice Maheshwari and his spouse embraced the local customs by donning traditional tribal attire and participating in a ceremonial tribal wedding. The Justice praised the organizers for crafting such an authentic and meaningful experience, stating, "This has been an enlightening experience, allowing us to connect deeply with the traditions and values of the tribal com-

munities." Later in the day, the couple visited the renowned Borra Caves. They were awestruck by the natural splendour of the caves, with Justice Maheshwari noting, "The natural formation of these caves is truly a wonder. It's incredible to witness such a masterpiece of nature." Justice Maheshwari's visit highlights the importance of preserving the unique cultural and natural heritage of the Araku Valley, as he emphasized.



### GVMC lifeguards avert tragedy at Rishikonda Beach

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A potential disaster was averted on Saturday at Rishikonda Beach, thanks to the quick actions of GVMC lifeguards. Three teenage boys were rescued from a dangerous rip current, demonstrating the crucial role of vigilant beach safety measures. According to Dr Y. Srinivasa Rao, Additional Commissioner of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC), the incident unfolded when a group of 20 tourists from Hyderabad visited the beach for a day of relaxation.

## Collector directs officials to evolve 100-day 'Vision document' for Parvathipuram dist

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

District Collector A Shyam Prasad has directed officials to formulate a comprehensive hundred-day development plan to accelerate progress in Parvathipuram district. The initiative is aligned with the state's Vision 2047 and aims to drive transformative changes at the grassroots level. During a review meeting with primary sector departments on Friday, the Collector emphasised the need for a meticulously planned and actionable roadmap to enhance the overall quality of life within the district. He underscored the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and the district's imperative to adapt and leverage its capabilities.

"The government's Vision 2047 is a blueprint for uplifting the lives of our citizens, partic-



**Highlighting the document's scope, he remarked, "This vision document must encapsulate health, welfare, economic development, social progress, environmental sustainability, and overall sustainable development."**

ularly the marginalised," said Collector Shyam Prasad. "Artificial intelligence offers unprecedented opportunities to revolutionize various sectors. We must proactively integrate it into our development strategy."

Highlighting the document's scope, he remarked, "This vision document must encapsulate health, welfare, economic development, social progress, environmental sustainability, and overall sus-

tainable development. It's crucial for raising the standard of living in our district." He also set ambitious targets for the district's development over the next five years, with an aim for at least 15 per cent annual growth. "Our plans must have clear financial and physical goals. They should be realistic and based on factual data to ensure successful implementation," the Collector explained. Specific directives were

given to the Agriculture Department to prepare village-level plans, with a clear understanding of primary, manufacturing, and service sectors. "We need a robust plan that boosts our district's per capita income and gross income," he said, setting a deadline for the draft report by the 26th of this month.

District Planning Officer P. Veera Raju echoed the Collector's sentiments, emphasizing the importance of value-oriented designs in the plans. "Every aspect of the plan should be crafted with value in mind, and we must identify the district's strengths and capabilities," he said. He also underscored the importance of adhering to the government-prescribed timeline. The meeting was attended by key district officials including the District Revenue Officer.



### Minister promises help to kin of teachers who lost lives while crossing stream

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

Minister for Tribal Welfare and Women and Child Welfare Gummidi Sandhya Rani, has announced that the government will provide full support to the families of the teachers who lost their lives while attempting to cross the Raimanu stream in Pachipenta mandal. The incident claimed the life of Aarti, a teacher from Haryana who was serving as a warden at Eklavya Model Residential School, Kotikapenta.

Minister Sandhya Rani expressed deep sorrow over the incident, noting the unfortunate circumstances that led to the tragedy. "Despite the warnings from locals not to cross the stream, the teachers were unable to understand the danger due to language barriers. This is a heartbreaking loss, and we stand with the families during this difficult time," she said. In the immediate aftermath of the incident, local authorities were swift in their response. "As soon as we were alerted, the local tesildar and police reached the

site and commenced search operations," the Minister added.

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has personally reached out to the families of the victims, ensuring them of the government's support. "The Chief Minister has instructed that one member from each family will be provided with employment as a means of support during this time of grief," Minister Sandhya Rani stated. She also confirmed that arrangements are being made to transport the bodies of the deceased teachers back to their home state. "In line with the Chief Minister's orders, we are ensuring that the bodies are returned with the utmost dignity. District Collector A. Shyam Prasad has taken all necessary steps to facilitate this process," she assured. The Minister reiterated the government's commitment to standing by the families and ensuring they receive the necessary support. "Our hearts go out to the bereaved families, and we will do everything in our power to help them through this tragedy," she affirmed.

### Concerns rise over sale of controlled medications to minors



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Kesali Apparao, Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Child Rights Commission, has expressed grave concerns about the alarming trend of selling cough medicines and controlled medications to minors without proper supervision or prescriptions. Speaking at an awareness program on the Prevention of

drug and substance abuse for district drug store owners, Apparao highlighted the issue of medications like Corex, Alprazolam (0.25, 0.5 mg), and Benzodiazepines being sold to children. "It is deeply concerning that these drugs are being sold to children without proper controls. Our commission is committed to addressing this issue through rigorous enforcement," Apparao stated

during the event organized by the Andhra Pradesh State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (APSCPCR) and the Visakha District Drug Administration.

The session, chaired by District Drug Administration Assistant Director S. Vijaya Kumar, brought to light numerous complaints about the illegal sale of narcotic injections.

## Doctors take out rally in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a powerful display of unity and resolve, the Andhra Pradesh Public Health and Clinical Doctors Association (APPHCDA) Visakhapatnam chapter and District Health Department organised a peaceful rally and candlelight vigil to demand justice for the rape and murder of a second-year postgraduate trainee at RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata. The event, held near the Mahatma Gandhi Statue in Visakhapatnam, saw the participation of hundreds of doctors, healthcare workers, and concerned citizens, all rallying behind



the cause of safety and justice for the medical fraternity.

The spokesperson of the APPHCD Visakhapatnam articulated the gravity of the situation, declaring, "The attack on our fellow doctors in

Kolkata is not just an assault on individuals but on the entire medical fraternity. We stand together today to send a clear message that violence against healthcare workers will not be tolerated.

## DESPITE 2 DECADES OF OPERATIONS..

# Rushikonda IT Park faces infra challenges

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Two decades after its establishment, Rushikonda IT Park continues to grapple with incomplete infrastructure, severely hampering the daily operations of the 20 companies situated across Hill-1, Hill-2, and Hill-3. These companies employ approximately ten thousand people, with six thousand working from home and four thousand commuting daily from various parts of the city. "We need at least three or four trips per day," emphasized another company representative. "If that's not possible, a route from the car shed junction to the IT park would greatly help."

In a recent meeting with IT Principal Secretary Saurabh Gaur and Collector Harendhira Prasad, officials decided to operate buses from the city, but not from the car shed junction as requested by the companies. "We need at least three or four trips per day," emphasized another company representative. "If that's not possible, a route from the car shed junction to the IT park would greatly help."

Compounding the transportation woes are frequent power outages, causing significant disruptions to business operations. "These power cuts



are a serious problem," an official from one of the companies explained. "Data backups are failing, and the auto switches connected to generators are getting damaged. These parts aren't available locally, and repairs take about a week."

EPDCL CMD Prithvi Tej acknowledged the issue, stating, "Due to the lack of a near-

by substitution, we sometimes have to stop the power supply briefly to address issues. However, we're working on restoring power quickly and minimizing disruptions." He added that there are plans to establish a sub-station near the IT park to mitigate these challenges.

The lack of dining options

within the IT park is another major concern. "With four thousand people commuting here daily, the area is severely lacking in food options," said an employee. "There's just one hotel near the Hill-2 and Hill-3 junctions, and it's expensive. After 6 PM, there's nothing to eat unless you travel four kilometres to the car shed junction or Sai Priya Resort Junction."

Security is also an issue, with non-functional CCTV cameras and inadequate street lighting on the main road. "Cameras are either not working or absent in many areas, and the street lights on the main road don't work at night," noted a company spokesperson. In response, officials suggested addressing these concerns through the Infrastructure Leasing and Advisory (ILA) group, which manages funds contributed by

companies instead of taxes paid to the Corporation. The Collector emphasized the need to resolve these issues before the IT Minister visited Visakhapatnam and proposed exploring the option of running a minibus from the car shed junction through AILA for employees.

RTC Deputy Chief Traffic Manager Satyanarayana informed The Pioneer, "We will be introducing two buses from the city to the IT Park via Beach Road. Running buses from the car shed alone wouldn't ensure proper occupancy." He added that as Rushikonda IT Park faces ongoing infrastructure challenges, "the need for timely and effective solutions is becoming increasingly critical to support the companies and employees in this vital tech hub."

23<sup>RD</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SWARNA BHARAT TRUST

Embrace economic nationalism: Vice Prez

URGES INDUSTRY TO PRIORITISE LOCAL PRODUCTION OVER IMPORTS

PNS ■ NELLORE

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar here on Saturday called upon the nation to embrace economic nationalism, urging the industry, trade, and commerce sectors to prioritise local production over avoidable imports.

Emphasising the concept of economic nationalism as a facet of Swadeshi and a reflection of being vocal for locals, Dhankhar highlighted the negative impact of unnecessary imports on the economy, including the drain of foreign exchange and the loss of job opportunities for Indian workers.

"Our reliance on imported items like carpets, garments, and toys is not only sending our foreign exchange abroad but also impeding the growth of domestic entrepreneurship," Dhankhar stated. He appealed to the industry to resolve this issue by supporting local production, which would, in turn, provide work for Indian work-

ers and foster entrepreneurship. Addressing a programme organised on the occasion of the 23rd Anniversary of Swarna Bharat Trust at Venkatachalam, near here, Dhankhar underscored the critical need for optimal consumption of natural resources, urging citizens to use resources based on necessity rather than financial power. He emphasized that the overuse of natural resources driven by economic strength poses a significant threat to future generations.

Cautioning against reckless expenditure, the VP remarked that such actions will jeopardise the well-being of future generations. "If we spend unnecessarily based on the power of money, we are putting the future generation in danger," he added.

Expressing concern over the export of raw materials, such as iron ore, without value addition, the VP stated that this practice not only diminishes employment potential but also weakens the nation's econom-

ic framework. "It is painful to see our iron ore leaving the ports without added value. As a nation, we cannot afford to prioritise easy and quick money over long-term national interests," Dhankhar asserted. The VP called for a collective effort to prioritize the

nation's well-being over political, self, and economic interests, expressing confidence that this shift in mindset will be achieved.

Expressing his deep admiration and respect for the former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Dhankhar highlighted Naidu's lifelong dedication to the welfare of the nation, emphasizing his unwavering commitment to the ideals that have shaped his public life.

Former Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Governor S Abdul Nazeer and Sameera Nazeer, Usha Naidu, Ministers Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, and P Narayana were among those who attended the 23rd Anniversary celebrations of Swarna Bharat Trust.



"Our reliance on imported items like carpets, garments, and toys is not only sending our foreign exchange abroad but also impeding the growth of domestic entrepreneurship."



DELAY IN POLAVARAM WORKS

Ambati dares CM for debate

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Former minister Ambati Rambabu has dared Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for a debate on the delay in Polavaram project works.

Speaking to the media at the party central office in Tadepalli on Saturday, the Former Minister emphasized that the delays and increased costs were caused by mistakes made during Naidu's tenure and called for the swift completion of the project to benefit the people.

Ambati Rambabu flayed Naidu, stating that although the project was to be completed by the Central government, Naidu took over and handled it poorly. He stated that Naidu's tenure saw strategic mistakes and hurried actions, which led to the collapse of the diaphragm wall and that was the primary reason for the delay in the project, and that his government had consistently tried to clarify it.

The ex-Minister lambasted that Chandrababu and his followers blamed the then Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for the collapse of the diaphragm wall, but he denied this, stating it was actually due to Naidu's lack of understand-

ing and strategic mistakes, which caused delays and higher costs.

"Discussions had been held about whether to repair or rebuild the diaphragm wall. During the YSRCP regime, a conclusion was reached with the help of international experts, and it was determined that the diaphragm wall had been damaged over a length of 485 meters. This assessment had been made and the final report was submitted to the Central Water Commission on August 12 th," Ambati Rambabu revealed.

The former minister shared that the report was clear and outlined the events that occurred during different periods. He reiterated that the diaphragm wall should have been constructed only after diverting the river, a point now confirmed by the expert committee. He stated that Naidu made a strategic mistake by starting the spillway and diaphragm wall construction simultaneously in 2016. According to the expert committee, this should not have been done, he noted.

Ambati further mentioned that the expert committee had confirmed that the foundation.

Canara Bank regional office inaugurated

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Canara Bank CEO K Satyanarayana Raju inaugurated the Regional Office, MSME Sulabh, Retail Assets Hub and JP Road Branch in Chinamiram, Bhimavaram Saturday.

Talking to the media on the occasion, the CEO highlighted the Bank's growth post-amalgamation, with business increasing from Rs 16 lakh crore to the current Rs 23 lakh crore.

He noted the maximization of profits and the Bank's market capitalization crossing Rs 1 lakh crore. The Bank declared a dividend of Rs. 3.22 per share



following a stock split that reduced the face value from Rs. 10 to Rs. 2. The Bank also achieved double-digit deposit growth in the last financial year. The MD & CEO

Satyanarayana Raju had an interaction with the customers and informed them about various products and developments in the bank which are beneficial for all the customers.

One killed as private travels bus collides with lorry

PNS ■ NANDYAL

One person was killed when a private travel bus collided with a lorry at Dhone on the National Highway 44 in the early hours of Saturday.

Police said that a private travel bus was going to Bangalore from Khammam. The bus mounted the road divider and jumped into the other lane. At the same time a lorry was going in the opposite direction. The private travel bus collided with the lorry killing the bus driver instantly.

The impact of the collision was so intense that the front portions of the two vehicles turned to be iron mangle. The



police extricated the lorry driver from the cabin with great difficulty and shifted him to the GGH.

However, the officials heaved a sigh of relief as no passengers in the private trav-

el bus were injured in the mishap. The private travel bus driver was drowsy at the steering wheel resulting in the bus veering off the road and plunged into the other lane, the police said.

Interstate burglar arrested, Rs 40 L booty recovered

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police arrested an interstate notorious burglar and recovered Rs 40 lakh worth of booty including gold jewellery. Speaking to the media here on Saturday, SP AR Damodar said that complainant Gummadi Nagarajuna Rao is a resident of Kammampalem here. He along with his family members went to attend a marriage on August 9. When he went home on the night of August 10, he found the doors were broken. He found gold jewellery weighing 50 sovereigns, Rs 1.80 lakh cash and a motorcycle stolen. He complained with the police.



The police arrested the burglar Palivela Prabhu Kumar who belonged to Vedireswaram village in Ravulapalem mandal in Konaseema district. He confessed to the burglary. He was also involved in four other such offences in Rajahmundry, Tadepalli near Vijayawada,

Tiruvuru, Hyderabad, Amalapuram and Eluru. A special police team arrested him at the MSR statue at Santapet near here on Friday and recovered the booty. The SP appreciated the police personnel who arrested him and recovered the booty.

Take firm steps to check illegal transport of sand: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has directed the officials to take firm steps to ensure that sand is not transported illegally in the district.

She also directed them not to allow vehicles with more than 20 tonnes capacity. The district sand committee meeting was held in the Collector's chamber here on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that strict measures should be taken to prevent even a single tonne of sand from being transported illegally in the district. She told the officials that since no more than 20 tonnes per person (Aadhaar card) is granted at the sand stock point, steps should be taken not to allow vehicles of more than 20 tonnes capacity at the sand stock



The Collector directed the officials not to allow vehicles with more than 20 tonnes capacity. The district sand committee meeting was held in the Collector's chamber on Saturday

points. The Collector said to the officials that stock points have been set up at Ibrahimpatnam, Vinjarum and Chebrolu in Unguturu mandal in Kukkunur mandal of the district. Sand loading should be done at the stock points only from 6 am to 6 pm, after that time police and revenue personnel should be present to prevent the illegal transport of sand. She ordered the officials

to ensure that the CC cameras record 24 hours a day to ensure stringent vigil.

The Collector ordered the officials to issue the permission letter of the RDO along with the receipt provided by the concerned VRO at the stock point. To control illegal transport of sand, a staff member of the Mines Department should inspect the stock points every day, check the sand distribu-

tion and stocks, check the sand stock in the records, whether the sand stock in the stock point is the same or not, and submit a weekly report to the committee.

The Task Force Committee should conduct surprise inspections from time to time, she instructed and directed the Transport Department officials to immediately finalize the transport charges from the sand stock point to the consumer's home.

The authorities should take action without any hindrance to the government's desire to provide free sand to the common man. The officials have been directed to seize the vehicles smuggling sand and register a case. Mines department DD B Ravi Kumar, Deputy Transport Commissioner S Santhakumari and other officials were present.

Drones to be used in 'anti-larval' operations

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Kakinada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Bhavana Vasista said here on Saturday that anti-larval spraying operations were taken up using drones in water-stagnated areas in the city as a part of the mosquito eradication programme.

During her field survey in the morning in Ninth Circle on Saturday, she said spraying operations were in full swing in low-lying areas like Revenue Colony and Sanjaynagar. She said the city was facing the problem of a low-lying area to the extent of 150 acres which became the breeding ground for the mosquitoes.

Tree plantation drive targets 13 cr seedlings for 2024-25

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Under the "Ek Pedh Maa Ke Naam" tree plantation campaign, the Government of India has set a target for Andhra Pradesh to plant 13 crore seedlings for the year 2024-25, with 7.8 crore saplings to be planted by September.

During the Governors' Conference held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on August 2-3, 2024, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi urged the planting of saplings in available areas within university and educational institution campuses. He emphasised ensuring their survival through adequate watering, manuring, and monitoring their growth via geotagging.

In response to the Prime Minister's call, Andhra Pradesh Governor S. Abdul Nazeer, along with First Lady Sameera Nazeer, Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana, Nellore Rural MLA K. Sridhar Reddy, District Collector O. Anand, SP Krishna Kant, and other dignitaries, participated in a tree plantation programme at the R&B Guest House during his visit to Nellore on Saturday.

Governor Nazeer encouraged officials to expand the plantation initiative with the active involvement of students, NGOs, Scouts and Guides, Red Cross youth volunteers, and other community members to ensure its success.



Use social media to highlight Cong, counter BRS propaganda: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy underlined the need to strategically use social media to highlight the Congress government's achievements in Telangana and expose the failures of the BRS and the BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre.

Addressing the Congress party social media activists of Huzurnagar and Kodad Assembly constituencies on Saturday, Uttam explained the key role social media plays in today's politics.

He underlined that social media could be an effective platform for disseminating the Congress government's landmark achievements before the public, particularly the imple-

mentation of the Six Guarantees.

He appealed to social media activists to engage with the beneficiaries of such schemes, record their testimonials, and share those stories in their social media accounts. This way, the Congress could ensure that its governance has a real impact on people's lives.

He exhorted the activists to pool the views of commoners and impress upon them how the Congress government is more effective and responsive to the people's needs than the BRS. He argued that only such a grassroots outreach would help build a powerful narrative that will strike a chord with voters.

Uttam emphasised that every Congress worker should look out for false propaganda

by the BRS. He underlined the need to refute misinformation with facts and figures so that the party's narrative remains strong and credible. Congress workers must monitor social media for any misleading information and respond promptly to correct the record to ensure that no wrong information spreads.

He emphasised the need for regular engagement with official party channels on social media and urged all Congress workers to check the official X and Facebook accounts of Rahul Gandhi, the Congress, and other top leaders at least three times a day. By liking and sharing all the posts from these accounts, party workers can ensure that the Congress' message reaches a larger audience.

Heavy rain likely in north coastal AP, Rayalaseema

PNS ■ GUNTUR

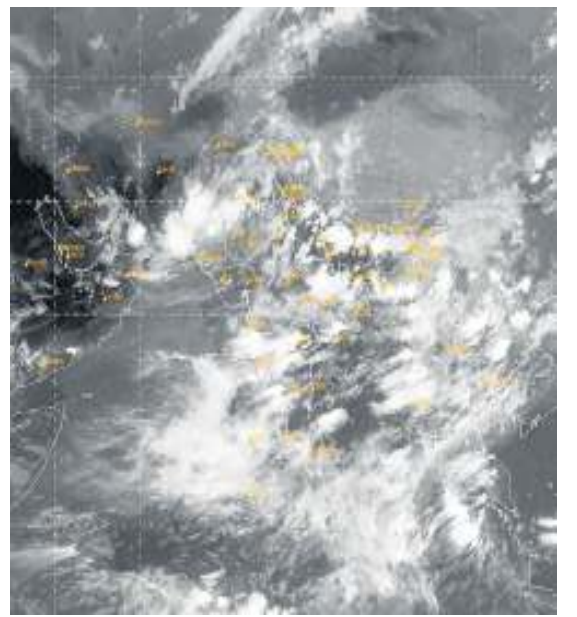
Heavy rain is expected at isolated locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 48 hours. The southwest monsoon has been weak over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and normal over Rayalaseema. According to

the daily weather report, thunderstorms with lightning and strong surface winds, ranging from 30-40 km/h, are likely in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh for the next five days, and in Rayalaseema for the next 48 hours. Additionally, strong surface winds of 30-40 km/h are expected at isolated

places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on August 17-18.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are anticipated at a few places or isolated locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days. Rain has occurred at some places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema in the past 24 hours, the report noted.

The cyclonic circulation that was over South Interior Karnataka on Friday has now shifted to North Interior Karnataka and adjoining Telangana, extending up to 5.8 km above mean sea level and tilting southwestward. The trough from North Interior Karnataka to the Comorin area has shifted to run from the cyclonic circulation over North Interior Karnataka and adjoining Telangana to the Comorin area, passing through Kerala and interior Tamil Nadu, extending up to 1.5 km above mean sea level.



ACROSS THE STATES



J&K Apni party leader meets Shah; likely to join BJP

Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party vice president Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali met Union Home Minister Amit Shah here amidst speculation that he might join the BJP ahead of next month's assembly elections in the Union Territory. Ali, who is an advocate, won from the Darhal assembly constituency of Rajouri district in the 2008 and 2014 assembly elections on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) ticket. He served as a cabinet minister in the Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP-BJP coalition government from 2015 to 2018. The coalition government collapsed in June 2018 after the national party pulled out of the government. Many PDP leaders led by former minister Altaf Bukhari subsequently founded Apni party in 2020 and Ali was one of its founding members. A BJP leader said Ali met the home minister in Delhi and discussed with him several issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir including the assembly elections.



Let's work unitedly to confront pressing challenges: Modi

Prime Minister urges Global South

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called on the countries of the Global South to work unitedly in dealing with food and energy security crises and challenges of terrorism as he flagged concerns over consequences of "uncertainties" around the world. In his opening address at the third edition of the Voice of Global South Summit hosted by India virtually, Modi said India will make an initial contribution of USD 25 million to the 'Social Impact Fund' that aims to develop digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the Global South.

The prime minister reaffirmed India's commitment to sharing its capabilities with the Global South or the develop-

ing countries to promote mutual trade, and inclusive development, and to achieve sustainable development goals.

Modi said there has been an "atmosphere of uncertainty" around the world and it has

"We are already facing the challenges of climate change, and now there are also concerns about health security, food security, and energy security," he said. "Terrorism, extremism and

also emerging," the prime minister said. He said the global governance and financial institutions formed in the last century have been unable to fight the challenges of this century. "It is the need of the hour that the countries of the Global South unite, stand together in one voice and become each other's strength. Let us learn from each other's experiences." "Let us share our capabilities. Let us together take our resolutions to fruition. Let us together get recognition for two-thirds of humanity," Modi said.

In the last few years, India has been positioning itself as a leading voice, flagging concerns, challenges and aspirations of the Global South or the developing nations, especially the African continent.

**The prime minister reaffirmed India's commitment to sharing its capabilities with the Global South or the developing countries to promote mutual trade, and inclusive development, and to achieve sustainable development goals**

not yet fully come out of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, adding new challenges to development are being faced due to wars.

separatism remain serious threats to our societies. Technology divide and new economic and social challenges related to technology are



Modi govt's biggest push to lateral entry

UPSC advertises 45 posts across ministries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Forty-five specialists will soon be joining key posts of joint secretaries, directors and deputy secretaries in different central ministries as part of the Modi government's ambitious plan to infuse fresh talent to further improve ease of governance. Usually, such posts are manned by the officers of all-India services -- the Indian Administrative Service (IAS),

Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFoS) -- and Group A services, among others.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Saturday advertised 45 posts -- 10 of joint secretaries and 35 of directors/deputy secretaries -- to be filled through the lateral entry mode on contract basis. It is the biggest tranche of lateral recruitment being undertaken by the Centre, an official said.



Women SHGs to send 1cr rakhis to Maha CM Shinde

Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) will send one crore rakhis to Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to "express gratitude" for implementing various welfare schemes, a statement from Shinde's office said on Saturday. The rakhis will be delivered to the chief minister on August 19, the day of Raksha Bandhan festival, it said. The Shinde-led government announced the 'Majhi Ladki Bahin' scheme in this year's budget, ahead of assembly elections, and money under the scheme was recently deposited in the bank accounts of lakhs of women. More than 2.5 crore women in the state would be getting Rs 1,500 every month in their bank accounts under the scheme, the CMO statement informed. Besides, three gas cylinders are provided to women free of cost under the Muktiyamantri Annapurna Yojana, it said, listing other schemes for women.



Mall in Navi Mumbai receives bomb threat via e-mail

A prominent mall in Vashi area of Navi Mumbai was vacated on Saturday after receiving a bomb threat, which turned out to be a hoax as no suspicious object was found during the search, police said. The InOrbit mall received an e-mail stating, "Hello there, I planted bombs in the building every person inside the building will be kill (sic)", at around 11:59 AM, a Vashi police station official said. The mall was immediately evacuated and the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad, ATS officials, Fire Brigade personnel, and police conducted a search with a dog squad, the official said, adding that a bomb or suspicious item was not found. "The search was called off at around 2:50 PM, following which the mall was reopened for people at around 3 PM," he said. Police are investigating the source of the e-mail and trying to identify its sender.

DOCTOR'S RAPE, MURDER

Not just medical fraternity, all concerned, says Rijiju

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said everyone was concerned about the rape and murder of the doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata and not just the healthcare fraternity. Rijiju was speaking to reporters at the Bhubaneswar airport after arriving here to attend the orientation programme of the newly-elected MLAs.

"There is concern over safety and security all along after the Kolkata incident. It is not a matter of medical staff alone



and it is a matter of security for all. Everybody is concerned about the West Bengal incident. There is also anger over the incident. The Health Ministry has taken whatever steps required," he said. The postgraduate trainee

doctor was allegedly raped and murdered while on duty at the RG Kar MCH last week. When a demonstration was underway against the gruesome incident in the early hours of August 15, a mob ransacked parts of the hospital

Cong's Venugopal to head PAC, 4 newly formed panels go to BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader K C Venugopal will head the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which keeps a close eye on government expenditure, according to the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla also constituted four other parliamentary panels, including Estimates and Public Undertakings committees which will be chaired by BJP leaders.

Public Accounts, Public Undertakings and Estimates committees are the key financial committees of Parliament tasked with keeping a watch on the government's accounts and



the functioning of public sector firms.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a bulletin on Friday announcing the constitution of parliamentary committees.

The Committee on Welfare of OBCs will be headed by

Ganesh Singh of the BJP. His party colleague Faggan Singh Kulaste will head the Committee on Welfare of SCs and STs.

BJP leader Sanjay Jaiswal will head the Committee on Estimates while his party colleague Baijyantra Panda will chair the Committee on Public Undertakings.

The committees have a tenure of one year and have members from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. They are elected by the two Houses.

The PAC is usually headed by a senior Lok Sabha member of the principal opposition party. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury headed the PAC for five years.

Health ministry reviews mpox situation, risk of large outbreak currently low for India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There are currently no reported cases of Monkeypox in India even though cautionary measures will be put in place to prevent and control the spread of the disease, the Union health ministry said on Saturday.

At a review meeting held during the day, although the possibility of a few imported cases being detected in the coming weeks was not entirely ruled out, it was assessed that the risk of a large outbreak with sustained transmission is low for India at present.

Since WHO first declared



the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern in 2022, a total of 30 cases were detected in India with the last case being reported this March, the health ministry said in a statement.

There are no reported cases of Monkeypox in India as of now, it said.

The situation is being monitored closely by the ministry, the statement said.

In view of the World Health

Organization (WHO) again declaring Monkeypox a public health emergency of international concern on August 14, a detailed review of the situation and the preparedness was taken by Union Health Minister J P Nadda at the meeting with the senior officials of his ministry.

It was decided that as a matter of abundant caution, certain measures such as sensitizing the health units at all airports, seaports and ground crossings; readying the testing laboratories (32); gearing up health facilities for detecting, isolating and managing any case are put in place.

SEBI chairperson must resign, JPC probe into Adani 'scam' essential

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday cited a media report which flagged alleged conflicts of interest against SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch and said her continuance as the head of the capital markets regulator is "untenable".

The opposition party said Buch must resign and a full Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) investigation must be conducted into the Adani 'mega scam'.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh cited an article by The Morning Context which raises issues of Buch's alleged conflicts of interest.

The media report raises questions such as has Buch recused herself from all matters involving companies that private equity firm Blackstone has a stake in and how many Blackstone companies find a place on that recusal list.

Sharing the report on X, Ramesh said, "Yet another day and yet more revelations on the multiple conflicts of interest in the SEBI chairperson's activities."

"The SEBI chairperson's conflicts of interest have already made a mockery of the Supreme Court-mandated SEBI investigations into the violations of securities laws by the Adani Group," he said.

Congress suspends its two MLAs in Meghalaya

PNS ■ SHILLONG

The opposition Congress in Meghalaya suspended its MLAs Gabriel Wahlang and Charles Marngar following allegations that they were "hobnobbing" with the ruling National People's Party.

The Congress had four MLAs in the 60-member House. In a communicate, state Congress general secretary Wansuk Syiem said the MLAs were suspended for "anti-party activities".

"The party's decision came based on recent reports from the block committee and frontal organisation, which indicated your association with anti-party activities and asso-



ciating with the MDA government," Syiem said.

"Such actions are in direct conflict with the party's ideologies and principles, necessitating this disciplinary measure," said the communicate sent to both MLAs.

Following allegations against three MLAs, the Congress conducted an internal investigation, which revealed that two of them were "hobnobbing" with the ruling NPP over the last few months, a party leader said.

Genetic links between Alzheimer's, heart conditions found

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new study has uncovered genes that could be related to heart conditions and Alzheimer's disease, suggesting that the two could have similar origins.

Researchers said that evidence increasingly links people having the heart condition with a quicker cognitive decline and a 26 per cent increased risk of dementia, affecting one's memory and thinking, and interfering with daily activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.

Coronary artery disease is a condition in which blood flow to the heart is restricted due to narrowing of blood vessels.

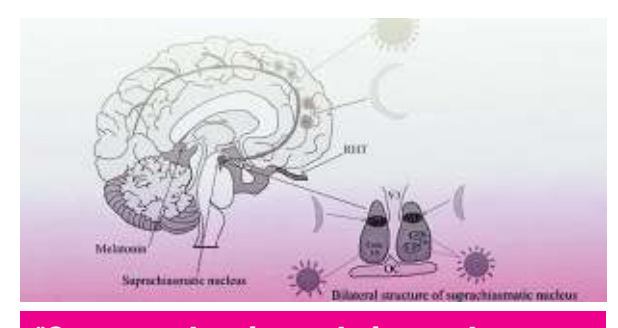
Even as abnormal levels of fat in blood and inflammation

could be possible shared risk factors between having coronary artery disease and developing Alzheimer's disease, the researchers at Edith Cowan University, Australia, said that the processes underlying the link remain unclear.

In this study, they employed genetic methods to examine the intricate relationship between heart disease and Alzheimer's disease.

The team chose to study seven heart disease-related factors, such as coronary artery disease and angina, and 13 lipids, including cholesterol -- both 'good' and 'bad'. Previous studies have long suggested lipids to play a role in the development of Alzheimer's disease, they said.

"Our comprehensive analysis reveals a significant and



**"Our comprehensive analysis reveals a significant and positive global genetic correlation between Alzheimer's disease and three lipid traits: LDL ('bad' cholesterol), triglycerides, and total cholesterol," the authors wrote in the study published in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences**

positive global genetic correlation between Alzheimer's

disease and three lipid traits: LDL ('bad' cholesterol), triglycerides, and total cholesterol," the authors wrote in the study published in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences.

This suggests that certain lipids, not all, may have a more direct genetic link with Alzheimer's disease, they said.

However, many of the lipids that the authors studied were genetically related with coronary artery disease.

"Specifically, we found significant genetic correlations between coronary artery disease traits and lipid profiles such as HDL, LDL, triglycerides, and total cholesterol, aligning with the existing literature that underscores the genetic interplay in cardiovascular risk factors," they wrote.

# NOE - WHERE GLOBAL FLAVOURS MEET RARE INGREDIENTS!

Nestled in the heart of Lutyens Delhi in the iconic Diplomat Hotel, the recently launched 'NOE' is set to redefine the dining culture in the city, bringing a vibrant social atmosphere and an innovative culinary experience

By SHARMILA CHAND

I wanted an elevated comfort food zone to take guests through a culinary journey blending global flavors with local influences to craft a unique experience," says Sandeep Bishnoi, the Founder who has been associated with creative brands such as Perch Wine & Coffee Bar and Hoots. Here innovative culinary experience is the key with Chef Dhruv Nijhawan, at the helm of affairs. An alumnus of Le Cordon Bleu, India, Chef Dhruv's passion for ingenious cooking techniques and for reviving rare, authentic ingredients, is well known. At NOE, he brings forth his passion as is evident in the distinctive menu that celebrates the art of 'elevating comfort food'. Evoking nostalgia and inspiring innovation, the kitchen at NOE re-invents handpicked traditional comfort dishes from world cuisines using lesser-known ingredient pairings and creative cooking techniques. From high-quality produce to regional and international cuisines, each dish encapsulates a rich tapestry of flavours and the ingredients' culinary heritage.

Speaking about the cooking methods, chef Dhruv tells me, "Every dish tells a story of a unique ingredient and a different cooking method. Reinventing modern classic dishes in a flavour forward method lies at the heart of our cooking. NOE incorporates culinary techniques from around the world using star ingredients to create an innovative dining experience." Hence, Potato & Chilli Orange sits nicely looking pretty in front of me. Swedish Hasselback potatoes in smoked brown butter with savoury cheena, bajji chili, orange zest, Korean chilli oil and pea shoot cress, is one perfect example of Dhruv's philosophy. And so is 'Tofu & Garum' - an umami flavoured silken tofu with vegan mushroom garum, soy, leek circles, porcini mushrooms & nori powder. For mutton lovers, what better than 'Kanda & Picante'? "Kaffir lime and coriander mutton kanda with broccoli picante puree finished with chermoula crumble," explains chef. He also recommends 'John Dory & Mazavaroo' - pan-seared John Dory with cauliflower crème, smoked Mazavaroo, tossed almond flakes served with cashew duqqa. The menu is extensive with a lot more stars like 'Lamb & Molé' - medium-rare cooked lamb chop with curry leaf, thyme, black molé sauce, togarashi tossed snap peas, sumac onions with seasonal cress. For crab lovers, 'Crab & Wasabi' is strongly recommended. Crab meat with avocado, wasabi, lime puree, water chestnuts, asparagus, compressed cucumbers and seasonal cress.

From large plate section, Pumpkin & Pomegranate turned out to be my favourite. Braised pumpkin with pomegranate sauce reduced with all spice and tahini, served with a sumac cress salad. 'Potato & Capers' is another one I lapped up. You will love layered potato slices with lemon zest cream, asparagus and olive. The relish of smoked onion added to the flavor



brilliantly accompanied by a side salad in orange dressing. 'Onigiri & Rasam' is a brilliant take on innovative experimentation. Jasmine rice onigiri with a light rasam sauce finished with celery dust, furikake peashoot, you would have never relished rasam in this medium. The dessert section looks pretty impressive, each dish comes with a lavish dose of drama to oomph things up. For me, Biscoff & Chai was the perfect way to wind up the meal. A vanilla cardamom sponge cake with Biscoff mousse and masala chai whipped cream cheese, with a spiced ginger sable & Biscoff gelato, simply bowled me over. Complementing culinary experience is the creative highball cocktail program served at NOE's bar. Managed by Hoots - recently awarded as one of Asia's Top 50 Bars, the highball bar concept emphasises refreshing, perfectly balanced cocktails created with premium spirits and house-made mixers, showcasing creativity and craftsmanship. Inspired by its prestigious address



flows effortlessly into a trendy bar and a plush rustic outdoor deck as well as an intimate courtyard," tells Amit Chhabra, of studio LDC, the team behind the design architects of NOE. With diverse settings, NOE offers layers of sensory experiences for all moods and occasions where guests can enjoy different spaces in a single visit or each separately over multiple ones. Whether it's a casual gathering over food and drinks, a rendezvous with a friend, a special celebration, solo culinary adventures, a romantic date, or even small events, NOE promises for a memorable time. Featuring an extensive breakfast spread, an all-day dining menu, delectable Sunday brunches, and a creative drinks menu along with rotating seasonal menus and pop-up surprises, NOE welcomes you to a world of elevated comfort food, exquisite cocktails, and unforgettable dining experiences. Overall, the vibe at NOE is elegant and chic. Sharmila Chand is an author and independent journalist who writes on Travel, Food and Lifestyle



# A NOSTALGIC CULINARY FARE AT INDIAN REPUBLIC CANTEEN

By SHARMILA CHAND

Ever heard of Waffle Imarti, Mac n Cheese Pakora, Waffle Bread Pakora, Samosa Cannelloni? If no, head to Indian Republic Canteen in the heart of capital's popular Connaught Place and you will get to taste innovative dishes with a flair for fun. Why the name Indian Republic, I asked the team. The concept is inspired by the diversity of the Indian Republic, aiming to create a welcoming and accessible environment to a familiar canteen setting, where all patrons can feel comfortable and engaged, is the answer. Alok Aggarwal Co-Founder- Indian Republic Canteen further explains, "Our establishment is founded on the concept of nostalgia, aiming to evoke cherished memories of simple, beloved foods such as noodles, samosas, and bread pakoras from one's college days. We are devoted to celebrating these dishes and encouraging patrons to savor

them without reservation. The interior design of our space is a contemporary fusion of modernity and nostalgia. It reflects both cutting-edge trends and traditional influences, presenting a vision of India that is globally stylish yet deeply rooted in Indian sensibilities."

## BREAKFAST SOIREEs

If not in a mood to rustle up breakfast at home, then just hop in here. They have introduced a new breakfast menu, serving a delightful array of morning treats that promise to start your day on a flavorful note. Imagine the perfect morning with a spread of traditional and contemporary breakfast dishes, curated to suit every palate. From 8 AM to 11 AM, you can indulge in a hearty and wholesome breakfast experience that blends the best of regional flavors with popular morning staples. The highlight of my breakfast was the comforting taste of Nagori Halwa, a classic dish that combines the rich flavors of semolina and sugar, bringing a touch of nostalgia to your breakfast. How could I miss the delicious Bedmi Sabzi, just perfect for my taste. For a flavour of traditional regional classic, Indori Poha, garnished with fresh



coriander, sev, and a squeeze of lemon, captures the essence of Indore's street food culture so beautifully. If you prefer something nutritious and savory, the Besan Chilla with Chutney

provides a protein-packed option, featuring a gram flour pancake served with a side of tangy chutney. The Bombay Sandwich offers a taste of Mumbai with layers of fresh vegetables and

tangy chutneys sandwiched between slices of soft bread. Health-conscious diners need not worry as they have option of Masala Oats, Banana Muesli Bowl, a refreshing mix of

muesli, fresh bananas, and yogurt, offering a perfect balance of taste and nutrition. For the ubiquitous South Indian flavors, the menu includes crispy and golden Dosa, served with traditional sambar and chutneys, transporting you to the streets of Southern India. Complement your meal with a selection of fresh juices, made from seasonal fruits, to add a refreshing touch to your breakfast. Or go for signature drinks like The IRC Shichanji, a longstanding favorite, alongside the Imli Fritz. Each drink is crafted to be unique and memorable, aligning with the overall concept of the place.

## TO CONCLUDE

Whether you are looking for a quick bite or a leisurely breakfast, Indian Republic Canteen's thoughtful and exciting menu is well curated to cater to all your hunger cravings.

## CHECK IT OUT

**Time:** 08:00am to 11:00am  
**Location:** H-26, Connaught Circle, Block H, Connaught Place, New Delhi



# FOREST RIGHTS ACT: A BEACON OF HOPE OR A VICTIM OF EXPLOITATION?



BKP SINHA



DR ARVIND K JHA

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 was heralded as a transformative piece of legislation designed to recognise and empower forest dwelling communities while promoting sustainable forest management. However, the implementation of FRA has faced significant hurdles, including mismanagement, exploitation, and inadequate scrutiny write **BKP SINHA** and **ARVIND KUMAR JHA**

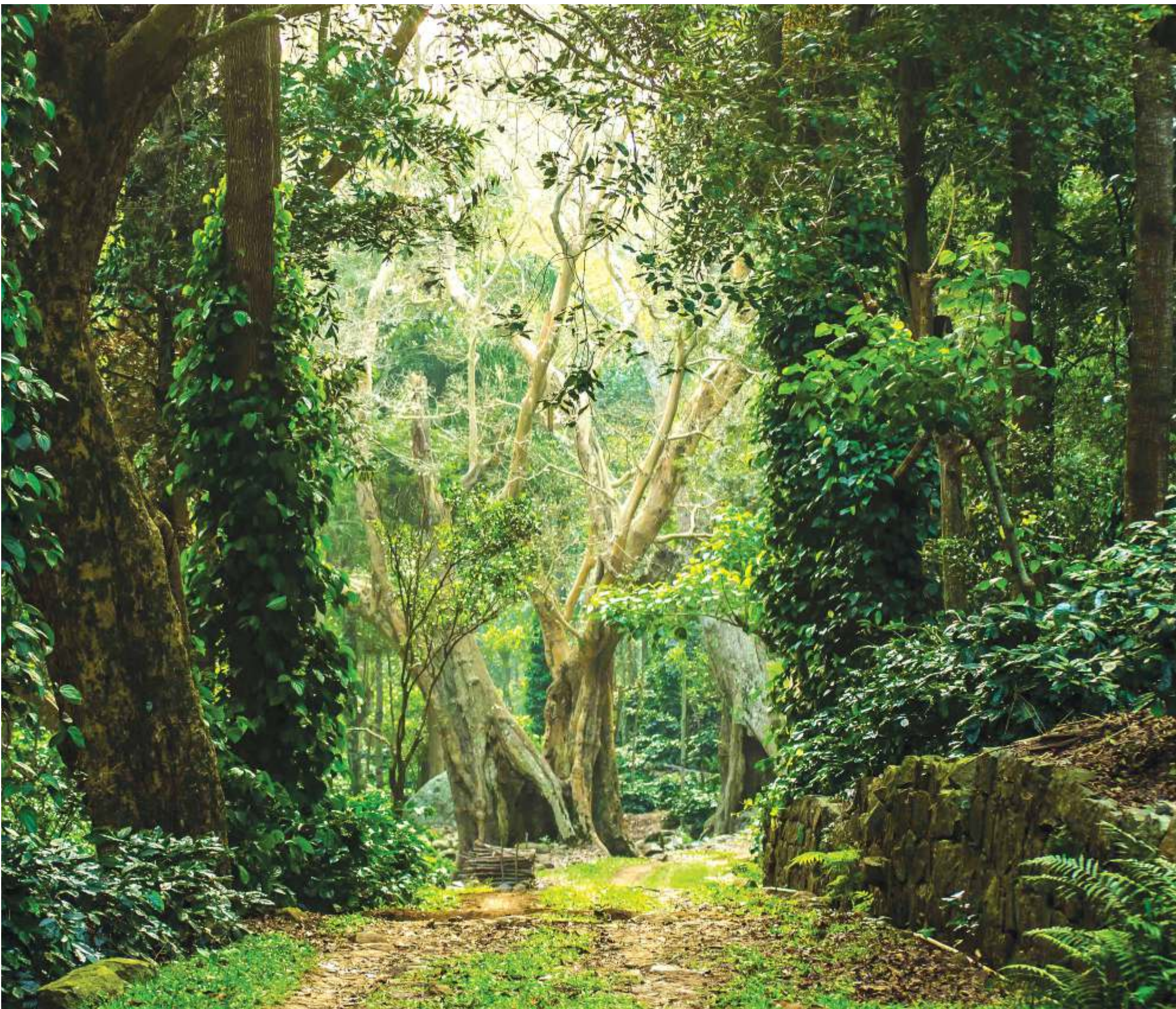
The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006, a landmark legislation in India, was introduced to recognise forest rights (FRs) of the Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) and empower them aiming at strengthening the conservation regime of forests. It was seen as a beacon of hope ushering in an era of community-led sustainable use of forest resources, conservation of biodiversity, and maintenance of ecological balance, which are essential for the sustenance of FRs. The Act however has faced serious implementation challenges and is overly involved in debates about the fulfilment of this vision indicated in the preamble.

The FRA outlines fourteen distinct FRs for its target group but its initial implementation focused primarily on just two viz. habitation and self-cultivation. This emphasis led to large-scale encroachments by people claiming that they occupied the forest land before the mandated cutoff date of December 13, 2005. Not very surprisingly, the high volume of cases and the pressure to decide them quickly resulted in many ineligible claims getting recognized as valid. This, in turn, encouraged even more people to make similar claims, hoping that theirs would also be approved. During this time, the claims related to Community Forest Rights (CFRs) were given low priority, except for those involving traditionally collected minor forest produce.

In 2012, significant amendments to the FRA Rules were made and new guidelines issued thereafter. Although these amendments purportedly aimed to streamline implementation, they resulted in unintended consequences. Some of these amendments, allegedly extending beyond the Act's original scope, relaxed the eligibility criteria for claimants, allowing non-deserving individuals and communities to exploit the system. The amended Rule introduces a new right, known as the "Title" to Community Forest Resources.

It enabled communities with only a few members from the FDST and OTFD to make such claims thus allowing the rural elite and powerful individuals to take advantage of the system marginalizing the genuine target group of FRA. Additionally, the evidentiary value of satellite imagery was lowered, making it more challenging to distinguish between legitimate and fabricated claims. No system was established to scrutinize the approved claims while the Tribal Ministry, GOI repeatedly issued directives to review just the rejected ones. In the existing atmosphere, it was 'practical' to approve claims rather than reject them even when the evidence was weak and essential criteria were not met. At times hundreds of cases were cleared in just one meeting which often lacked adequate representation of non-officials and women members, and objections by foresters, even when based on ground reality, were generally labelled as anti-tribal and anti-FRA.

The protection-related duties of forest right holders, gram sabhas, and village-level institutions mentioned under Section 5 of the FRA still await alignment with existing Acts and Rules given the purport of Section 13. Some state tribal departments, as nodal agencies for implementation, have excluded the forest department from village-level management plan committees constituted for community forest resources. Such exclusion precludes inputs from trained foresters and consideration of a landscape-based forest management approach, which is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of biodiversity, survival of wide-ranging wildlife, and the provision of eco-services that extend beyond village boundaries. Village-centric



management systems, influenced by electoral politics, may undermine long-term conservation efforts and harm ecological balance. Instances of clear felling and over-exploitation in bamboo coupes, in violation of sustainability principles, have already been observed in some villages. Encroachments and land-use alteration near watercourses and on slopes pose significant risks. In 1992, the Forest Department attempted to remove encroachments in Mundakai, Wayanad but faced violent resistance resulting in assaults, injuries, and the torching of six vehicles by locals. Over time, emboldened encroachers and developers constructed large resorts on slopes increasing landslide susceptibility. This risk was tragically realized with the recent landslide in Mundakai in July 2024.

Under FRA also, recognition of claims by ignoring the terrain is an extremely serious issue. In Maharashtra, a 2014 satellite-based study on FRA implementation revealed that out of randomly selected 56,029 claims for cultivation and habitation in Gadchiroli, Gondia, Nandurbar, and Dhule districts; 8,472 and 11,988 sites respectively were within 50 and 100 meters of water bodies or watercourses. Similar claims were found in different districts on slopes exceeding 20 degrees, pockmarked with a total area of

485 acres, many of which could potentially become the epicentre of additional encroachments and imminent disasters.

To date, 5.18 million acres of forest land scattered over 2.37 million sites have been recognized in the country as individual FRs of cultivation and habitation and the process is still on. The absence of a cut-off date for claim submission, however, makes misuse of the Act easier with time since the verifiability of evidence about 2005 becomes increasingly difficult. It may allow the exploitation of the Act for political purposes too.

An analysis of cases cleared just before elections, for instance, 1,33,920 titles granted to podu cultivators reportedly based on village elders' statements; ramping up of claim clearances in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh; and current invitations for new claims in Jharkhand should be revealing. A worrying trend, however, has emerged in Madhya Pradesh, with encroachers from other villages and districts targeting forest land in Burhanpur district and nearby areas, often with local politicians' support. These actions have sparked violent clashes between the encroachers, local villagers, and forest officials, who are struggling to protect the forests. An examination of randomly selected CFR cases in Maharashtra reveals that the 'nature' and 'extent' of FRs are often missing from title documents. The issue reportedly

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THE PROTECTION-RELATED DUTIES OF FOREST RIGHT HOLDERS, GRAM SABHAS, AND VILLAGE-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE FRA STILL AWAIT ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING ACTS AND RULES GIVEN THE PURPORT OF SECTION 13. SOME STATE TRIBAL DEPARTMENTS, AS NODAL AGENCIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION, HAVE EXCLUDED THE FOREST DEPARTMENT FROM VILLAGE-LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN COMMITTEES CONSTITUTED FOR COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCES

exists in other states as well. Understanding the quantity of forest produce (as a forest right) is crucial for the sustainable management of community forest resources and the long-term continuance of the exercise of forest rights. Accurate quantification can prevent issues such as the dwindling supply of medicinal plants for the Ayurvedic industry, which has led to the use of substandard materials and tarnished the reputation of Ayurveda. Unregulated removals could lead to future disputes over forest produce among neighbouring villages which would simply be disastrous.

The process adopted for recognizing Rights over Community Forest Resources (RCFR) raises significant concerns. According to Section 3(1)(i), RCFR of management is admissible only for communities of FDSTs and OTFDs who have traditionally protected and conserved these resources for sustainable use. Further, section 4(3) of the Act mandates that these communities must have occupied the forest land before the cutoff date of December 13, 2005. However, in practice, management rights under Section 3(1)(i) have been liberally granted, ignoring the mandated criteria, on more than 13.5 million acres out of the country's total recorded forest area of 191.5 million acres. The trend continues unabated also

due to the absence of a deadline for claim submission. Surprisingly, RCFRs for management have been granted on thousands of acres in the core areas of Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas in Achanakmar, Udanti Sitanadi, Dhamtari, Navegaon Nagzira, and Tansa without fulfilling the required criteria. Apart from the illegalities involved in RCFR cases, the overall situation indicates that the concerned District Level Committees have unauthorizedly transferred the State's responsibility mentioned in Article 51A of the Constitution.

In the past, forests were vast and tribal populations were small and cohesive with minimal influence from market forces. They existed harmoniously. Today, we face a crisis of fractured village populations and fragmented forests. The traditional arrangements that once worked may no longer be effective. Any harm to forest conservation and management has far-reaching consequences and Nature responds to it in compounded ways, leading to unpredictable weather patterns, desertification, global warming, and ecological crises. These environmental changes exacerbate climate change, creating a vicious cycle that further threatens the sustainability and health of our forests and communities. It is crucial to set a deadline for claim

submissions, revisit the rules under the FRA, and swiftly correct its implementation to benefit genuine beneficiaries. Cancelling irregularly granted rights, removing encroachments, and relocating FR holders from high-risk areas will establish confidence in the administration among the voiceless target group of the FRA.

The Supreme Court must prioritize the hearing of writ petition 109/2008, duly because their earlier order to evict encroachers was stayed on February 28, 2019, due to the Tribal Affairs Ministry's submission that due processes were not followed in implementing the FRA. The ministry had also highlighted that the process of settling the claims and rights of the applicants left much to be desired.

At this critical juncture, the choices we make will shape the destiny of India's forests, its people including forest-dependent communities, and its ecology and economy. The question remains: Will the FRA fulfil its promise of empowering legitimate forest right holders while safeguarding India's ecological wealth, or will it succumb to exploitation and misuse? Only time, and our commitment to a sustainability-oriented implementation of the Act, will tell.

(The writer are former PCCFs, UP and Maharashtra; views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



Raj Govt receives investment proposals of Rs 5.21 lakh cr

The Rajasthan government has received investment proposals worth over Rs 5.21 lakh crore (over USD 62 billion) within two weeks of the announcement of dates for the 'Rising Rajasthan' Investment Summit 2024. According to an official statement, the Bureau of Investment Promotion (BIP), which is the nodal department for the investment summit, has received proposals from some of the biggest names in the Indian and global corporate sector. These projects have the potential to generate about 1.55 lakh direct employment opportunities. The received investment proposals (worth Rs 5.21 lakh crore) amount to over 33 per cent of Rajasthan's present economy (GSDP) which is estimated to be INR 15.28 lakh crore (at current prices) in 2023-24.



CBIC to GST: Consult board on law interpretation

The CBIC has asked GST officers conducting audit to refer to the board those cases where they face issues of conflicting interpretation of provisions of the tax law. In an instruction to field offices, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said during the process of audit, a CGST Audit Principal Commissioner may come across a scenario where a taxpayer has followed a prevalent trade practice based on particular interpretation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) law and more than one such interpretation of the law could result in litigation. "In such cases, it is desirable that the zonal (Pr.) Chief Commissioner make a self-contained reference to the relevant policy wing of the Board i.e. the GST Policy or TRU (Tax research Unit)," the CBIC said, adding that the Commissioner would make the reference before conclusion of the audit and before issuing show cause notice to promote uniformity and avoid litigation.



Maruti to raise deferred tax liability provision by Rs 850 cr

Maruti Suzuki India on Saturday said it would need to increase provision for deferred tax liability by around Rs 850 crore due to the withdrawal of indexation benefit while calculating long-term capital gains on debt mutual funds. The company was making accounting provisions for deferred tax liability on fair value gains on these investments, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. A one-time impact on profit after tax will be felt in the second quarter of the ongoing fiscal, it added. In the Finance (No.2) Act 2024, the indexation benefit has been withdrawn while calculating long term capital gains on debt mutual funds which were purchased prior to April 1, 2023, it added. "Due to withdrawal of indexation benefit and change in rate of tax from 20 per cent plus surcharge and cess (with indexation) to 12.5 per cent plus surcharge and cess (without indexation), accounting provision for deferred tax liability so created needs to be restated," the automaker said.

Open to increase India's collaboration with IMF: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is open to exploring more ways to increase its collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said during a meeting with IMF's First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath on Saturday.

During the meeting, Gopinath congratulated the Finance Minister on policy continuity in the fiscal consolidation path being followed by the Government of India.

"FM Smt. @nsitharaman stated that India deeply values its relationship and continuous engagement with IMF; and looking ahead, the Government of India is open to exploring more ways to increase India's collaboration with the IMF," the finance ministry said in a post on X.

Besides acknowledging the vibrancy of the Indian economy, Gopinath appreciated the strength of India's relationship with IMF - valuable to both India, IMF, and to the world at large.



'India needs to create 148 mn additional jobs'

India has been a laggard among G20 nations in terms of employment generation and the country needs to create an additional 148 million jobs by 2030 given the population growth, Gita Gopinath

said on Saturday.

India on an average grew at 6.6 per cent for the decade starting 2010 but the employment rate was under 2 per cent, she said at the Delhi School of Economics Diamond Jubilee event here.

So, India's employment rate is much less when compared to other G20 nations, she said.

"If you look at India's projections in terms of population growth, India will have to create anywhere between 60 million to 148 million additional jobs cumulatively between now and 2030... we are already in 2024, so in a short period of time we have to create a lot of jobs," she said.

Given the scale of what is needed, it is going to require basic reforms including land reforms and implementation of labour codes.

To generate more jobs, she said, there is a need for an increase in private investment as it is not commensurate with 7 per cent growth in GDP. However, she said, public investment is going well but private investment has to improve.

She also said that India should revamp its education system so that it can improve the skill set of its workforce.

Besides, she said, there is a need to further ease of doing business, improve the regulatory environment and broaden the tax base.

Unilateral measures hamper equitable world trade: Commerce Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday said that unilateral environmental measures such as the European Union's (EU) carbon tax do not reflect the principles of equity and hamper equitable world trade.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the Global South countries are facing challenges both in terms of developing climate and sustainable development strategies and responding to unilateral measures such as CBAM (carbon border adjustment mechanism).

"Unilateral environmental measures do not reflect the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities; and hamper equitable world trade," he said in a virtual address at the third Voice of Global South Summit.

India has on different platforms raised its concerns over the EU's decision to impose carbon tax on certain sectors as it would hurt the country's exports. The country is in dis-

cussions with the EU on the subject.

The EU has decided to impose a CBAM, or carbon tax, which will come into effect from January 1, 2026. Initially, it would be imposed on seven carbon-intensive sectors, including steel, cement, fertiliser, aluminium and hydrocarbon products.

According to the think tank GTRI, the EU-CBAM when fully implemented will result in a 20-35 per cent import tax on Indian firms and the domestic industry will have to share all plant and production details with the EU.

The Global South countries include both developing and least developed nations (LDCs).

The secretary also said that these countries need to increase cooperation in areas of food security and global value chains; address challenges faced by MSMEs and also the challenges posed by the current international trading system.

Technopark's software export revenue touches Rs 13,255 cr

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The revenue from software exports by the IT and IT enabled services companies of the Kerala government-owned Technopark has reached Rs 13,255 crore for the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24, marking a 14 per cent growth compared to last year, the IT hub authorities said on Saturday.

The software export revenue of Technopark for the FY 2022-23 was Rs 11,630 crore. "The revenue from software exports by the IT/ITEs companies of Technopark has clocked Rs 13,255 crore for the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24, marking a 14 per cent growth compared to last year," Technopark said in a release.

The premier IT hub of the country, which covers a total area of 768.63 acres with 12.72 million sqft built up space, houses as many as 490 companies, providing 75,000 direct jobs and two lakh plus indirect jobs.

Col Sanjeev Nair (Retd), CEO, Technopark, said the stellar performance tells a growth story of the vibrant IT ecosystem in Kerala and the business vision and professionalism of the in-house companies.

"The world-class infrastructure and skilled workforce at Technopark played a major role in hitting this high growth trajectory. The results will enhance confidence in the state, which is a model for the whole country," Nair said.

SECURITIES MARKET

Sebi proposes expansion of sustainable fin framework

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has proposed expansion of the sustainable finance framework in the securities market by introducing a new category of financial instruments.

This category will include Social Bonds, Sustainable Bonds, and Sustainability-linked Bonds in addition to the current green debt securities. It aims to provide issuers with flexibility in raising funds for projects that align with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) objectives.

In a consultation paper released on Friday, Sebi proposed that issuers, in addition to existing green debt securities, be allowed to raise funds through issuance of social bonds, sustainable bonds, and sustainability-linked bonds. These bonds will collectively be known as ESG Debt Securities.

This will enable issuers to raise money for more sustainable projects, assisting in closing the funding gap for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sebi said it received representations from market participants including the

Confederation of Indian Industry to expand the scope of the regulatory framework pertaining to sustainable finance to include Social Bonds, in addition to existing Green Debt Securities as a mode of raising sustainable finance, in line with global practices.

As per the consultation paper, Sebi said, it "proposed to introduce the concept of Sustainable Securitised Debt Instruments for the purpose of providing originators of the underlying credit facilities which are within such international or domestic frameworks for sustainable finance, and thereby provide investors as well an opportunity to participate in the sustainable securitised debt instruments".

The consultation paper also addressed the initial and continuous disclosures for sustainable securitised debt instruments that would be based on international frameworks.

Initial disclosures could be made in the offer document for the securities, while continuous disclosures might be included in annual reports or other mandated formats.

The markets watchdog also suggested



This will enable issuers to raise money for more sustainable projects, assisting in closing the funding gap for the Sustainable Development Goals.

that issuers of ESG debt securities and sustainable securitised debt instruments appoint an independent external reviewer or certifier, to facilitate transparency and credibility.

The review could take various forms including, second-party opinions, verification, certification, or scoring/ rating.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has invited comments and suggestions from the public on the consultation paper by September 6

India a global leader in breakthrough innovations, says Bill Gates

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

India is a global leader with breakthrough innovations, American businessman and Microsoft founder Bill Gates has said as he joined Indian Americans to celebrate the first ever India Independence Day celebrations of the newly-opened Indian Consulate in Seattle.

Bill Gates, chairman of the Gates Foundation, flagged off the first India Day celebrations in the Greater Seattle area as Consulate General of India as Seattle's Guest of Honor, on India's 78th Independence Day, a media release said.

Addressing the nearly 2,000 plus members of the Indian American community, he referred to India "as a global leader with breakthrough innovations in areas like technology, agriculture and healthcare".



Gates further said, "From manufacturing safe low-cost vaccines to the remarkable leadership shown by the Indian diaspora to India's Digital Public Infrastructure - India's ingenuity is helping not just Indians, but the whole world. Countries across the Global South are leveraging India's experience to build their DPI systems."

Other participants at the India Day celebrations included Congresswoman Suzan

Windfall tax on crude petroleum reduced to Rs 2,100/tonne

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has slashed windfall tax on domestically produced crude oil to Rs 2,100 per tonne, from Rs 4,600 per tonne with effect from Saturday.

The tax is levied in the form of Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED).

The SAED on the export of diesel, petrol and jet fuel or ATF, has been retained at 'nil'.

The new rates are effective from August 17, an official notification said.

India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1, 2022, joining a host of nations that tax supernormal profits of energy companies.

The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks,

Govt to empanel AI infra providers under Rs 10,372-cr India AI mission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has invited bids for the empanelment of entities for providing artificial intelligence services on cloud under the Rs 10,372-crore India AI mission, which was approved by the cabinet in March this year.

The empaneled agencies, like data centers and cloud service providers, will have to provide access to high-speed computing AI infrastructure like graphics processing unit (GPUs), accelerators, Tensor Processing Units (TPUs), storage etc to academia, startups, researchers, government bodies among others at the lowest rate that will be discovered through the bidding process.

Under the IndiaAI Mission, supercomputing capacity, comprising over 10,000 GPUs, will be made available to various stakeholders for creating an AI ecosystem.

"With an objective to



empanel service providers for making this possible, IndiaAI - an IBD under Digital India Corporation, MeitY has issued a RFE (request for empanelment)," Meity, Additional Secretary Abhishek Singh said in a social media post.

The rapid development of AI across the globe has led to an increase in demand for GPU-based servers, as they can process data at a higher speed compared to CPU-based servers.

'Majority blue-collar jobs pay less than Rs 20k per month'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Majority of blue-collar jobs in India pay within the salary range of Rs 20,000 or less per month, suggesting that a substantial portion of the workforce is grappling with financial strain, struggling to meet essential needs such as housing, healthcare, and education, a report has said.

Over 57.63 per cent of blue-collar jobs fall within the salary range of Rs 20,000 or less per month, indicating that many workers earn close to the minimum wage, tech-enabled blue collar recruitment platform WorkIndia said in a report.

In addition, the report

revealed that about 29.34 per cent of blue-collar jobs are in the moderate earning bracket, with salaries ranging from Rs 20,000-40,000 per month.

Workers falling under this category, experience marginally improved financial security but are far from achieving a comfortable standard of living, it said.

The income in this range may cover necessities but it leaves little room for savings or investments, which highlights the economic vulnerability of a large segment of the

blue-collar workforce, it added. "The data reveals a significant concentration of low-wage jobs and limited opportunities

for higher earnings within the blue-collar sector. This disparity not only reflects the economic challenges faced by a large portion of the workforce but also has broader implications for social stability and economic growth," WorkIndia CEO and co-founder Nilsh Dhangarwal told PTI.

Addressing these issues may require targeted interventions such as skill development, wage reforms, and the creation of more high-paying job opportunities, he added. The report further

revealed that a very small segment of the workforce, constituting only 10.71 per cent, get salaries over Rs 40,000-60,000 per month.

This higher earning bracket among the blue collar reflects the presence of specialised skills or experience among these workers, yet the restricted availability of such positions suggests that upward mobility within the segment remains challenging, it said.

Only 2.31 per cent of blue-collar jobs offer salaries exceeding Rs 60,000, which is an extremely small percentage that signifies the scarcity of well-paying opportunities in this sector, it stated.

'Identify high-value cash transactions at hotels'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rampant cash transactions in business sectors like hotels, luxury brand sales, hospitals and IVF clinics need to be checked in a "non-intrusive" manner, the CBDT has asked the I-T department.

The apex body for direct taxes administration in the country -- the Central Board of Direct Taxes -- has also asked the tax department to undertake "concerted efforts" to recover arrear demands which have been witnessing a "steep rise" since the last financial year.

The CBDT recently issued an annual action plan dossier called the central action plan (CAP) 2024-25.

Senior officials told PTI that transactions over Rs 2 lakh in cash were required to be reported through a statement of financial transaction (SFT) by financial institutions but that was not happening.

"While examining such reports, it is noticed that the circumvention of these provisions is widely prevalent," the Board told the I-T department.

"Further, although section 139A requires PAN (permanent account number) to be provided or obtained in specified transactions, there is no reporting/verification mechanism for determining the compliance with this obligation," it said.

In any case, it said, "high value" consumption expenditure needs to be verified with information about the taxpayer and therefore, it is imperative to identify the sources which could be involved in possible circumvention.



# BURMESE BITES: CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF BURMA

**FOOD**  
Tar La Baw, Sarbuthi, Sar Hype

**DECOR**  
The vibrant and inviting array of colours was enhanced by the hand-painted stone floor, the woven wicker walls and the hand-painted table tops

**PRICE**  
₹1800 approx for two

**VERDICT**  
★★★★★



TEJAL SINHA

In honour of its 10th anniversary, Burma Burma launched "The Ten-Year Trail" and introduced a special dine-in menu that will be offered until September 30, 2024. So to celebrate this milestone, we were invited to the Burma Burma outlet in Hyderabad. Once I was seated, two different soups were served: *Tar La Baw* and *Sarbuthi*. Talking of *Tar La Baw*, it is a fermented and sun-dried bamboo broth infused with pounded ginger and basil served with red pumpkin and rice vermicelli noodles from the Karen tribe in Kachin, further elevated with a slow-roasted tomato confit. While corn and mushrooms are not a new dish to try, having pumpkins and bamboo broth was certainly a novel experience. But again, being a mushroom person, I couldn't resist but immerse myself in the flavoursome ingredients of *sarbuthi*. Then I was served the *Shman Thoke*, a refreshing salad of chickpea tofu and raw papaya with a sour and spicy dressing from Shan. For someone who enjoys spicy food beyond anything else, this seemed a little blunt as I took my first bite. However, the next bite turned out to be a surprise, with the different flavours assuring my tastebuds with their fried crisps. Heading to the next was the *Sar-Hype*. Wok-tossed rice noodles, seared mock meat and tofu with tamarind and sawtooth coriander sauce reflecting a complete home-style communal meal that celebrated the flavours of Kachin. This stood as the standout dish for me, beyond a doubt. So basically, the Burma Burma team explained to us how this sauce is used to separate the sticky rice noodles. As I took the first chew, the taste simply bombarded my mouth with its piquancy. Then comes the Highway Meal Parcel, which is a popular food with commuters to Yangon with steamed rice. This was, for a second, an improvised version of the South Indian Thali with a Burmese twist! The concept, as it is named, is that you can pack yourself and just head your way. Inspired

by the sustainable practices of the monasteries of Bago, the Monk's Meal, or *Kho Poong* with *Pebok Chet*, featuring bamboo shoot and roselle curry with a spicy fermented soybean relish and rice, were local delicacies that found their place on this celebratory menu. The Burma Burma team, while serving, shared how, just like the monks enjoy their meals being plain and healthy, without much mirch-masala, the dish tasted the same. And finally, in the main course, comes the Split Gill Mushroom Rice from Kachin, which included foraged split gill mushrooms with rice, flavoured with roasted mushroom extract, garlic and soy, and topped with Burmese-pounded tomato. This did not seem to meet my expectations. Coming to the beverages, we were served *Mont Let Saung*, inspired by the traditional Burmese cooler from the town of Inle, with palm jaggery, coconut milk and toasted coconut shavings, while the *Kan Lan Yay* combines fresh sugarcane juice with raspberry purée, lime and nori salt. While all three had its own unique flavours depending on their ingredients, *Kan Lan Yay*, according to me, is a must try and trust me, you'll not be regretful in any way. A meal without a dessert. Well never! The menu had Burmese Milk Tea Cheesecake, infused with Burmese tea and topped with brown butter streusel, stewed roasted apple confit, cinnamon ice cream topped with cinnamon caramel and spiced tea tulle.



'FORK'LORE

# ONE NIGHT IN TOKI-O

AARTI SREENATH

Quorum, a longstanding gem amidst the hustle of Hitech City, invited us into a world where tradition meets modernity with its latest experience: "One Night in Tokyo by Santory." As you step into the warm, dimly lit lobby, you're greeted with a red-ribbon tag setting the tone for an evening that promises to transport you to the heart of Japan. This event beautifully captured the essence of old Japan, infused with a contemporary twist—the concept of "One Night in Tokyo" by Santory brought together the rich traditions of Japan with a modern spin, creating an immersive experience that resonates with both the past and the present. Santory, a brand synonymous with Japanese whiskey, has long been a pioneer in preserving and evolving Japanese culture. So, the event showcased this blend of tradition and innovation in various forms, from the Hanko stamp studio—where guests could create their own personalised stamps, a nod to the stamps once used in legal documents—to the Vinyl listening sessions that filled the air with nostalgic tunes. The culinary offerings at were just as thoughtfully crafted. At the event, the essence of Japan came alive, transporting attendees into the heart of Japanese culture. It began with an intimate mixology workshop by Shibani Surkund, Portfolio Advocate, West, Santory Global Spirits, delving into its rich heritage and its cultural integration. Beyond merely demonstrating the artistry of mixology, the session shed light on the revered *Japanese Highball* tradition; a drink deeply entrenched in Japanese culture, celebrated for its simplicity and nuanced palate. The *Toki Highball*, a signature drink, was the highlight. Made with Toki whiskey, soda and a twist of peach, it was the perfect embodiment of how tradition can be both honoured and reinvented. The food, inspired by the vibrant street food culture of Japan, was equally impressive. I had the opportunity to try the *Seasonal Vegetable Baozi*, a vegan delight stuffed with finely minced vegetables and the *Katsu Chicken Sando* with pickled cucumber and coriander. *Chicken Yakitori* made its entrance with tender, smoky skewers, each bite enhanced by the subtle zing of a green onion sauce. The flavours were deep, rich and yet so effortlessly satisfying. Then came the *Vegetable Kakiage*, a crunchy, golden medley of tempura vegetables, perfectly paired with the delicate sweetness of *kaeshi* sauce. It was a dish that felt both familiar and surprising, with layers of texture and flavour that kept you reaching for more. But the true star of the night, at least for me, was the *vegetable harumaki*. These spring rolls were a revelation, crispy on the outside with a symphony of fresh, vibrant vegetables inside. The dipping sauce was like a final brushstroke on a masterpiece, elevating the



dish from mere comfort food to an artful delight. And then, just when you thought it couldn't get better, the *baby potato teriyaki* arrived. Each bite was a melt-in-your-mouth experience, with the sweet, sticky teriyaki glaze hugging the tender potatoes, leaving behind lingering warmth. The evening also brought a playful twist with the *Japanese Purin*, where the airy, crisp purin were filled with a delicate egg mixture that added a rich, velvety contrast to the lightness of the dish. To round off the meal, the *Mini Matcha Swiss Roll* was a perfect finale. Eggless and utterly divine, the roll was soft and spongy, with the earthy matcha providing a subtle, yet profound depth of flavour—a sweet echo of Japan's tea rituals. As the food delighted our palates, the cocktails were no less a spectacle. The *Toki Highball* opened the show with a crisp and refreshing blend of Toki Santory whiskey, soda water and grapefruit, each sipping as invigorating as the first breeze of spring. Then came the daring *Toki-O Wasabi Sour*, where the bold, fiery kick of wasabi danced with the citrusy notes of lemon, all held together by the smooth embrace of Toki Santory whiskey. The Toki and Tea cocktail was like a whispered secret from a Japanese garden, with the smoky essence of Toki whiskey mingling with the fragrant Earl Grey tea, citrus and ginger ale—a drink that unfolded in layers, each more intriguing than the last. The *Toki-O Harudesu* sparkled like a Tokyo night, with peach and lime weaving through the effervescent fizz, creating a drink that was both lighthearted and sophisticated. And finally, the *Toki-O Matcha Haiboru* brought the evening to a soothing close, with the creamy notes of matcha and vanilla wrapping around the whiskey like a warm blanket on a cool evening. The ambiance at Quorum elevated the entire experience. The indoor space, with its refined and royal interiors, was complemented by an outdoor area that featured creative mood lighting and a small pool-like setting. The atmosphere was both serene and sophisticated, making it the perfect backdrop for an evening of culinary exploration. The guests also enjoyed a vinyl listening session featuring Japanese music that immersed everyone in Japan's enchanting sounds. The event featured The Toki Art Studio, an interactive screen printing and Hanko stamp workshop, along with curated culinary delights inspired by the streets of Japan. The festivities culminated in a mesmerising musical performance, leaving guests with lasting memories of a night infused with the magic of music and art. Overall, "One Night in Tokyo by Santory" was an evening that seamlessly blended old-world charm with new-age innovation. It was an experience that not only paid homage to the deep-rooted traditions of Japan but also celebrated the creativity and evolution that continue to define Japanese culture today.



# WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

AUGUST 18 - 24



- ARIES**  
You'll receive unexpected financial help. Avoid delays and excessive worry. Exciting experiences will refresh you. Meeting important people benefits your growth.
- TAURUS**  
Stay confident and support others, but avoid too much involvement. Define goals, be cautious with trust and embrace new tasks. Don't let setbacks dishearten you.
- GEMINI**  
Embrace joy, introspection and creativity. Support your family, balance commitment with personal growth and carefully check new opportunities. Be open to change.
- CANCER**  
Stay focused and patient. Proceed with long-held plans, manage your impulses and do not be too loyal. Your humour and enthusiasm will prove to be beneficial.
- LEO**  
Be gentle with yourself and your loved ones. Balance work with family time. Stay lively and enthusiastic. Use your energy wisely. Don't let criticism create distance.
- VIRGO**  
Take cautious steps in both personal and professional life. Seek support, manage stress and embrace change. Prioritise your well-being over entertaining others.
- LIBRA**  
Embrace new project ideas, but be mindful of others' feelings and seek security guidance. Balance thrill with practicality. Expect unexpected financial support.
- SCORPIO**  
Stay patient and calm under pressure. Support from friends will help you achieve your goals. Embrace new career opportunities but at the cost of some pastimes.
- SAGITTARIUS**  
Your talent and charisma will lead you to success. Be cautious of new attractions. Stay committed in your relationships and remain focused on personal goals.
- CAPRICORN**  
Your creativity and innovation will attract attention and bring success. Stay calm amidst chaos, clear doubts in relationships and expect unexpected financial support.
- AQUARIUS**  
Reap the rewards of your hard work. Stay emotionally composed and engaged with family. Be confident and navigate challenges with humility and resilience.
- PISCES**  
Proceed with your plans as conditions are favourable. Communicate openly to ease relationship tensions. Stay cautious with your finances during travels.

## WHAT'S NEW

### SUNRISE KURTA SET

Featuring an all over aari embroidery kurta set that consists of chanderi kurta and chudidar.

## Rakshabandhan special

### CELEBRATE RAKHI IN STYLE

As the joyous festival of Rakhi approaches, it's time to celebrate the special bond between siblings with love, laughter and style. At Yavi, they have curated a stunning collection of printed outfits that perfectly embody ease, chic elegance and modern sophistication—just what you need to make this Rakhi truly memorable.

### PEAR CATHEDRAL MOISSANITE DIAMOND RING

A stunning pear-shaped moissanite centerpiece set in a cathedral-style ring, complemented by lab-grown diamonds for added brilliance.

### VAHDAM INDIA GLOW ASSORTED TEAS GIFT SET

A gift set containing 6 premium teas packed in beautiful tin caddies, themed around elegance and uniqueness. Price - Rs. 1,799.00

### OF FRISCHSCHOGGI, PRALINE & TRUFFLES

Enhance your Rakhi celebrations with the Läderach rakhi handle gift box, thoughtfully designed to capture the essence of togetherness and tradition. With its elegant, rakhi-inspired patterns, this luxurious gift is sure to make your festive moments memorable. The hamper includes a beautifully crafted scroll for your personal message, adding a heartfelt touch that transforms the gift into a cherished keepsake celebrating your special bond. MRP: Rs. 6,300

### FESTIVE MEETS FLAVOUR

This Rakhi, festive meets flavour with this specially curated gift box packed with MasterChow's bestsellers that is perfect for those brothers and sisters who love their spice. Indulge in the fiery goodness of Sichuan Chili Oil, add a crunchiness to your meals with Garlic Chili Crisp and savour the authentic taste of Schezwan Chutney. To satisfy those sudden hunger pangs, there's our newly launched Sweet and Spicy Cup Noodles to the rescue! Price: Rs. 699

### WHERE EVERY SISTER SHINES

Praush Beauty's Feeling Festive Gift Box, elegantly presented in a beautiful and sturdy pink box, is sure to capture everyone's heart. It is the ultimate gift to express your love and make this Rakhi unforgettable. Price: MRP 2950

### JUNGLY DELIGHTS X NAINA GIFT SET

Give the gift of light and health this festive season with our exclusive Jungly Delights x Naina gift box. Each beautifully packaged set includes a Naina candle in your choice of uplifting mandarin lime or calming frangipani, and an assortment box of five superfood bars by Jungly Delights. It's the perfect present for your loved ones. Price: INR 1600/-

### CELEBRATE BOND OF LOVE WITH KICKY AND PERKY

This Raksha Bandhan, celebrate the eternal bond between siblings with Kicky and Perky's exquisite Floral Jali Pattern Silver Rakhi. Crafted from 925 sterling silver, this versatile piece embodies the essence of love and protection. The intricate floral jali design symbolises the delicate beauty of your relationship, while a sparkling moissanite stone adds brilliance and depth of meaning.

### RAKSHA BANDHAN GIFTING BUNDLE FROM INTO

This duo from INTO is a no-brainer gifting option for your sibling. It consists of a cleanser, clean slate is a well-balanced, refreshing daily cleanser formulated with a blend of hydrating ingredients like glycerin, squalane, niacinamide and the right percentage of exfoliating ingredients along with doubling down nourishing rinse-off cleansing balm to accompany the cleanser. Offer price - Orders above INR 1000/-, will get an additional 10% off + free headband. Valid from: 12th - 20th August

### CELEBRATE BOND OF LOVE WITH SOLIS COLLECTION

ORRA presents its latest sub-brand Solis—a minimalist jewellery for every day of the week. This radiant Rakshabandhan celebration as we hold in high the bond between siblings, Solis is an ideal present to be gifted to your sister. Crafted to enhance the natural beauty of diamonds, it features an exquisite range of jewellery that perfectly embodies the warmth, love and protection that this special occasion symbolises.

"Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up"  
- Gareth Thomas



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

# RAKSHA BANDHAN

## CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY OF PURE BONDS

In the heart of Delhi, with monsoon clouds overhead, the streets burst into life for Raksha Bandhan. Amidst the lively chaos and bright colours, the festival unfolds as a touching celebration of sibling love. Each stall, filled with colourful rakhis, tells a story of pure bonds and heartfelt traditions, turning everyday moments into cherished memories, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

As the festive season arrives, bringing with it a time of warmth, togetherness and cherished traditions, one celebration stands out for its profound significance — the bond between brothers and sisters. Raksha Bandhan, a festival that embodies untold love and silent care, is not just a ritual but a celebration of a "PURE BOND." Amidst this atmosphere, the vibrant marketplaces come alive with the spirit of Raksha Bandhan and nowhere is this evident than in Delhi's iconic Sadar Bazar. The festival's essence is captured not just through rituals but through the bustling, colourful preparations that fill the market, making it a focal point of the celebration.

### THE ENCHANTING FESTIVAL ATMOSPHERE

Sadar Bazar, one of Delhi's oldest and busiest markets, undergoes a remarkable transformation as Raksha Bandhan approaches. The market, typically known for its wide range of goods, turns into a hub of colour and excitement, with rakhis and festive decorations taking center stage. Every shop and vendor gears up for the big day, filling the air with a lively sense of excitement. The narrow lanes of Sadar Bazar, usually crowded with shoppers, become even more packed as people move from stall to stall, searching for the perfect rakhi. The market itself seems to join in the celebration, with every corner reflecting the spirit of Raksha Bandhan. Despite the unpredictable weather during the monsoon season, with sudden bursts of rain and heat, enthusiastic shoppers continue to pour into Sadar Bazar. The market remains crowded, even in the rain, as people carry umbrellas or brave the elements to get what they need. There is a shared determination among the shoppers, a sense that no amount of rain or heat can dampen the joy of preparing for Raksha Bandhan.

### A MARKET FULL OF CHOICES

One of the most striking features of Sadar Bazar during Raksha Bandhan is the sheer variety of rakhis on display. The market caters to all tastes and budgets, ensuring

“ONE OF THE MOST HEARTWARMING SIGHTS IN THE MARKET IS THE SELECTION OF CHILDREN'S RAKHIS, OFTEN FEATURING POPULAR CHARACTERS. A YOUNG GIRL, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS OVERHEARD ASKING A VENDOR, "BHAIYA, DO YOU HAVE A SPIDER-MAN RAKHI?" THIS SMALL MOMENT BEAUTIFULLY ENCAPSULATES THE SIBLING BOND, A SISTER KNOWING EXACTLY WHAT WILL MAKE HER YOUNGER BROTHER SMILE

that everyone can find something special. From simple, traditional rakhis costing as little as ₹ 10 for a dozen to more elaborate designs priced at ₹ 70 or ₹ 100 per dozen, the market offers something for everyone. Rakhis come in every imaginable style, from classic designs featuring beads and threads to more modern versions adorned with glitter and stones. Children's rakhis, often featuring popular cartoon characters and superheroes, are among the most popular items. Little girls excitedly pick out rakhis for their brothers, carefully choosing ones that they know will bring a smile to their siblings' faces. A young girl, for example, was overheard asking a vendor, "Bhaiya, do you have a Spider-Man rakhi?" This small moment beautifully encapsulates the sibling bond, a sister knowing exactly what will make her younger brother smile, a small moment that perfectly captures the thoughtfulness and love that define Raksha Bandhan. The girl knew exactly what her brother would love and she was determined to find it for him.

### THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE FESTIVAL

The vendors and artisans are integral to the Raksha Bandhan experience. Their work begins long before the festival, with many starting preparations at least a month in advance. Crafting each rakhi requires skill, patience and a deep understanding of what the festival means to people. For these artisans, Raksha Bandhan is more than just another business opportunity; it's a chance to contribute to a tradition that has been passed down through generations. A shopkeeper in Sadar Bazar explained how much effort goes into preparing for Raksha Bandhan. "We start getting ready about a month before," he said. "There's a lot of hard work, but it's worth it when you see the market come alive like this. Even in the rain, people come. It's something we love." His words highlighted the dedication that goes into making the festival special for everyone. Despite the long hours and sometimes challenging conditions, the vendors take pride in being part of something bigger than just selling rakhis. They are part of a tradition that brings people together, year after year. The artisans also take great care in crafting each rakhi. They understand that these simple threads carry significant emotional weight. For them, it's important that every rakhi reflects the love and care that

siblings have for each other. They often work late into the night, ensuring that their creations are perfect. It's not just about making something that looks good, it's about creating something that will be cherished.

### A FESTIVAL OF EMOTIONS

Raksha Bandhan is a time of joy and celebration, but it can also bring about feelings of longing, especially for those who are separated from their loved ones. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be with their siblings on this special day, and for them, the festival carries a bittersweet note. A woman in Sadar Bazar, carefully choosing rakhis to send to her brother who lives far away, shared her plans to send them by post. Despite modern courier services offering faster delivery, she preferred the traditional method, finding something special in the anticipation that comes with receiving a package by postman.

Her story is just one of many that highlight the emotional depth of Raksha Bandhan. The festival is not just about the physical act of tying a rakhi, it's about the connection that siblings share, a connection that goes beyond time and distance. Even when miles apart, the bond remains strong and the act of sending a rakhi is a way of maintaining that bond. It serves as a reminder that, no matter where life takes people, the relationships that matter most are always worth celebrating.

### THE ESSENCE OF TRADITION

As Raksha Bandhan draws near, the market becomes a living embodiment of tradition. With its rich history and vibrant atmosphere, it reflects the enduring values of family and togetherness. In a world that often moves too fast, these moments offer a chance to slow down and appreciate what truly matters. The festival is a time to reconnect with loved ones and honour the bonds that have shaped lives. During this time, the market becomes more than just a place to buy rakhis, it transforms into a space where memories are made. Every purchase, conversation and shared smile contributes to the festive atmosphere. The streets serve as a symbol of the festival,

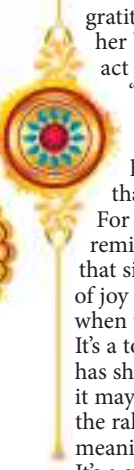
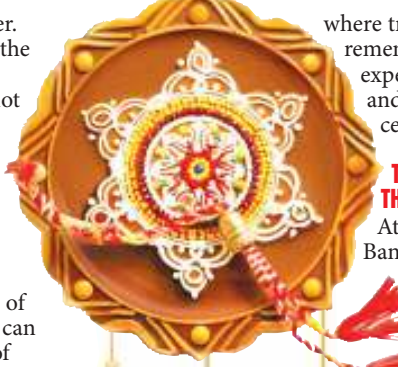
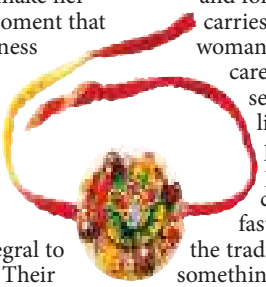
where tradition is not just remembered but actively experienced, blending the past and present in a heartfelt celebration of love and family.

### THE MEANING BEHIND THE RAKHI

At the heart of Raksha Bandhan is the rakhi itself - a simple thread that carries profound meaning. It's more than just a decorative piece, it's a symbol of a sister's love, gratitude and appreciation for her brother. Tying a rakhi is an act of trust, a way of saying, "Thank you for always being there." This small thread binds not just wrists but hearts, reinforcing a bond that is as old as time. For many, the rakhi is also a reminder of the shared history that siblings have, the moments of joy and support and the times when they've stood by each other. It's a token of the relationship that has shaped who they are. Though it may be simple in appearance, the rakhi holds a depth of meaning that goes beyond words. It's a symbol of a bond that is pure, unbreakable, and everlasting.

### A CELEBRATION OF LOVE

Raksha Bandhan is more than just a date on the calendar, it's a celebration of the relationships that connect people, the memories that hold them together, and the love that sustains them through life's challenges. In today's fast-paced world, festivals like Raksha Bandhan remind everyone of the importance of family and the connections that define them. In Sadar Bazar, the spirit of Raksha Bandhan is alive and well. The market, with its history and vibrancy, captures the essence of the festival. It's a place where love is expressed through simple gestures and where the bonds between siblings are honored in all their beauty. As brothers and sisters across the country prepare to tie the rakhi this year, they are reminded of what the festival truly stands for. It's not just about the rituals, it's about the love, care and unbreakable bond that siblings share. In the end, that's what makes Raksha Bandhan so special - a celebration of love that goes beyond time, distance and the challenges of life.



CHAT-O-CINO

FYI

# FROM South hits TO vogue success!

**We go into actress Shalini Pandey's transformative journey to becoming a key figure in Bollywood in this exclusive interview. Shalini, who is praised for her nuanced but impactful performances, has captivated fans all over the world with her portrayal in the highly anticipated Netflix movie *Maharaj*. Shalini Pandey shares details about her changing career, including her insights into the character Kishori and the difficulties of working on a historical narrative**

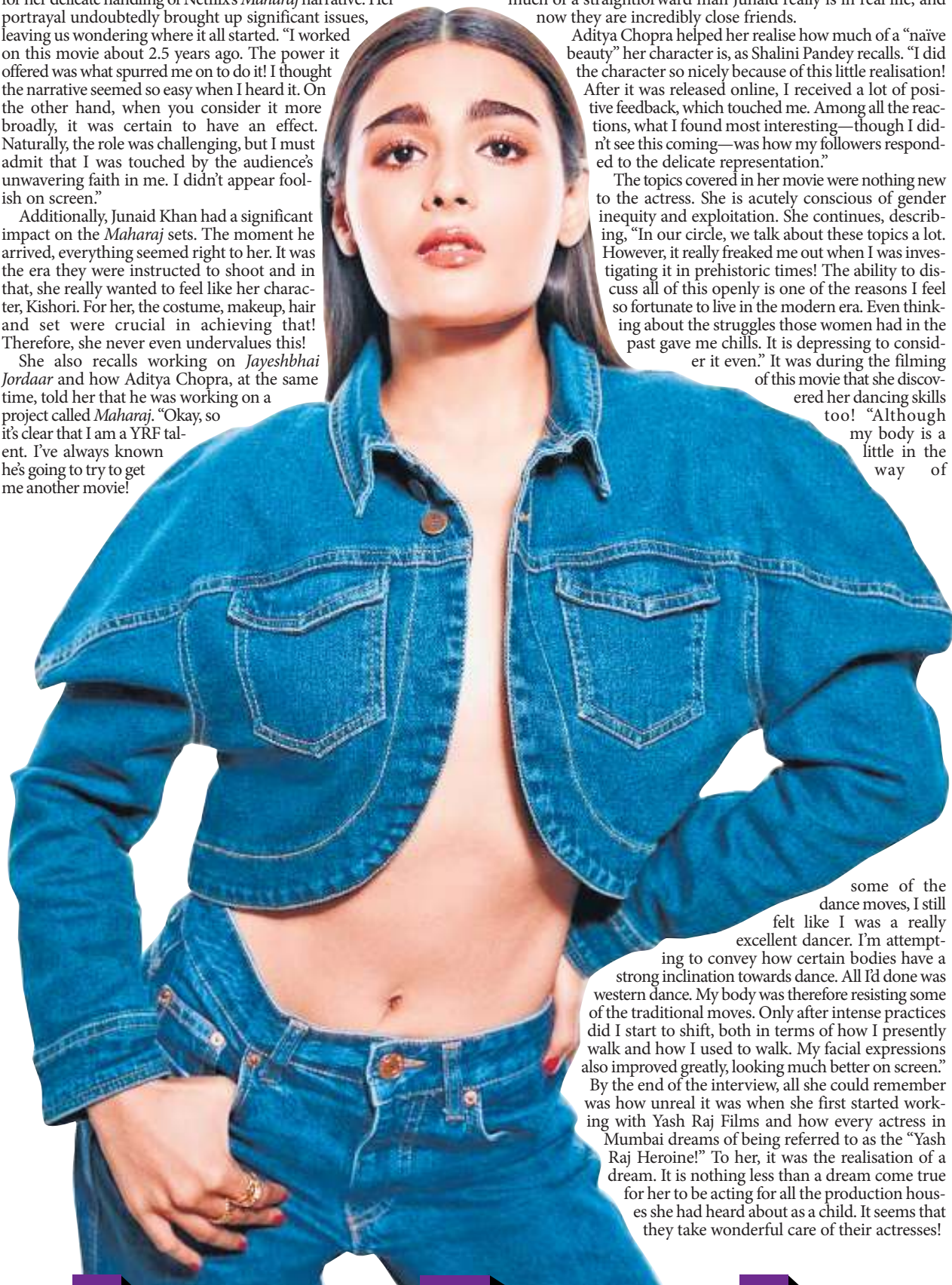
SHIKHA DUGGAL

The movie *Maharaj*, which starred Shalini Pandey with Jaideep Ahlawat, Junaid Khan and Sharvari (in a special appearance), received great acclaim. Making it a worldwide, not just in India, must-watch! Thus, how could we have overlooked the interview featuring the prominent actress from the same movie?

Our very own South fame from *Arjun Reddy* is still being praised for her delicate handling of Netflix's *Maharaj* narrative. Her portrayal undoubtedly brought up significant issues, leaving us wondering where it all started. "I worked on this movie about 2.5 years ago. The power it offered was what spurred me on to do it! I thought the narrative seemed so easy when I heard it. On the other hand, when you consider it more broadly, it was certain to have an effect. Naturally, the role was challenging, but I must admit that I was touched by the audience's unwavering faith in me. I didn't appear foolish on screen."

Additionally, Junaid Khan had a significant impact on the *Maharaj* sets. The moment he arrived, everything seemed right to her. It was the era they were instructed to shoot and in that, she really wanted to feel like her character, Kishori. For her, the costume, makeup, hair and set were crucial in achieving that! Therefore, she never even undervalues this!

She also recalls working on *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* and how Aditya Chopra, at the same time, told her that he was working on a project called *Maharaj*. "Okay, so it's clear that I am a YRF talent. I've always known he's going to try to get me another movie!"



But, for that reason, I felt really empowered as soon as I heard the script. Being an YRF talent didn't matter as much as how much I wanted to join the team of *Maharaj* personally since I genuinely wanted to share this narrative with my fan base. I had never danced on film before!" acknowledges Mahanati fame!

She even showed *Maharaj* that big stars are not necessary for a movie to succeed and she did a great job in the part! "The set was very comfortable, but when I finished one of the significant scenes, it had a troubling impact on me," says NTR *Kathanayakudu* actor. "For a while, I felt traumatised! As I carried out that scene, I was able to comprehend the impact it had on me. In fact, I found myself rooting for the character even more. I did feel for a little while that the situation had turned a little unsettling."

Further in the interview, the actress admits that, more than challenging, the scenes should feel exciting to her! Apparently, she always goes with a blank slate on the sets to know what could happen to them. She genuinely doesn't believe in over-preparing until and unless she has been told to do action scenes. That's Shalini Pandey for you! "Most of the moments I had in *Maharaj* were enjoyable to perform. The script had the line "drag her out," but when I acted it out with the actor who was meant to be my on-screen sister, it had such a powerful effect! My feelings were very apparent and the entire atmosphere was buzzing with activity. The term "dramatic" is appropriate for it!" You will realise how different Shalini is from her real-life character, Kishori, if you know her or have met her. Without making fun of her, she had to have faith in that persona! The actress said that Jaideep and Junaid were quite helpful on the sets. She had a lot of strange parts to perform and the concept was rather uncomfortable, but her other actors were really helpful. She discovered how much of a straightforward man Junaid really is in real life, and now they are incredibly close friends.

Aditya Chopra helped her realise how much of a "naïve beauty" her character is, as Shalini Pandey recalls. "I did the character so nicely because of this little realisation! After it was released online, I received a lot of positive feedback, which touched me. Among all the reactions, what I found most interesting—though I didn't see this coming—was how my followers responded to the delicate representation."

The topics covered in her movie were nothing new to the actress. She is acutely conscious of gender inequality and exploitation. She continues, describing, "In our circle, we talk about these topics a lot. However, it really freaked me out when I was investigating it in prehistoric times! The ability to discuss all of this openly is one of the reasons I feel so fortunate to live in the modern era. Even thinking about the struggles those women had in the past gave me chills. It is depressing to consider it even." It was during the filming of this movie that she discovered her dancing skills too! "Although my body is a little in the way of

some of the dance moves, I still felt like I was a really excellent dancer. I'm attempting to convey how certain bodies have a strong inclination towards dance. All I'd done was western dance. My body was therefore resisting some of the traditional moves. Only after intense practices did I start to shift, both in terms of how I presently walk and how I used to walk. My facial expressions also improved greatly, looking much better on screen." By the end of the interview, all she could remember was how unreal it was when she first started working with Yash Raj Films and how every actress in Mumbai dreams of being referred to as the "Yash Raj Heroine!" To her, it was the realisation of a dream. It is nothing less than a dream come true for her to be acting for all the production houses she had heard about as a child. It seems that they take wonderful care of their actresses!



World photography

day special

## AMID SHADOWS AND SPOTLIGHT

AARTI SREENATH

In a world flooded with fleeting images, there are few photographers who capture the essence of life with the depth and intimacy that transforms moments into timeless stories. For this photographer, the camera is not just a tool; it is a bridge to unseen worlds, a voice for the voiceless and a means to illuminate the profound beauty in everyday struggles.

Rana Pandey emerges as a visual poet, weaving narratives that go beyond the surface. A documentary and travel photographer of remarkable depth, his portfolio reveals the multifaceted layers of socio-economic realities and the often-overlooked aspects of human life, all captured through a lens that seeks intimacy and truth.

His journey as a photographer is one of relentless curiosity to unearth stories buried beneath the hustle of daily life. His work doesn't just capture images; it captures the essence of lives lived on the margins, often forgotten by the mainstream. Whether it's the resilient spirit of female carpet weavers in Mirzapur or the quiet dignity of widows in Vrindavan, his photographs tell stories that resonate with raw emotion and a deep sense of empathy.

Rana's work earned global recognition at *PhotoFest*, a prestigious National Geographic-curated festival held in the enchanting town of Mexico. Out of a staggering 13,000 entries from over 195 countries, his photograph stood among the top 25 to his ability to find beauty in the mundane and meaning in the overlooked. The same year, his artistry was celebrated at the *Kolkata International Photography Festival*, further solidifying his place among the most evocative visual storytellers of his generation.

With a passion ignited by the socio-economic realities often overlooked by society, this visual storyteller dives deep into the shadows where life's most poignant tales reside. "As a visual storyteller, I believe it is my responsibility to shed light on stories that remain hidden in the shadows," he shares.

The journey to these stories, however, is never straightforward. "Approaching subjects can be tricky, especially when covering sensitive issues," he admits. Trust, he believes, is the key. "Spending time with the people before I start shooting is essential. I listen to their stories, share moments of their lives and only then do I bring out the camera."

One such photograph, which earned him recognition at *PhotoFest* in Mexico, stands out among the thousands of images that crossed his path. "This photograph is special to me," he reflects, recounting the serendipitous moment on his first trip to Kashmir. "We encountered a unique traffic jam, hundreds of goats and sheep being herded by nomadic shepherds. One shepherd stood out, carrying a newborn goat on his back. I knew I had to capture that moment." That image, now celebrated globally, symbolises not just human compassion but the unexpected beauty found in the rhythms of daily life.

His project *How India Prays*, released at the House of Lords by Cherie Blair, further cements his reputation as a master of bridging the gap between literature and photography. The book captures the spiritual essence of India in a way that transcends mere documentation, offering a glimpse into the soul of a nation.

But perhaps it was his work on the women carpet weavers of Mirzapur that truly transformed him. "Documenting the lives of the women carpet weavers in Mirzapur was a powerful and transformative experience," he recalls. "Amid the blistering heat of May, with temperatures soaring to 40 degrees Celsius, he navigated from one weaving center to another, capturing the essence of each woman's story. "The resilience and dedication of these women were profoundly inspiring," he says. The project revealed to him the transformative power of traditional crafts, not just as a means of livelihood but as a source of independence and pride for the women who weave their destinies thread by thread.

His current project, *Torn between the Tiger and the Tide*, delves into the sensitive issue of human-wildlife conflict in the Sundarbans. Balancing the authenticity of the story with its impact is a challenge he approaches with the same reverence and commitment that has defined his career.

His recent exhibition spotlighted the unseen lives of Vrindavan's widows, a project close to his heart. "The project *LEST WE FORGET: A SISTERHOOD CALLED WHITE* delves into the poignant narratives of widows in Vrindavan," he explains. Living among them, he documented their stories, forming bonds that transcended the lens. A simple gesture from one of the widows, gifting him a shawl for his mother, left a lasting impression on him. "This moment profoundly moved me," he says, "teaching me what living with pride and dignity truly looks like."

Recognition, in the form of awards from the Istanbul Photo Awards and the Russian Press Photo Award, has come as both an honour and a responsibility. "Such recognition motivates me more than it adds pressure," he confesses.

Documentary photography often requires patience, a quality that has paid off in his work. "Patience and timing are



essential in photography," he notes, recalling a moment in Varanasi at the Blue Lassi shop, where he waited for half an hour before capturing a shot that aligned perfectly with his vision. The photograph, titled "Lost Identities," is a testament to the art of waiting for the right moment.

As he looks to the future, the road ahead is filled with possibilities. Themes of human-wildlife conflict and the interplay between humans and nature intrigue him, offering rich storytelling opportunities that align with his passion for capturing the complexities of life.

To aspiring photographers, his advice is simple yet profound: "Start local. Focus on photographing and documenting stories within your own community." Local stories, he believes, hold just as much significance as those from distant lands and provide invaluable insights and opportunities to hone one's craft.

If given the chance to photograph any historical figure, his choice would be Bruce Lee. "Capturing the essence of the man behind the legend would be a profound honour," he muses, reflecting his admiration for Lee's charisma, strength and groundbreaking contributions to martial arts and film. In the age of social media, his advice is clear: "Stop oversaturating your photographs."

There are many misconceptions about the life of a travel and documentary photographer, and one he is keen to debunk is the notion that they make money on every trip. "Often, the first trip is more about investing time and resources," he explains. The real income, he says, comes after extensive strategising, preparation and execution.

For this photographer, the world is a canvas of endless stories waiting to be told. And with every click of the shutter, he brings us closer to understanding the raw, unfiltered beauty of the human experience.

<p><b>TRENDING</b></p>	<p><b>PERSON</b></p> <p><b>SHEIKH HASINA</b></p> <p>Sheikh Hasina, who recently resigned as Prime Minister and fled to India, faced a murder case on Tuesday. Her extended stay in India is reportedly straining relations between India and Bangladesh's interim government.</p>	<p><b>VIDEO</b></p> <p><b>78TH INDEPENDENCE DAY BEATING RETREAT CEREMONY</b></p> <p>A video of the 78th Independence Day Beating Retreat ceremony has gained widespread attention, highlighting the military's synchronised formations and powerful performances.</p>	<p><b>MOVIE</b></p> <p><b>THANGALAN</b></p> <p>Vikram's <i>Thangalan</i> saw a respectable opening in India, even as it faced competition from multiple releases. Directed by Pa Ranjith, the film leveraged its Independence Day release to draw audiences despite receiving mixed reviews. The movie has garnered 12 crore net at the Indian box office.</p>	<p><b>SONG</b></p> <p><b>NALLANCHU THELLACHEERA</b></p> <p>On Monday, the producers of the film <i>Mr. Bachchan</i> dropped a new tune. Mickey J. Meyer is the composer of the song. The lively dance track has playback vocals by Sreerama Chandra and Sameera Bharadwaj, with Ramya Behara receiving credit for the chorus vocals.</p>	<p><b>PICTURE</b></p> <p><b>MASSIVE NIGHT PROTESTS</b></p> <p>Indian women led nighttime protests following the rape and murder of a doctor. Protests have erupted across the country, with doctors and citizens alike demanding justice for the heinous crime that took place in Kolkata.</p>
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# From jingles to *Jai Ho* and beyond



## A QUIET KID

As a kid, I was always calm and composed. I would often be playing with myself in the corner of a room and my family members would go searching for me. I used to be quite happy in my own little world, dreaming up about things (giggles). I am an extrovert now, though I still have preference for my silent zone. When I party, I party with my family or friends; I do party hard but again prefer my silence. My silence is longer than my hectic or I'd say a fun life, hehehe!

## TRADITIONAL FAMILY, BUT LIBERAL PARENTS

During my growing years, my parents were very lenient towards me. I come from a very orthodox south Indian family. My parents hailed from Chennai, but my dad had moved to Mumbai in pursuit of better job opportunities back in the 60s. Although my parents were orthodox in their outlook, they never placed restrictions on us on matters like cutting hair or wearing fashionable clothes.

## MOM ASPIRED TO MAKE IT BIG AS A SINGER

My sisters and I were considered gifted by our parents. My mother, who was grounded in Carnatic music, had aspired to make it big as a singer. But she had to give up her dream because of her family and the need to co-work in her own life. My mother was the one to initially sound my father about our being gifted as singers and to push us into pursuing musical training.



## ART ALWAYS APPRECIATED

Like in most south Indian homes, we were always motivated to take up any of the art forms, be it Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, or learning music. We were encouraged to learn any art form, but whether we were also allowed to make a career out of it is somewhat debatable, given the notion *nahi nahi bachchon ki shaadi nahi hogi, waghera waghera*. Still, my parents were very forward-thinking.

## 'YOUNGEST' SINGER OF IYER HOUSE

I was the youngest among four sisters; so, I was pampered a lot by all of them. I am close to all three of them. My elder sister (Kalpana Iyer) of course gained a lot more respect. I never called the others 'Akka' or 'Didi'. My parents were very comfortable with us calling one another by name. So, we are more like friends even today. We fight like crazy even now (laughs) but you know the bonds are strong. My sister Shobha, who is slightly older than me and I had the same group of friends while growing up; so, she knows my deepest and darkest secrets, haha!

## WINNING COMPETITION AT 10

There was a lot of music in the family and whenever anybody visited us; my mom would ask me to sing. They'd be like 'She must take up music, irrespective of what else they'd want to do! By the time I was 10, I was singing well. My sister Kalpana, she was like 'Now, let's give it a chance'. My second sister and I entered a competition and I won it, while she stood 6th. After that, the seed was kind of sown and the talent was so special to just let it go.



## WE DID NOT KNOW IF WE STOOD A CHANCE

My dad was insisting that academics should also be taken seriously and completed. I was a commerce student. We did not have any connections in the film industry or the music industry. In those days, with Lataji and Ashaji being at the top of their game, we did not know if we stood a chance. We had heard that it was very difficult for a young artiste to get a chance. So, we kept learning and 'kept hopes alive', as they say.

## ATTAINING HER B COM GOAL

During my days in college, I started getting some opportunities. A musician informed me that there was this person who does a lot of these advertising jingles and that he'd like to try my voice. I came back and told my parents about this conversation and they were like 'This is the break you are looking for and try'. I got an opportunity, grabbed it, and did a couple of jingles and slowly the word spread around. In due course, I finished my 3rd year B Com as well.

## DEBUT THAT TURNED INTO TRIBUTE

My playback debut involved doing two songs for *Dus*. The same week Rahman saab called me. I remember three of these people came up to me, and said 'Oh he (AR Rahman) has heard about you and he is keen to work with you', so, I was very excited and I kept waiting and finally he called and I went and he was like 'There are just 2-3 lines in the song'. I was like 'Never mind'; I was just dying for this opportunity to work with him. He was such a huge name even back then. So, I recorded the songs and unfortunately the director of *Dus* passed away. The album was released a year later as a tribute. A lot of footage was already shot and for the song we erected a 40-foot-high stage at Juhu Beach in Mumbai. We performed the song *Suno Gaur Se* to promote the album and the song. It was a wonderful debut.

## A R RAHMAN'S 2:00 AM CALL FOR OSCARS

We (AR Rahman and I) were on a show on a TV Channel where Rahman sir was the judge and the playback singers were given themes to sing and we had to create a new song. After the shoot, at about 2:00 am in the morning, he was like 'I'd want to record this song with you. Would you like to come now? I was like

'Yeah sure' and recorded this song at 4:00 in the morning and came back, slept for a few hours and went for the shoot. We recorded the song and apparently Danny Boyle came and absolutely loved it. However, he wanted a few changes, he wanted more male vocals. I had no idea that the song would go global! We don't get those kinds of briefs when going to record a film song. We just know that we are recording for this actor, actress, and what the film is going to be about. I was extremely happy over the fact that a song of mine is in an international film. The film was a huge hit and then the Grammy and the Oscar happened and it feels so surreal. Even today when I go on stage, this is the song that's always requested the most. In fact, the backdrop in all my shows has a huge *Jai Ho* written on the screen. It is the biggest feather in my cap.



**W**hat had started off as any teen's fascination for a musical career turned into a consuming passion for Mahalakshmi Iyer, thanks to her mother's vicarious pleasure in honing her singing abilities. Today, Mahalakshmi's voice adorns some of the biggest blockbuster hits to which we can never stop grooving. Well, it's not just in Hindi that she has made a mark. She has been an enduring sensation down south with her melodious numbers.

Born into a traditional south India family in which music occupied a pride of place; she had a congenial environment at home, with her mother, Vijaya, being a proficient Carnatic classical singer, and her father Krishnamurthy a veritable classical music aficionado. They say 'Music runs in the family'. And, to cap it all, Mahalakshmi, the youngest of four siblings, came to be the most pampered one with the family's encouragement of her singing career. Beginning with jingles during her college days, she rose steadily by dint of hard work, eventually working with stalwarts like AR Rahman, Pankaj Udhas, SP Balasubramanyam, Hariharan, Ilaiyaraaja and many more.

She reached the acme of her singing career with her voice behind the Academy- and Grammy award-winning song *Jai Ho* from the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*. Breaking language barriers, she went on to win hearts down south by working with Ilaiyaraaja, Hariharan, Mani Sharma and MM Keeravani and Nadeem-Shravan, among others. In her conversation with **Tejal Sinha** of *The Pioneer* for our special *Dil Se* segment, the chanteuse takes us through her growing years, her parents' support throughout her rise as a singer, working with virtuosos and more. Interestingly, she prefaced our chat with her soft corner for Hyderabadis, saying: "I have often performed in Hyderabad. The love the audience brings on there has been tremendous, makes me want to come back to the city again and again. It's always fun and I'm always ecstatic to perform for my Hyderabad audience in their city."



## RAPID FIRE

**DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS:** Calm, giving and loyal

**YOUR IDOL IN THE INDUSTRY:** Lata Mangeshkar

**DRIVING FORCE:** My family

**RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL:** Spiritual

**YOUR HIGH PHASE:**

My debut as a playback singer, Oscar and Filmfare

**YOUR LOW PHASE:** Regrettably, my father's accident and his subsequent death

## RENDERING BACKGROUND VOCALS FOR PANKAJ UDHAS

When I was a beginner, I was waiting for opportunities to go and sing in a studio and learn about studio techniques, voice modulation and all. So I'd grab the opportunities that came my way. Slowly there was this word around that there is this young singer who is good and comfortable singing Indian classical, Indian ghazals or slightly light music or even slightly westernised music. Pankaji heard me calling and said 'I have this album that I am already doing. I had already recorded something for him in another song for a television serial title song so he knew my voice and knew what capability I had. He told me about his album and it was an 8-song album and he wanted the call of a beloved. All the songs in the album had a woman's voice midway going all through the ghazals. I was very happy, imagining eight songs and I had wonderful parts to sing. It was another test for me as a playback singer too.

## ENCOUNTER WITH SP BALASUBRAMANYAM

I had again gone and sung the song for Rahman saab and I did not know who the male counterpart would be. I came back to Mumbai and after a few months, I realised it was SPB sir who had sung the male part in *Velli Malarae*. I was whooping after I got to know about it. While I was on a US-Canada tour with Rahman saab, there was this man standing there, who was none other than THE SP Balasubramanyam himself. So humble, down-to-earth. As we met, he instantly said 'Hi Mahalakshmi, we finally meet'. I thought he wouldn't know who I was and here, he was addressing me with so much warmth. Then I watched him perform on stage, effortlessly singing a song. It was like he's just woken up from sleep and sang it like so apt and nothing here or there. It was just amazing. Watching SPB sir performing *Raja* in three different languages at the same time, because we had a crowd of over 40-45 thousand mix so he would intersperse the lines one in Tamil, one in Telugu and one in Hindi effortlessly without any hiccups, everything was so spot on. He was such a wonderful entertainer. I had my best experience with him.

## AR RAHMAN & SHANKAR-EHSAAN-LOY'S TREMENDOUS SUPPORT

Down south AR Rahman plays a very important role and in Mumbai, it is Shankar Ehsaan-Loy. Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy are my buddies. From the first few commercial jingles to the first song featured in a movie, they have had a significant impact on my

professional journey. I have never encountered music composers as prolific as them. I would call AR Rahman saab 'Mr Spontaneous'. He possesses a quick intellect and acts on impulse. He will say to you, "Here is the song, do as you please with it". He allows you total freedom as a singer and the liberty to interpret the song as you please. He is the most open-minded composer I have encountered. He is known as the most innovative composer because he has consistently challenged musical norms throughout his career.

## FLAIR OF MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

I've been fortunate and I keep saying this that I love languages and I have a flair for languages. Every language has its own beauty. I'm very fortunate that I've also worked with the stalwarts from the Marathi industry. In Hindi, I have worked with Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Vishal-Shekhar, my first Tamil song which was with Hariharan sir was composed by Ilaiyaraaja sir. Talking of Tamil, my mother said you shouldn't sing in Tamil because I was born and brought up in Mumbai and our Tamil was not that perfect. At home, we speak English, Hindi and at times Marathi also. Tamil was the language of communication only when I spoke with my mom and dad. With them too, at times it was with a mix of other languages. She was very concerned about me singing in Tamil (giggles) and then I sang a lot for Rahman sir and all of them have been super-duper hits. It's difficult to say who played a major role but if you talk about recognition it is obviously because I sang for Rahman sir and in Mumbai for Shankar.

## TRANSITION FROM HINDUSTANI TO CARNATIC

I was initially apprehensive about singing down south. Generally, in those days they wondered if you had the proper diction but by then I had already started singing in the industry with jingles in various Indian languages which further polished my south Indian diction. I have learnt Hindustani classical and not Carnatic. My exposure to music was initially Hindustani. For me to go down south and get the very typical Carnatic style was a big plus and made my mom very happy. It gave me challenges to work very hard and live up to expectations. I got an out-and-out Carnatic classical kind of song, *Meethaatha Oru Veenai*, as a playback singer. I was very warmly welcomed in the south with so many songs. I was taken under their wings and I've learnt so much from them. I really treasure these songs in Tamil and Telugu. My discography is so interesting because of all those hits. They include: *Vanna Poongavai*, *Kandukonden Kandukonden*, *Pengal Nenjai*, *Oru Pournami*, and *Ore Ore Vaanam*, among many in Tamil, while, *Nelluri Nerajana*, *Kala Anuko Kaladanuko*, *Ee Nagaram*, *Paajukunna Segalalona*, *Manasa Nuvvunde*, *Endammaaya* and *Naa Raja* in Telugu.