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**EAM calls on Kuwaiti PM, Crown Prince; discuss bilateral ties**

**'MY EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN DURING SHOOT OF ADHA RE ADHA MADE ME REALISE CHALTI RAHE ZINDAGI'**



**Ankith Koyya's big break in Maruthi Nagar**

**SUBRAMANYAM!**



**"It is a great honor to represent Telangana in the Rajya Sabha. Telangana has a rich cultural heritage. It stood against the bourgeois system. Telangana is a state that has achieved women empowerment. Vengeful politics is increasing in the country. This situation exists in many states along with Telangana. Congress needs to work more actively in this situation".**

**- Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Congress leader, Telangana**

P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**AP will host National Games...**

Vijayawada Parliament Member Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has announced that the National Games will be held in Andhra Pradesh in 2027, with Vijayawada being one of the host cities. He noted that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is making significant efforts to ensure the successful organisation of the National Games in the State. MP Kesineni Chinni attended a meeting of the Polytechnic College Walkers Association at the college grounds in Vijayawada on Sunday. Recently, Chinni was elected as the Andhra Cricket Association...

-PAGE: 3

**Sri Lankan President Wickremesinghe...**

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has emphasised the importance of strengthening economic cooperation and regional integration with Japan to India, with a special focus on deepening ties with New Delhi, as his country seeks to emerge from bankruptcy. Wickremesinghe's comments came as he was virtually addressing the Head of State Session of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, held under the theme "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future." From the north-central...

-PAGE: 5

**ISRO's SSLV, private players Skyroot...**

ISRO's latest satellite launch vehicle "SSLV" is the first rocket in its category to be ready for commercialisation with two others, 'Vikram' from Skyroot and 'Agnibaan' from Agnikul Cosmos, expected to vie for market share to place small satellites in orbit. According to industry estimates, the satellite launch market in India is expected to grow from USD 720 million in 2022 to USD 3.5 billion by 2033 and small satellites are likely to be the most preferred modes for a number of applications ranging...

-PAGE: 8

**Our fight will continue, truth...**

Overwhelmed by the grand reception she received on her arrival from the Paris Olympics, wrestler Vinesh Phogat said that her fight against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) would continue and hoped that "truth will prevail". Hundreds of supporters had gathered outside the IGI airport here on Saturday to give a rousing welcome to Vinesh who was disqualified for being overweight after reaching the 50kg final at the Olympics. Vinesh's appeal against her disqualification was rejected by...

-SPORTS

## CM to launch a slew of projects in Sri City today

**2,740 jobs to be created with an investment of Rs 900 cr**



◆ Naidu to inaugurate 15 organisations and lay stones for 7 institutions

◆ AP to sign deals with four companies for an additional Rs 1,213 cr investment

◆ After Sri City, the CM will visit the Somasila irrigation project in Nellore district.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu is set to launch several projects and lay foundation stones for new institutions in Sri City on August 19 (Monday). During his visit, the Chief Minister will inaugurate operations for 15 organisations and lay the foundation stones for the establishment of seven additional institutions. As per the schedule, Chief Minister Naidu will depart from

his residence in Undavalli at 10 am and arrive at Tirupati Airport by 11.30 am. From there, he will travel to Sri City by helicopter. The CM is expected to launch multiple projects and initiate the operations of 15 organisations. Additionally, he will lay the foundation stones for seven more institutions. Officials have stated that these developments are expected to generate employment opportunities for 2,740 people, with an

investment of Rs 900 crore. The Andhra Pradesh state government will also sign agreements with four leading companies for an additional investment of Rs 1,213 crore. Later, the Chief Minister will meet with the CEOs of various companies at the Sri City Business Centre.

Following his visit to Sri City, Chief Minister Naidu will visit the Somasila irrigation project in the Nellore district before returning in the evening.

## BURNING OF POLAVARAM OFFICE PAPERS 4 employees suspended

**Notices to 2 Deputy Tahsildars**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

East Godavari District Collector P. Prashanti announced on Sunday that four employees have been suspended and two deputy tahsildars have been issued show-cause notices for their negligence in the incident involving the unauthorised burning of office papers at the Polavaram Left Canal Land Collection Office. The suspended employees include Senior Assistants K. Nukaraju and Karam Babu, Special Revenue Inspector K. Kala Jyoti, and Office Subordinate K. Rajasekhar. Deputy Tahsildars A. Kumari and A. Satya Devi have received show-cause notices.

Collector Prashanti stated that a comprehensive departmental inquiry will be conducted into the matter. A complaint has been filed with the Dhavaleswaram police station by Deputy Collector K. Vedavalli, resulting in an FIR being registered as crime number 211/2024. The police have also filed a case under Section 326(f) read with 3(5) of the Indian Law Enforcement Act and Section 4 of the Destruction of Government Property Act, 1984. Both the police and the department will conduct thorough investigations.

It was reported that on Saturday, papers from the Dhavaleswaram-Polavaram Left Canal Land Collection Office (LMC-LA) were



burned, which has been taken seriously. Rajamahendravaram Revenue Divisional Officer K.L. Sivajyothi stated that upon receiving information, revenue officials rushed to the Polavaram project office, and retrieved and examined some half-burnt documents. These documents were found to be of no importance, being mostly Xerox copies and waste papers.

The RDO explained that new cupboards had been installed in the office, and while transferring files from the old cupboards, staff found many Xerox copies and waste papers related to land acquisition in the Polavaram Left Canal area and decided to dispose of them. Burning these papers without prior permission from higher authorities was deemed inappropriate. The RDO confirmed that approximately ninety documents were involved and assured that disciplinary action would be taken against the employees involved.

## AP techie drowns in USA

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In a tragic incident, an Indian software engineer working in the United States drowned in the sea in California.



According to family members, Daddala Butchibabu (40) was employed as a software engineer in California. He and his family were on a holiday and went to the sea to spend time. However, he drowned while swimming. US officials informed his parents, who reside in Mundlamuru village. Butchibabu's death has cast a pall of gloom over the village.

NRI organizations in America are working to repatriate his body to Ongole.



**Woman gang-raped; accused held**

PNS ■ ELURU

In a shocking incident, a woman was gang-raped by three youths in the Ramakoti area here in the wee hours of Saturday. The accused have been arrested.

According to police, a couple from Vijayarai village in Pedavegi mandal had come to Eluru and were employed at a hotel.

While staying near the hotel, the woman's husband befriended the three accused.

The accused offered the man liquor and intoxicated him. When he was semi-conscious due to excessive alcohol consumption, they dragged the woman to an isolated place and gang-raped her.

Later, the victim's husband informed the police with the help of a passerby.

Continued on Page 2

## Privatisation of IAS is 'Modi's guarantee'

**Congress leader Rahul slams lateral entry**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday termed as an "anti-national step" the government's move of recruiting public servants through lateral entry, alleging that the reservation of SCs, STs and OBCs is being "openly snatched away" by such an action.

The former Congress president also alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "attacking the Constitution by recruiting public servants through the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh instead of the Union Public Service Commission".

Gandhi's attack came after it emerged that 45 specialists would soon join key posts of joint secretaries, directors and deputy secretaries in different central ministries.

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.

"Reservation of SC, ST and OBC classes is being openly snatched away by recruiting through lateral entry on important posts in various ministries of the central government," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

"I have always said that the underprivileged are not represented in all



**"Reservation of SC, ST and OBC classes is being openly snatched away by recruiting through lateral entry on important posts in various ministries of the central government."**

the country's top posts, including the top bureaucracy. Instead of improving it, they are being pushed further away from the top posts through lateral entry," he said.

"This is a robbery of the rights of talented youth preparing for UPSC and an attack on the concept of social justice including reservation for the underprivileged," he alleged.

Continued on Page 2

## M'giri ACA Stadium to host intl matches within a year: MP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) president, Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni), the newly elected president of ACA and Vijayawada MP, has outlined plans to ensure that the ACA Stadium in Mangalagiri is ready to host international cricket matches within a year. The stadium is currently under construction, and Chinni has committed to addressing existing issues and completing the work to prepare the venue for international events.

During his visit to the stadium on Sunday, Chinni inspected various areas, including the playing field, gallery, and other amenities still under development. He expressed dissatisfaction with the progress, attributing delays to the negligence of



ACA president Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) inspecting the ACA Stadium at Mangalagiri in Guntur district on Sunday.

the previous government and the contracting agency responsible for the construction. Chinni noted several defects in the stadium's construction

and emphasised the need to resolve legal disputes with the contracting agency within the next two to three months.

Continued on Page 2

## Vasudeva Reddy played key role in excise scams: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's liquor policy has been embroiled in controversy in recent times. The TDP-led NDA has consistently alleged a liquor scam during the YSRCP regime, similar to those in Delhi and Jharkhand. In light of this, the CID has arrested the former MD of AP Beverages Corporation, Vasudeva Reddy, in connection with the liquor scam.



Sources indicate that Vasudeva Reddy is currently being interrogated by CID officials at an undisclosed location. The fact that Reddy was brought to Andhra Pradesh on special deputation by former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has also gained significance following the arrest.

TDP leaders contend that Reddy was a key figure in the scam, and his arrest today has added signifi-

cant weight to their allegations. Sources indicate that Vasudeva Reddy is currently being interrogated by CID officials at an undisclosed location. The fact that Reddy was brought to Andhra Pradesh on special deputation by former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has also gained significance following the arrest.

Continued on Page 2

## LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

# Americans give Harris an advantage over Trump

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Vice President Kamala Harris has a perceived advantage over former President Donald Trump on several leadership qualities such as honesty, a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds, although Americans are slightly more likely to trust Trump on the economy and immigration.

Nearly half of Americans say that "committed to democracy" and "disciplined" are attributes that better describe Harris. About 3 in 10 say these qualities better describe Trump.

About 4 in 10 say Harris is someone who "cares about people like you" while about 3 in 10 say that



**Nearly half of Americans say that "committed to democracy" and "disciplined" are attributes that better describe Harris**

about Trump. About 4 in 10 say "honest" better describes Harris and 24% say that quality better describes Trump.

Both parties are racing to define Harris as she prepares to accept the

**Trump has spent the campaign championing himself as a strong leader who is capable of handling tough crises facing the country**

Trump has spent the campaign championing himself as a strong leader who is capable of handling tough crises facing the country and suggesting that foreign leaders wouldn't respect Harris in the White House. But he doesn't have an advantage with Americans on that characteristic, according to the survey. Four in 10 U.S. adults see Trump as a strong leader, and



roughly the same share say that about Harris. About 4 in 10 say Trump is capable of handling a crisis, and a similar share say Harris is better positioned to do so.

Continued on Page 2

## KOLKATA RAPE-MURDER CASE

# SC takes cognisance of incident; hearing tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has taken suo motu cognisance of the alleged rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, and will hear the case on August 20.

According to the cause list of August 20 uploaded on the apex court website, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is scheduled to hear on Tuesday a matter



titled 'In Re: Alleged rape and murder incident of a trainee doctor in RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata and related issue'. The alleged rape and murder of the junior doctor in a seminar hall of the state-run hospital has sparked nationwide protests.

Continued on Page 2

# Monday Mirchi

## SIMULTANEOUS ABSENCE OF CM & CS: A RARE SPECTACLE

You'd be hard-pressed to find another instance where both the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary simultaneously went on a foreign tour. It's practically a rule that when one is off for the cause of the State, the other stays back to keep the fort secure. But this time, with Revanth Reddy and his entourage, including the Chief Secretary, off to the US, the administrative ship was left without its usual captains. And now, everyone's asking the million-dollar question: Who was steering the ship? Nobody was officially designated to play captain, leaving the whole state wondering if this was a planned experiment in administrative independence - or a classic case of "Oops, we forgot!" Either way, it's got everyone talking and, for some, panicking. Stay tuned as the plot thickens!

## I&PR FALLS SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS DURING US TRIP

Rumour has it that the recent US visit, which was supposed to be a grand showcase of our State's prowess, hit a bit of a snag - thanks to the I&PR department. Commissioner Hanumanth Rao was expected to make this trip a glittering success, but instead, it seems the department's performance was short of expectations. The grapevine is buzzing with confusion, especially since the Chief Minister's PRs might be new, but the seasoned officers should have had this covered! The government's starting to wonder why this once well-oiled machine is now sputtering. The whispers suggest that this isn't just a minor blip but might lead to a deeper dive into the department's operations. Who knew managing PR could feel like rocket science?

## THE PENDULUM SWINGS FROM DICTATORIAL TO 'TOO MUCH DEMOCRACY'

The switch from the BRS government to the Congress-led administration has been a bit like watching a pendulum swing wildly from one extreme to the other. From a regime that was accused of being dictatorial, we've now swung to one where democracy seems to be on steroids. Some bureaucrats are starting to feel the pinch, with one lamenting, "We've gone from too much dic-

tatorship to too much democracy. Honestly, too much of anything isn't good!" It turns out that when everyone gets a say, things slow down - considerably. The new government's next challenge? Figuring out how to turn down the volume on all those voices so they can get something done!

## A TALE OF TWO THEORIES: BABUS DIVIDED OVER SOMESH'S GST ROW

Somesh Kumar's Rs 1400 crore GST-related controversy is the latest hot topic in bureaucratic circles, and opinions are as split as a poorly assembled jigsaw puzzle. Some officials are brushing it off as a storm in a teacup, chalking it up to Somesh Kumar's love for micromanagement. Others, however, are buzzing with talk that TK Sreedevi's recent transfer might be connected to the scandal. But hold on - yours truly has caught wind of a different tale: Sreedevi's move might have more to do with her unique management style, which rubbed some people the wrong way. As the drama unfolds, one thing's for sure - Somesh Kumar seems unfazed, happily celebrating the second edition of his book *Methods for Community Participation: A Complete Guide for Practitioners Book*, while the rest of us are left wondering what's really going on!

## IPS DILEMMA: CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE OF SHIFTING POLITICAL WINDS

If you thought school detention was rough, wait till you hear about the latest punishment doled out to some senior IPS officers. In a plot twist straight out of a bureaucratic soap opera, several officers have been applied for mass leave after being caught in the crossfire of shifting political winds. You see, their close ties with the previous government didn't sit well with the new bosses, leading to their transfer to 'insignificant' posts. But the real kicker? The Andhra Pradesh DGP has now ordered these officers to report to HQ at 10 am sharp, sign the attendance register, and then - brace yourself - sit in the waiting room doing nothing till 5 pm. It's like a time-out for grown-ups! Not surprisingly, all 16 officers have decided to take a leave of absence. Can you blame them?

- Yours truly

## AP lags in PLI scheme: BJP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Central Government announced the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to promote 'Make in India' under Atma Nirbhar Bharat, with a focus on high-efficiency solar PV module manufacturing to encourage green energy. However, it is disappointing that only one or two firms in Andhra Pradesh managed to secure PLI benefits during the previous regime led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy (2019-24), and no projects have been completed thus far, said Lanka Dinakar, AP BJP chief spokesperson, in a release on Sunday.

He urged the present State Government, led by Chandrababu Naidu, to investigate why manufacturers failed to achieve targets despite the availability of substantial incentives under the PLI scheme.

Additionally, he requested the Chief Minister to assess the state of the industry over the past five years and explore new investment opportunities in the green energy sector through the Central Government's PLI initiative.

Given the current administration's relentless efforts to attract investments to Andhra Pradesh, it is crucial to take proactive steps to leverage the PLI scheme for the renewable energy sector and draw in new investments.

## BRUTAL RAPE & MURDER OF JUNIOR DOCTOR

# AIIMS-M'giri doctors, nurses continue protest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Doctors, house surgeons, medical students, interns, and nurses from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Mangalagiri continued their protest for the second day on Sunday, in response to the brutal rape and murder of a junior doctor at RG Kar Hospital.

A mega rally was organised at 5 pm, beginning at the rear entrance of AIIMS Mangalagiri and culminating at the Ambedkar statue at the Mangalagiri bus stand. The rally saw participation from faculty doctors, interns, nurses, medical students, and nursing students, all demanding justice for the victim and the implementation of a Central Protection Act.

A Senior Resident at AIIMS Mangalagiri highlighted the urgent need for a Central Protection Act to safeguard medical professionals. Following the rally, medical students staged a flash mob in front of the Ambedkar statue to raise awareness about their cause.

"The AIIMS Mangalagiri doctors and staff have unitedly demanded justice for the victim doctor. We are not safe at our



workplace, and it is high time we had a Central Protection Act (CPA) to ensure our safety," said a Senior Resident at AIIMS Mangalagiri. On Saturday, the Andhra

Pradesh Junior Doctors' Association (APJUDA), AIIMS-Mangalagiri, the Government Doctors Association, IMA, and other healthcare organisations actively participated in a 24-hour bandh. They demanded justice for the victim and the implementation of the Central Protection Act to ensure the safety of healthcare professionals.

"We are deeply disturbed by the tragic incident at RG Kar Medical College. We call on the government to provide safe working environments by implementing the Central Protection Act. We risked our lives during COVID-19, and now we need protection," said Dr A Vijay Chandra Reddy, representing the Faculty Welfare Association at AIIMS Mangalagiri.

Dr Santosh, a Senior Resident at AIIMS Mangalagiri, expressed determination to continue the protests.

"We will not stop until our demands are met: justice for the victim and the implementation of the Central Protection Act. Today, we were joined by faculty associations, nursing staff, patients, and various social activists, which has strengthened our resolve," he said.

## Fire at Tirumala DE office, records damaged in blaze

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Shortly after the deputy engineer's office staff performed a puja and locked the office, a fire broke out in the Annexe Building of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) administrative complex on Saturday. Officials suspect the fire may have been caused by a ceremonial lamp ('Deepam') left burning after the room was closed. This is linked to the common practice of performing puja rituals every Saturday in various sections of the building, including TTD offices.

The affected office houses records of TTD engineering works undertaken in temples across South India.

While TTD officials confirmed that some physical documents were burnt in the incident, they assured the public that all critical records remained secure. The TTD engineering department operates with an e-office system, ensuring that all files and records related to engineering works are stored online and remain safe.



TTD Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (CVSO) S Sreedhar reported that the fire was swiftly extinguished by staff using fire extinguishers. The prompt response helped to control the damage, and no significant files were lost. An inventory is currently underway to assess the full extent of the damage, said the security officer.

TTD Chief Engineer Nageswara Rao stated that all important documents are securely stored in electronic form, thanks to TTD's comprehensive e-filing system. Even crucial records like M-

books are preserved as e-M Books. Nageswara Rao further clarified that the documents affected by the fire were mainly under field-level verification, and all critical files are backed up electronically. "The TTD engineering department operates with an e-office system, ensuring that all files and records related to engineering works undertaken in temples across South India remain safe," he said.

A case has been registered, and police along with TTD vigilance and security staff have initiated investigations into the incident.

## Eight IAS officers transferred in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In yet another minor administrative shake-up on Saturday, the Andhra Pradesh government transferred eight IAS officers, as per a Government Order (GO Rt No 1441) issued by Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad.

N Tej Bharath (IAS 2018) has been reassigned to the Municipal Administration & Urban Development Department, where he will serve as Project Director for the Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA).

Abhishek V (IAS 2019), currently serving as Project Officer, ITDA, Paderu, has been moved to the position of Joint Collector & Additional District Magistrate of Chittoor District. Prakar Jain (IAS 2021), previously Sub Collector of Tenali, has been transferred to the role of Sub Collector in Paderu, with additional duties as Project Officer for ITDA, Paderu, until further notice.

Rahul Meena (IAS

2021), who was the Sub Collector in Markapuram, will now serve as Joint Collector & Additional District Magistrate in Kakinada District. Shiv Narayan Sharma (IAS 2021), formerly Sub Collector of Adoni, has been transferred to the same position in Ananthapuram District.

Gobbila Vidyadhari (IAS 2021), previously Sub Collector of Kandukur, will take on the role of Municipal Commissioner at Kurnool Municipal Corporation.

Ashutosh Shrivastava (IAS 2021), who was a Sub Collector in Kovvuru, East Godavari District, has been appointed as Sub Collector of Parvathipuram. He will also hold the additional charge of Project Officer for ITDA, Parvathipuram, until further orders.

Apoorva Bharat (IAS 2021), previously Sub Collector of Penukonda, will now serve as Sub Collector in Etipaka, with additional responsibilities as Project Officer for ITDA, Chintoor, until further notice.

## YSRCP demands thorough probe into Margadarsi scam

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Former minister Ambati Rambabu has accused media baron Ramoji Rao of violating multiple laws and building an empire rooted in corruption. Speaking at a media conference in Guntur on Sunday, Rambabu alleged that Ramoji Rao used his media outlets as a shield to engage in corrupt practices, including the unauthorised collection of public deposits.

He criticised the former Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, for failing to take action against Ramoji despite years of offences, allowing Ramoji and his successors to operate with impunity.

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has called for a comprehensive and transparent investigation into the Margadarsi Chit Fund scam, stressing the need for justice and accountability. Rambabu pointed out that despite nearly five decades of alleged illegal activities by Ramoji Rao in managing his companies, financial institutions, and chit funds, no one has dared to question his operations.

Rambabu also highlighted the significant role of former MP Undavalli Arun Kumar, who first exposed Margadarsi's illegal deposit practices in 2006. After years of legal battles, the Supreme Court ordered a reinvestigation into the matter, and the Reserve Bank of India recently confirmed that Margadarsi's deposits were illegal.

Rambabu warned that those involved, including Margadarsi's directors, will face trial and punishment if found guilty.

## TTD workers' quarters raided by vigilance staff

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Under the direction of TTD Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (CVSO) Sreedhar, TTD Vigilance and Security personnel, in collaboration with local police, conducted a joint raid on the quarters dwellings of workers located behind Balaji Nagar in Tirumala on Sunday.

The authorities discovered that these temporary sheds were originally set up for workers who had been employed as wage labourers in various construction projects in Tirumala.

However, despite the com-

pletion of the work and the departure of the contractor, many individuals continued to reside in more than 70 of these sheds, including some unauthorised persons.

In light of the need to ensure Tirumala's safety, the vigilance team documented the workers during the operation, which took place between 10 am and 12 noon. The list has been forwarded to the Engineering Department for verification.

Moving forward, similar raids will be conducted at regular intervals to monitor and prevent unauthorised entries.

## Mangalagiri ACA Stadium...

Continued from Page 1

He stated that once these legal issues are resolved, the ACA plans to restart the construction and complete the stadium to host international cricket matches within a year. Chinni highlighted that certain areas, such as the dressing rooms, restrooms, and rooms for referees and analysts, have not met the expectations of the BCCI and will need to be reconstructed. Additionally, Chinni men-

tioned that the gallery requires modifications to improve the viewing experience for spectators.

The ACA plans to engage a consultant to address these changes. Following the formation of the Apex Committee, the ACA will prioritise the completion of the Mangalagiri Stadium, including the provision of necessary amenities.

Furthermore, considering the stadium's seating capacity, Chinni announced plans to construct a double railway

overbridge (ROB) on the nearby railway line to improve accessibility. The ACA has already communicated with the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) regarding this proposal.

Guntur District Cricket Association president Ramana Murthy, secretary Ramesh, Central Zone Academy chairman Purushotham, Stadium Manager Bhaskar, Women's Wing Manager Bapuji, and other officials were present during the visit.

## Privatisation of...

Continued from Page 1

The SEBI is a vivid example of what representatives of a few corporates will do by sitting on decisive government posts, where for the first time a person from the private sector was made the chairperson, Gandhi said in an apparent reference to the conflicts of interest allegations against SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch. The INDIA bloc will strongly oppose this "anti-national step" that hurts both the administrative structure and social justice, Gandhi said.

"Privatisation of the IAS is Modi's guarantee for ending reservation," he said. 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 a contract basis. It is the biggest tranche of lateral recruitment being undertaken by the Centre, an official said

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Purnima:	Aug 19 03:05 AM to Aug 19 11:55 PM
Krishna Paksha Pratipada:	Aug 19 11:55 PM to Aug 20 08:33 PM
Nakshatram:	
Shravana:	Aug 18 10:14 AM to Aug 19 08:10 AM
Dhanishta:	Aug 19 08:10 AM to Aug 20 05:45 AM
Rahukalam:	7:37 AM to 9:11 AM
Yamagandam:	10:45 AM to 12:19 PM
Varjyam:	12:10 PM to 01:36 PM
Gulika:	1:53 PM to 3:27 PM
Amritakalam:	08:24 PM to 09:50 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:54 AM to 12:44 PM

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy  
Temp: 36°  
Humidity: 70%  
Sunrise: 5:52 AM  
Sunset: 6:30 PM  
Updated: August 18, 2024 5:00 PM

## Woman gang-raped...

Continued from Page 1

The One Town police promptly responded, arrested the three accused - Narapati Nagendra, Madadani Ranga Rao, and Gaddi Vijay Kumar - and produced them before the court. The court remanded them to judicial custody for 14 days. Talking to the media at the One Town police station on Sunday, DSP P Shrivani Kumar said that the 35-year-old victim hailed from Dharmajigudem in Chintalapudi mandal and was widowed. She subsequently married a man from Vijayarai village in Pedavegi mandal, and the couple were employed at a hotel. Unable to find a rented house, they were residing on the premises of a temple.

## Vasudeva Reddy played...

Continued from Page 1

The TDP alleges that after appointing Vasudeva Reddy on deputation, Jagan Mohan Reddy entrusted him with the responsibility of liquor sales across the State. Reddy is accused of influencing distilleries, liquor depots, and liquor shops at Jagan Mohan Reddy's behest, playing a pivotal role in promoting J Brands. The TDP criticised Reddy for acting as the sole authority in the liquor scam and going into hiding for the past two months after the change of government. Given these circumstances, the arrest of Vasudeva Reddy has become crucial for the CID's investigation.

## SC takes cognisance of...

Continued from Page 1

The body of the postgraduate trainee with severe injury marks was found inside the seminar hall of the hospital's chest department on August 9. A civic volunteer was arrested by the Kolkata Police in connection with the case the next day. The Calcutta High Court on August 13 ordered the transfer of the probe into the case from the Kolkata Police to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) which started its investigation on August 14.

The high court had ordered transfer of the probe to the CBI while hearing petitions, including

the one moved by the victim's parents praying for a court-monitored probe.

Observing that the mob violence in RG Kar Medical College and hospital was an absolute failure of state machinery, the high court had on August 16 directed the police and the hospital authorities to file affidavits on the situation there. The high court had said it was hard to believe that the police intelligence did not have information about the gathering of 7,000 people, when the state's lawyer told the court that a mob of such a number had assembled at the hospital in the early hours of Thursday

## Americans give Harris...

Continued from Page 1

Americans are about evenly divided between who they think is more capable of winning in November - Trump or Harris. In July, before Biden dropped out of the race, only about 2 in 10 Americans thought he was more capable of winning, while about twice as many thought that about Trump. "Trump had a better chance when Joe Biden was running," said Lisa Miller, a 42-year-old student in Elko, Nevada, and a Republican. "I think a lot of people who were insecure about Joe Biden are more secure with Kamala Harris' age and cognitive abilities."

has advantages on the economy and immigration. Americans are more likely to trust Trump over Harris when it comes to

handling the economy or immigration, but the difference is slight - 45% say Trump is better positioned to handle the economy, while 38% say that about Harris. The difference is similar in handling immigration. Independents are about twice as likely to trust Trump over Harris on economic issues, and they give him the advantage on immigration as well. Howard Barnes, a 36-year-old artist in San Francisco, is a Republican who says he trusts Trump over Harris on the border. "She doesn't really seem to be proactive about it or even interested in it," Barnes said.

Harris has more of an advantage over Trump when it comes to handling issues related to race and racial inequality, abortion policy, and health care.

# Pavitrotsavams begin amid religious fervour

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamyvarla Devasthanam priests conducted the first-day rituals of Pavitrotsavams atop Indrakeeladri on Sunday. The Pavitrotsavams will continue till August 20. Temple Chief Priest Lingambhotla Durga Prasad and others are performing special pujas in this regard.

Priests performed Snapanabhishekam after the Suprabhatam seva. After Pavitra Mala Dharana, the temple was opened to the public. Ganapati Puja, Mandapa Aradhana, Agni Pratishta and Sarva Prayaschitta Vidhi etc. were performed. The deities of Upalayas were also adorned with Pavitra Mala.

"All the Arjita Sevas have been cancelled in view of the Pavitrotsavams. Priests will perform all types of Kaimkaryas," said Kanaka Durga Temple Executive Officer KS Rama Rao. He said that the Pavitrotsavams are being organised for the well-being of the people and the propagation of Hindu dharma.

On Sunday, a large number of devotees thronged the temple and EO Rama Rao assigned special duties to the temple staff to regulate the rush. Also, they provided buttermilk to the devotees who were waiting



As part of the Pavitrotsavams, Kanaka Durga Temple Executive Officer KS Rama Rao participating in the special rituals on Sunday

in the queue lines. Meanwhile, in view of the huge rush, the temple authorities stopped all protocol darshans between 11 am and 1.30 pm.

## Two drown in sea, woman's Body Recovered



PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

A holiday turned tragic for a group of tourists when two of them, including a young woman, drowned in the sea at Hamsaladeevi in Koduru mandal, Krishna district, on Sunday.

Police reported that a group from Gudivada town had visited Hamsaladeevi beach for a day out. While bathing in the sea, five people were swept away by a large wave. Local fishermen managed to rescue three of them.

However, two individuals drowned. The body of one victim, Sheik Fajal (26), was recovered, while a massive search is underway for the body of Musharaf (20). Marine police and expert swimmers are involved in the search operation.

## Min presents award to JSSWM chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Kandula Durgesh felicitated Putra Hanoch, President of the Jesus Salvation and Social Work Ministries (JSSWM) in Rajahmundry, and conferred upon him the Human Excellence national award. Hanoch received a memento, medal, and certificate of appreciation at a programme on Saturday.

The minister commended Hanoch for his three decades of service to the poor and needy. He highlighted Hanoch's efforts in organizing

meetings, conducting medical camps, treating lepers, caring for the elderly and physically challenged, and providing relief to the distressed during the COVID-19 pandemic through rice and grocery distribution.

The council chairman emphasised Hanoch's contribution to the empowerment of single women through skill development training and providing them with livelihoods. Dr. Addanki Raja Yonah, Chairman of the Philanthropic Society, was also present at the programme.



VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra, along with Executive Engineer Samrajyam, inspecting the side drain on the Pinnamaneni Polyclinic Road at Mogalrajapuram in Vijayawada on Sunday

city by desilting all major and minor drains regularly. He urged officials to promptly address any obstacles found in the drainage system.

VMC Executive Engineer Samrajyam and other officials accompanied Commissioner Dhyanaachandra during the inspection.

## Officials asked to desilt side drains

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra has instructed officials to take immediate action to conduct desilting operations in the side drains to ensure the free flow of drainage water.

During his visit to Polyclinic Road, Mother Teresa Junction, and other areas in Mogalrajapuram on Sunday, the Commissioner observed that many drains were filled with silt, causing drainage blockages and inconvenience to local residents.

Dhyanaachandra directed the officials concerned to remove the accumulated silt and ensure that the drainage water flows freely without any obstructions.

He also emphasised the importance of maintaining proper sanitation across the

## BSP's BC Assembly in Vijayawada tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Andhra Pradesh coordinator and retired Director General of Police (DGP), Dr Purnachandra Rao, on Sunday announced that their party will hold a BC Assembly in Vijayawada on August 20. The event coincides with Sri Narayana Guru Jayanti and will highlight the demand for a comprehensive caste census as the primary

### Will demand conduct of caste census: Dr Purnachandra Rao

issue. Dr Rao emphasised the importance of unity among BC communities to advocate for their rights and rightful political representation. He criticised the historical neglect and exploitation of BCs as mere vote banks and stressed the need for collective action to pressure the

government. The event will feature a roundtable discussion focusing on the rights, reservations, and political representation of BCs. Dr Rao has invited BC leaders and activists from various parties and districts, as well as students and intellectuals, to participate in the day-long

programme to be held at Hotel Sripada. "The leaders will collectively demand an immediate State and national-level caste census, ensuring BCs receive their due share in reservations within legislatures and other local bodies. We will also call for promotions for BCs in government jobs and

universities, prioritise them for nominated posts, and push for the implementation of the BC Protection Act promised by the State government," said Dr Rao. In addition to BSP leaders, representatives from various BC unions across the State are expected to participate in the event.

## Collector proposes natural farming in one lakh acres

### Stresses suitability of tribal farmers for natural farming due to their aversion to chemical fertilisers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Parvathipuram Manyam District Collector A Shyam Prasad has set an ambitious target of introducing natural farming across one lakh acres in the district, involving nearly 75,000 farmers. During a recent visit to Gorada, R Jammu, Kondabaridi, and Valasaballuru villages, the Collector highlighted the district's immense potential for adopting sustainable agricultural practices.

"Natural farming products are in high demand, and our district is well-positioned to capitalise on this trend," said Collector Shyam Prasad. He emphasised the suitability of tribal farmers for natural farming due to their existing aversion to chemical fertilisers. "While we aim for complete natural farming in certain villages initially, this practice can be easily scaled up across the district," he added.

In Gorada, the Collector was welcomed with traditional tribal customs. Inspired by the local enthusiasm, Shyam Prasad actively participated in



Parvathipuram Manyam District Collector A Shyam Prasad joins farmers in sowing paddy during his visit to Gorada village

paddy sowing and natural fertiliser preparation alongside farmers. "Farmers, with their inherent knowledge of natural farming, can achieve remarkable results with minimal support," he observed.

Interacting with self-help groups in Kondabaridi and Valasaballuru, the Collector discussed market opportunities for natural farming products and encouraged farmers to stay updated on market trends. "Our district boasts abundant resources like organic turmeric, moringa,

tamarind, and hill brooms, which we need to focus on," he said, assuring farmers of full administrative support.

Expressing gratitude for the hands-on learning experience, Shyam Prasad described the visit as "memorable and experiential." He reiterated the district administration's commitment to promoting natural farming and empowering farmers. Natural Farming supporter Pari Naidu and various officials accompanied the Collector during the visit.



## TTD EO inspects CRO, Sathagiri

### Observes room allotment system

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD EO J Syamala Rao, along with Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary and CVSO Sreedhar, inspected the Sathagiri Satralu and Central Reception Office at Tirumala the other day.

At Sathagiri Satralu, he inspected the rooms, verified the cleanliness in corridors and bathrooms, and also checked the switchboards, Jalaprasadam, mattresses, beds, cots and bedspreads. Later, he asked the officials concerned to list out the damage and immediately rectify the defects. The EO also directed the officials to carry out deep cleaning and to ensure that the premises are

kept clean. He interacted with the pilgrims and verified the allotment process at the counters.

At the Central Reception Office, the EO observed the process of allotment of rooms to the devotees. He checked the electronic display board, information kiosks and also interacted with the devotees from Karnataka and Kallakurichi.

The EO instructed the officials concerned also to display the information on the availability of rooms at Tirumala for the convenience of the pilgrims. He also directed the officials to make announcements and verify whether any pilgrim needs lockers in PACs and allot them according to availability.

## Chandrababu eyes revival of LuLu Group's project in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The long-debated LuLu Group project, which once promised to transform the City of Destiny with a Rs 2,200-crore investment, has once again become a focal point of public interest. With Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader N Chandrababu Naidu back in the political spotlight, there is growing speculation that he may seek to revive the UAE-based LuLu Group's ambitious plans, which were derailed during the YSR Congress Party's (YSRCP) tenure.

The project, which included an international convention centre, multiplex, and a five-star hotel spread over 13.59 acres of prime beachfront property, was officially launched in 2018 amid much fanfare. However, the initiative faced a significant setback when YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, after assuming office as Chief Minister, abruptly cancelled the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Reddy alleged that the previous TDP administration had undervalued the land, selling it to the LuLu Group at just Rs 4 lakh per acre, whereas the market value was pegged at Rs 700 crore.

In an attempt to salvage the situation, the YSRCP government tried to auction the land through the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) at an upset price of ₹107 crore per acre, a record-setting figure in both Andhra Pradesh and

Project, including convention centre, multiplex, and five-star hotel, was launched in 2018



Telangana. When the auction did not materialise, the government transferred the land's possession from the Andhra Pradesh

Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) to the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) for potential sale.

As the political winds shift with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the helm, Naidu is reportedly strategising how to restore investor confidence and revive projects that were stalled due to YSRCP's policies. Insiders suggest that these efforts may include reaching out to the LuLu Group to reconsider their investment in Visakhapatnam.

Bharat provided a glimpse into the government's future plans, stating, "We are on the cusp of unveiling a new industries policy designed to attract and retain investments. Our goal is to create a welcoming environment for investors, and we will ensure they are met with a red carpet, not red tape."

The LuLu Group project has a complex history, including the contentious acquisition of a four-acre function hall owned by CMR Group. To secure the land for the LuLu project, the government struck a deal with CMR Group, exchanging six government plots with free registration in lieu of the function hall.

The land's fate has been a matter of public concern, with

voices like that of social activist and former IAS officer EAS Sarma weighing in on the issue. Speaking to The Pioneer, Sarma remarked, "The land in question is public land that should be used for a genuine public purpose. Since it is on the beachfront, in my view, it should be left open for public meetings, as any construction there would violate the CRZ norms." He further cautioned, "Such lands are held by the government on behalf of the public, and commercialising them would amount to a breach of the public trust."

The possibility of the project's revival under Naidu's leadership has reignited discussions and speculation across Visakhapatnam's political and business circles.



## Rs 10 coins rejected in Rythu Bazaars despite RBI mandate

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Despite the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) categorically declaring Rs 10 coins as legal tender, the persistent refusal to accept them continues to disrupt daily transactions at Rythu Bazaars in Visakhapatnam. Farmers, traders, and consumers alike have expressed frustration over the issue, leading to frequent disputes.

Ramanamma, a local farmer, highlighted the problem, stating, "We are unable to accept Rs 10 coins as customers refuse them. This has created a significant inconvenience for us." Echoing her concerns, daily wage labourer Naidu shared his ordeal, "Every visit to the Rythu Bazar is a potential confrontation. The refusal to accept Rs 10 coins often forces me to leave without purchasing necessary items."

The aversion to Rs 10 coins persists despite clear legal provisions. Section 6(1) of the Coinage Act, 2011, unequivocally states that coins issued under its authority are legal tender up to specified limits. Non-compliance can result in legal repercussions. However, the ground reality remains unchanged. To address the prevailing misconceptions, the RBI has launched awareness campaigns featuring celebrities. While the central bank continues to emphasise the legality of these coins, the issue persists.

G. Prasad, estate manager of Rythu Bazar, attributed the problem to a broader distrust of currency, including new Rs 20 coins and old Rs 100 notes. A viral social media post earlier this year exacerbated the situation.

## Demand to release Rs 20,000 for tenant farmers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Koulu Rythula (Tenant Farmers) Association State secretary P Jamalaih has demanded that the State government provide investment support to the farmers immediately. Kharif season started 75 days ago and due to the lack of investment support, tenant farmers are facing severe troubles, he said.

### Farmers facing trouble due to lack of investment support

In a press release here on Sunday, Jamalaih stated that the TDP-led NDA government had promised to give Rs. 20,000 in investment support to each tenant farmer. He asked the government to release the amount as early as possible. "The NDA government has completed

two months; however, the government is yet to make any announcement regarding investment support."

"Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu announced the credit plan a month ago, and the government has decided to sanction Rs. 4,000 crore

crop loans to the tenant farmers. However, no tenant farmer has been sanctioned crop loans from the bank. As per the scale of finance, bankers should support the tenant farmers in sanctioning crop loans interest-free," he said.

He also mentioned the tenant

farmers' identity cards. So far, the government has not issued any cards. The registration of e-crop booking has begun. However, there is a delay in issuing identity cards to tenant farmers. At this stage, the government should allow tenant farmers to register their names without

any cards, he urged.

Furthermore, he requested the government to provide free crop insurance facilities to all tenant farmers. However, they can't make use of these facilities without identity cards. So, the government should take necessary steps to direct the Revenue and Agriculture departments to conduct Grama Sabhas to issue cards.

POLAVARAM FILES BURNING

# Minister warns of stringent action

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Stating that the people of the State have concerns about the burning of files related to Polavaram left canal land acquisitions, Minister for Tourism and Cinematography Kandula Durgesh said that the government has taken the matter seriously and an inquiry will be conducted.

The Minister visited the Polavaram Authority Office near here on Sunday and also inspected the half-burnt files and other documents at the dumping yard.

Speaking to the media later, Minister Kandula Durgesh said that a comprehensive inquiry would be conducted to bring the facts to light regarding the burning of Polavaram project files. The coalition government is committed to providing transparent governance, but some officials are indulging in corrupt practices, he regretted.

"The government is taking the burning of files related to the Polavaram project land acquisition very seriously. The Joint Collector has been directed to conduct a comprehensive departmental inquiry.



**"The government is taking the burning of files related to the Polavaram project land acquisition very seriously. The Joint Collector has been directed to conduct a comprehensive departmental inquiry. Stringent action will be taken against those involved in this crime," the Minister noted.**

Stringent action will be taken against those involved in this crime," the Minister noted.

He stated that if there are files to be disposed of, the

officials concerned should obtain permission from higher authorities to do so. While disposing of or burning old files, the government-pre-

scribed guidelines must be followed by the officials, the Minister warned.

Responding to the burning of files related to the

Polavaram Left Canal land acquisition, Joint Collector S. China Ramudu stated that a comprehensive inquiry is being conducted. If any officer is found guilty, strict action will be taken against them, he added.

The Joint Collector clarified that old files are disposed of following the government's guidelines. SP D. Narasimha Kishore said that the officials concerned had lodged a complaint about the burning of files, and the police have begun an investigation.



# Development launched in a big way: Minister Nimmala

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development, Nimmala Ramanaidu, laid the foundation stone for the construction of CC roads at Kambotlapalem village in Yelamanchili mandal on Sunday. The Minister also distributed rice and essential commodities to flood victims at Gamparru village.

Speaking on the occasion, the coalition government has launched development works on a large scale across the state. He emphasised that all damaged roads are being reconstructed or repaired.

Reflecting on the previous administration, Nimmala Ramanaidu criticised the five-year rule of the YSRCP, claiming that development had

stalled and the state had become heavily debt-ridden. "The Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government borrowed a staggering Rs 14 lakh crore, but this money was not spent on development works. The Naidu-led government has inherited an empty exchequer, and the new administration is struggling to overcome these financial constraints," the Minister revealed.

Ramanaidu highlighted the coalition government's fulfilment of its promise to increase the social security pension from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000. He also noted the recruitment of over 16,500 teachers through the DSC examination, recalling that during its previous term, the TDP government filled 1.75 lakh teacher posts.

The Minister acknowledged that the new government has reopened the Anna Canteens across the state to provide nutritious food to the poor at an affordable price. "The new government has completed 50 days in office and is taking steps to fulfil its promises one by one. We have extended all possible help to the flood victims by providing them with 25 kg of rice and essential commodities," he claimed.

He further stated that the people of the state are now relieved to be free from what he described as a 'psycho rule,' criticising Jagan Mohan Reddy for allegedly introducing a ganja culture to the state. The Minister also announced the coalition government's commitment to creating 20 lakh jobs over the next five years.

# AP will host National Games in 2027: Chinni



Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath attending the Polytechnic College Walkers Association's meeting at the college grounds along with Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao on Sunday.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Parliament Member Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has announced that the National Games will be held in Andhra Pradesh in 2027, with Vijayawada being one of the host cities. He noted that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is making significant efforts to ensure the successful organisation of the National Games in the state.

MP Kesineni Chinni attended a meeting of the Polytechnic College Walkers Association at the college grounds in Vijayawada on Sunday. Recently, Chinni was elected as the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) President. In this connection, the association representatives honoured MP Chinni.

Addressing the gathering, Chinni said that Vijayawada City, in addition to the capital Amaravati, would be devel-

oped in the next five years. The state government is giving top priority to sports and games, and as a result, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is considering conducting the National Games in Vijayawada in 2027, he said.

Furthermore, he stated that in addition to city development, he would strive to enhance sports and games in the city. CM Naidu aims to give Amaravati a special identity. As part of this, the government has chosen to host the National Games, he added. The official announcement will be made shortly.

Additionally, Kesineni Sivanath expressed his intention to establish a Cricket Academy in Vijayawada, noting that there is currently no available space in the city to construct a new stadium. He also announced that within six months, the Mangalagiri International Cricket Stadium will be completed.

# Ambitious 'Ocean Deck' project faces CRZ hurdles

Project envisions a 50-metre extension into sea from the old lighthouse behind Vuda Park

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The ambitious Ocean Deck project, touted to be a game-changer for Visakhapatnam's tourism landscape, has hit a major roadblock due to Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) restrictions. Announced with much fanfare by the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) a year ago, the project is now indefinitely delayed.

Envisioned as a 50-metre extension into the sea from the old lighthouse behind Vuda Park, the Ocean Deck was to offer a unique dining experience and panoramic sea views. With an estimated cost of Rs. 7.8 crore, the project was slated for completion within nine months. "We were extremely optimistic about the Ocean Deck and believed it would be a significant asset to Visakhapatnam," said CE Sivaprasad Raju, former VMRDA in-charge Commissioner. "The design was innovative and aligned perfectly with our vision for the city's development."



However, the project has been grounded due to the stringent CRZ norms. "Adherence to CRZ regulations is paramount for any coastal construction," explained a VMRDA official. "We are meticulously exploring all avenues to navigate these challenges and find a viable solution."

The delay has sparked concerns among both stakeholders and the public. "The Ocean Deck was expected to be an iconic landmark for the city," said Kamal, a local resident. "We are hopeful that the authorities will find a way to overcome these hurdles and

bring the project to fruition." Despite the setbacks, VMRDA remains committed to the project. "We understand the public's enthusiasm for the Ocean Deck, and we share their vision," affirmed K S Viswanath, Metropolitan Commissioner, VMRDA. "We are working diligently with environmental experts to find a path forward. We believe that with careful planning and determination, we can successfully implement this project." The project's fate hangs in the balance, casting a shadow over the feasibility of future coastal development initiatives in the city.



# Giant fish in fisherman's net

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

The joy of the fishermen of Vemuladevi village knew no bounds as they caught a giant fish in the sea on Sunday.

Sources said that a group of fishermen ventured into the sea for fishing. A giant fish weighing over one and a half tonnes caught in their net. Over 30 fishermen brought the giant fish to the shore with great difficulty, using a JCB. The giant fish is called Teak fish in the local parlance. The fishermen shifted the giant fish to Kakinada. The teak fish is brought by traders at a higher price as the fish has medicinal properties.

# Visakhapatnam Steel Plant on the brink, says union leader

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

"The future of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (RINL-VSP) hangs by a thread," warns KVD Prasad, general secretary of the Visakhapatnam Steel Employees Association. The steel plant, a cornerstone of the region's industrial landscape, is grappling with an unprecedented crisis that demands immediate intervention from the central government.

Prasad's urgent appeal underscores the dire financial and operational challenges confronting the plant. "To overcome the financial crisis facing our steel plant, we need at least Rs 10,000 crore," he declares. The plant is battling severe shortages of essential

raw materials, particularly coal, which is critical for its operations. "We are grappling with inadequate funds and a scarcity of essential raw materials like coal. The situation deteriorates daily," Prasad lamented.

Recent reports have revealed that significant coal reserves are sitting idle at the Visakhapatnam Port Authority and Adani Gangavaram Port. Approximately 83,000 tonnes of coal are languishing at Visakhapatnam Port, while 1.4 lakh tonnes remain at Gangavaram Port. An immediate fund of Rs 300 crore is urgently needed to transport this coal to the steel plant and mitigate the current operational difficulties.



# Chinta Mohan alleges Rs 100 cr scam in TTD

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Congress party senior leader and former Union Minister Chinta Mohan has made a startling allegation stating that Rs 100 crore changed hands six months ago in the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

Talking to the media here on Sunday, the former Union Minister said that a few months before the elections, Rs 100 crore worth of corruption took place in the TTD during the erstwhile TTD board led by B Karunakar Reddy.

"A huge amount of Rs 1200 crore was given to a private contractor for the construction of choultries without following the procedure and getting approvals. The TTD board had misused Rs 1200 crore which was donated to Lord Venkateswara by the devotees," he slammed.

He expressed doubts about the fire accident which took place in the TTD administrative office in which some files reportedly were damaged and demanded a comprehensive investigation.

# Rajiv Gandhi, pioneer of India's 21st Century: Mani Shankar Aiyar

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Former Union minister Mani Shankar Aiyar here on Sunday said that Rajiv Gandhi was a pioneer in the development of India in the 21st century through his vision and innovative reforms in all fields.

Addressing the Round-Table Meeting on 'Rajiv Gandhi: Vision and Mission for Transforming India in the 21st Century' organised through Zoom by the Academy of Grassroots Studies and Research of India (AGRASRI) on the eve of the 80th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Rajiv Gandhi, Aiyar recollects his memories and said, He placed in perspective Rajiv Gandhi's innovative foreign policy openings to China and Pakistan and in the domestic sphere, the Technology Mission and above all, Panchayati Raj.



Reviewing the developments in the Panchayati Raj system after the passage of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act nearly 31 years ago, Aiyar elucidated that it is regrettable that many state governments are unable to fulfil the dreams of Rajiv Gandhi, who envisioned that three F's - Functions, Finances and Functionaries should be perfected for Panchayats and that the power should be concentrated at the village level.

# Probe sought into fire accident at TTD executive office



Brahmana Chaitanya Vedika State president Sripurapu Sridhar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sripurapu Sridhar, the State president of Brahmana Chaitanya Vedika, has urged the State government to initiate a probe by a sitting judge into the recent fire accident at the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Office. He also demanded an investigation into the allegations against former TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy and Bhumana Karunakar Reddy that they diverted Rs. 2,000 crore from devotees' donations. During a media conference held at the Vedika office on Sunday, Sridhar alleged that leaders of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) were responsible for the fire at the executive office. He claimed that certain officers were attempting to shield former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his associates from scandals and irregularities within the TTD and other government offices.

# Will raise division issues in RS: Singhvi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress candidate for the Rajya Sabha by-poll from Telangana state, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, assured that he will raise the Telangana Division issues in the Rajya Sabha.

Singhvi said that he is happy to contest Rajya Sabha elections from Telangana and that he will file his nomination papers on Monday along with state leaders. He said that he has the full



support of the Telangana Congress party leadership.

Earlier, Singhvi paid a courtesy call to Telangana Government advisor (Public Affairs) K. Keshava Rao, Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy,

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy one after the other.

The Congress candidate for Telangana Rajya Sabha by-poll, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, said at the CLP meeting that it is a great honour to represent Telangana

in the Rajya Sabha. Telangana has a rich cultural heritage and it stood against the bourgeois system. It also empowered its women. The politics of vengeance is increasing in the country and it exists in many states along with Telangana. The Congress needs to work actively considering this, he said.

He said that he was a member of the Rajya Sabha twice in the past.

# Security beefed up at hospitals after Kolkata tragedy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the wake of the horrific murder of a medical student in Kolkata, Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner Dr Sankhabrata Bagchi has ordered a significant escalation of armed security measures at King George Hospital (KGH) and Andhra Medical College (AMC) on Sunday. A late evening inspection of the two institutions, including their nursing colleges, student hostels, and medical departments, was conducted by the Commissioner and his team. "After the unfortunate incident in Kolkata, we are taking no chances with the safety of our medical professionals," Dr. Bagchi declared. "The safety of doctors and patients is paramount, and we



will not compromise on this." The inspection covered critical areas within the hospital campus, such as the nursing college, student hostels, Satyanarayana Swamy Temple, and the routes leading to the anatomy and physiology

departments. Dr Bagchi identified areas requiring improved lighting and surveillance, and ordered the removal of overgrown bushes that could provide cover for potential threats. He also emphasised the need for a strong pri-

mate security presence. KGH Superintendent Dr Sivananda and AMC Principal Dr Buchiraju have initiated discussions to implement the Commissioner's directives. "We must ensure that our doctors can work in a safe and secure environment," Dr. Sivananda stressed. "These measures are crucial not only for their safety but also for maintaining the trust of the patients who rely on us."

The new security protocols have received widespread support from medical officers and senior police officials. "This is a collaborative effort, and we are committed to working closely with the police to ensure that our medical institutions are well-protected," Principal Buchiraju noted.

ACROSS THE STATES



Murmu greets people on Raksha Bandhan eve

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday greeted citizens on the eve of Raksha Bandhan and hoped that the festival enhances respect for women in the society. Raksha Bandhan is a celebration of the unique bond between brothers and sisters, which strengthens the feeling of love and mutual trust, she said. This festival goes beyond religious and cultural boundaries to symbolise the unity in diversity of our country, Murmu said. "This festival strengthens our determination to protect the rights of women. May this festival nurture the spirit of harmony and love, and enhance the respect for women in the society," she was quoted as having said in a message issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The festival will be celebrated on Monday. It is marked by the practice of sisters tying a 'rakhi' on the wrist of their brothers



AIIMS doctor found dead in south Delhi house

A 34-year-old neurosurgeon at AIIMS allegedly committed suicide in his south Delhi house on Sunday, police said. Raj Ghoniya, a resident of Rajkot in Gujarat, died due to a suspected overdose as used vials of medicines and syringes were found in his house in the Gautam Nagar area, police said. A suicide note was also recovered from the spot, however, Ghoniya did not blame anyone in it, they added. "At around 2 pm on Sunday, a PCR call was received at the Hauz Khas police station regarding suicide by a doctor in the Gautam Nagar area. Police reached the spot and found Ghoniya in an unconscious state," a senior police officer said. Ghoniya was taken to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) where he was declared dead. He was posted at the Trauma Centre of AIIMS



NE council withdraws draft vision document

Chief Minister N Biren Singh said the North Eastern Council (NEC) has withdrawn its draft Vision 2047 document after it erroneously pointed out that the migration of Kukis was from the 'Chin State of Manipur'. The mistake was identified in chapter 3 of the vision document, which discussed about the migration of ethnic tribes in the northeastern region. In the chapter, it was mentioned that the "Kukis (Chin)" migrated from the "Chin State of Manipur". Singh, in a social media post on Saturday, said, "Following the error with the NEC Vision Plan 2047, the issue has been raised with DoNER minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia and it was subsequently withdrawn." Chin state is in neighbouring Myanmar, which shares an international border with Manipur and Mizoram of the northeast region of India.

'Winnability to be key factor for seat-sharing among MVA partners'

He claimed that false promises and fake narrative of the ruling 'Mahayuti' (comprising the Shiv Sena, BJP and NCP) have been exposed. "Development has reduced and corruption has increased during their tenure. The state government has worked to weaken Mumbai and Maharashtra, farmers suicides have gone up," he charges. People are upset with the government, Khan claimed. The MVA constituents have declared to contest the Maharashtra assembly polls together. A meeting of the MVA allies was held on August 16 in which Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray demanded the alliance declare its chief ministerial face in advance without waiting for the scorecard of each constituent in the assembly elections, due in October-November. A Congress leader on Sunday said winnability would be the main criteria for seat-sharing among the MVA constituents for the upcoming Maharashtra assembly polls and it will be worked out amicably at the earliest. The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), comprising the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), is already in the poll and campaign mode, having held a joint meeting of their office-bearers on August 16, state Congress working president Naseem Khan said. "Winnability would be the basis for seat-sharing among the allies and it will be worked out amicably at the earliest," he said. "The Lok Sabha poll results will surely be replicated in the assembly elections," Khan said, expressing confidence of the MVA's victory.



EAM calls on Kuwaiti PM, Crown Prince; discuss bilateral ties

PNS ■ KUWAIT CITY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday called on Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and discussed ways to take the bilateral ties to a higher level. Jaishankar, who arrived here on Sunday on a day-long visit, appreciated Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah's perspectives on the deepening of India-Kuwait ties and conveyed the greetings of Prime



Minister Narendra Modi. Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait. Conveyed the greet-

ings of PM @narendramodi. Appreciated his perspectives on the deepening of India Kuwait ties. Valued his views in regard to further economic cooperation," Jaishankar said in a post on X. The bilateral ties and ways of boosting cooperation were touched on during the meeting, state-run news agency KUNA reported. Jaishankar earlier called on Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and sought his insights on taking the bilateral ties to a higher level.

INDIA bloc will not face any problem

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Amid speculation that former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren could join the BJP, Congress leader Ajoy Kumar on Sunday claimed that the ruling INDIA bloc in the state would not face any problem if the JMM veteran crosses over to the saffron camp.



If Soren switches sides, it would create a fissure among BJP leaders in the state, Kumar said. "The ruling alliance will not have any problem as Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren will be the face of the INDIA bloc in the assembly poll this year. But this will certainly create a fissure among BJP leaders," the Congress leader said while responding to a query on speculations about Champai Soren. Notably, Champai Soren left for Delhi on Sunday, amid speculations that he is likely to join the BJP, sources said. A close associate of Champai Soren claimed that the former chief minister left for the national capital from Kolkata.

J'khand CM accuses BJP of poaching MLAs

PNS ■ GODDA (JHARKHAND)

Amid speculation that JMM leader Champai Soren could join the BJP, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday accused the saffron camp of "poaching" MLAs and "dividing society". Soren's statement came hours after JMM legislator and former chief minister Champai Soren reached Delhi. Addressing a government function in Jharkhand's Godda district, Hemant Soren alleged that the BJP brought people from Gujarat, Assam and Maharashtra to "spread poison among the tribals, Dalits, backward classes and minorities and make them fight with each other".



"Forget about society, these people work to break families and parties. They poach MLAs. Money is such a thing that it doesn't take long for politicians to move here and there," he said. Notably, Champai Soren left for Delhi on Sunday, amid speculations that he is likely to join the BJP, sources said. A close associate of Champai Soren claimed that the former chief minister left for the national capital from Kolkata. Soon after landing in Delhi, the JMM leader told reporters that he hadn't met any BJP leader and was in the national

NEENA GUPTA ON KOLKATA RAPE-MURDER

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Veteran actor Neena Gupta has said there is a need to come up with solutions to ensure women's safety, as she condemned the alleged rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata last week. Over the last few days, the actor said, she has mulled a lot on the issue of women's safety. "Condemning it (the crime) is okay, but we need



a solution. What could the solution be? Ours is a large country. Every state, district, region or village will have committees where they (women) work, do surveillance and file a report. "For example, a teacher in a village perhaps has to walk many kilometres in the evening or at night before she gets back (home)... So, those ladies who go for surveillance, they are also at risk. I thought a lot but couldn't find any solution. It will take a long time for society to change," Gupta said.

'Approach SC in Janthakal mining case against me'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday challenged the state government to approach the Supreme Court against him instead of seeking Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot's permission to prosecute him. "What is the need to prosecute me? For how long have you been doing this drama?" Kumaraswamy asked, reacting to Siddaramaiah's accusation.

National interest should be paramount : Dhankhar



PNS ■ JAIPUR

Having different views is the "fragrance of the bouquet of democracy" but only till national interest is not sacrificed, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said here on Sunday and asserted that those who prioritise individual and political interests over the country should be "neutralised". He said that if national interest is not kept paramount, then the difference of opinion in politics can become anti-national. He also appealed that people should stop such forces for the development of the nation. "It is not appropriate to forgo national interest for individual and political interests. If the national interest is not kept paramount, then the difference of opinion in politics becomes

anti-national," Dhankhar said. He was addressing an event organised to honour the families of organ donors here. He said people should understand those for whom the nation's interest is paramount and who put national and personal interests above it. "And if they still persist, I urge everyone to neutralise these forces that are pernicious to the growth of this nation," he further said.

**"It is not appropriate to forgo national interest for individual and political interests. If the national interest is not kept paramount, then the difference of opinion in politics becomes anti-national," Dhankhar said**

'Experienced bitter humiliation'

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Champai Soren on Sunday said he experienced "bitter humiliation" as chief minister. His statement came hours after he reached Delhi amid speculations about him joining the BJP. He claimed all his government programmes were cancelled on July 3 by the party leadership without

his knowledge. "When I asked about the reasons for cancellation, I was told that there is a meeting of party legislators on July 3 and I cannot attend any government programmes till then," he posted on social media. "Can there be anything more humiliating in a democracy than a chief minister's programme being cancelled by another person?" he said.

Sri Lankan President Wickremesinghe calls for deepening ties with India

PNS ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has emphasised the importance of strengthening economic cooperation and regional integration with Japan to India, with a special focus on deepening ties with New Delhi, as his country seeks to emerge from bankruptcy. Wickremesinghe's comments came as he was virtually addressing the Head of State Session of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, held under the theme "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future." From the north-central town of Anuradhapura yesterday. The conference, chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, brought

together heads of state from various countries. Reflecting on Indo-Sri Lankan relations, the President emphasised the "vision" statement shared between the two nations, which celebrates their historical cooperation and lays the foundation for future collaboration. He expressed optimism that this vision will lead to stronger integration between Sri Lanka and India across various sectors. President Wickremesinghe highlighted Sri Lanka's strategic commitment to expanding economic partnerships across Asia, particularly through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Who will be held accountable if Mullaperiyar Dam collapses: Suresh Gopi

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister Suresh Gopi on Sunday expressed concern about the safety of Mullaperiyar Dam and sought to know who would take the responsibility if the 125-year-old dam collapses. He asked whether the courts that pronounce verdicts to maintain the status quo or the authorities who obtain such verdicts from the judiciary would be held accountable if such a disaster happens. The minister of state for petroleum and natural gas as well as tourism shared his concern while speaking during a function here. During the speech, he mentioned that he came across a Facebook post raising concern about the safety of Mullaperiyar Dam.



The actor-turned politician said the question whether the dam would collapse or not stands like an "idimuzhakkam" (thunderclap) in his heart. "Who will be answerable if it collapses? Will the courts answer? Or will those who obtain such decisions from the courts to continue to maintain the present position (regarding the dam) answer?" Gopi asked. They should answer what will be the consequences of their actions, he said. Kerala cannot afford to drown in tears anymore, he asserted.

Reflex ties with Dhaka Bangla political analysts urge India

PNS ■ DHAKA

India will benefit if it supports the current transition government in Bangladesh and moves to build relationships with other political parties instead of "focussing on one person and party", political analysts, foreign relations and security experts said on Sunday. After the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, 84, took oath as the Chief Adviser of the interim government on August 8 amid violence and chaos. Hasina, 76, fled to India on August 5 after she was forced to resign following a massive protest by students against a quota system in government jobs. "I think understanding should be the starting point for

resetting our relationship, having that we have our interdependence, so we need each other to recalibrate our relationship," head of the leading think tank Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) Humayun Kabir said. He said being Bangladesh's next-door neighbour, India was "always with us when we were in difficulty and in the current transition also if they come and support us then I think people of Bangladesh will look at India as a friend". Kabir, a career diplomat, said India would benefit if it "positively supports" the current transition in Bangladesh along with moving to build relationships with other political parties, instead of "focusing on one person and party" taking into account the "uniqueness" of the change.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Moment of truth

Elections to take place in Jammu and Kashmir after 10 years; first time after abrogation of Article 370

For the first time in a decade, elections are set to be held in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. After a long wait the elections have been announced for Jammu and Kashmir; the first since 2014, will take place in three phases on September 18, September 25, and October 1, with the results set to be declared on October 4. The region has been under President's Rule since 2018. This election marks significant progress in meeting the Supreme Court's directive that democracy be reinstated in Jammu and the Kashmir Valley by September 30. Last month in Srinagar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had confirmed the upcoming election. This is particularly significant as it follows the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two separate union territories — Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh — in August 2019, when Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which provided special status to the region, was abrogated by the Indian Government. The last elections in Jammu and Kashmir were held in 2014, before the abrogation of



Article 370 and the dissolution of the state's legislative assembly in 2018. Since the 2019 political reorganization, Jammu and Kashmir has been under central administration. The impending elections will not only address the demand for local governance but will also test the popularity of the government's policies and decision in the region.

With new electoral boundaries drawn post-delimitation, the political map of Jammu and Kashmir has changed. This could impact electoral outcomes, shifting the balance of power between regional parties like the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and national parties like the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These elections could set the stage for fresh political alliances and realignments, potentially altering the political dynamics between the Kashmir and Jammu regions. The region's security situation will play a major role in the lead-up to and during the elections. The success of the elections will depend on maintaining peace and ensuring free and fair polling. Indeed, it would be quite a challenge to have peaceful elections, given the recent terrorist attacks in Jammu. Both domestic and international observers will be watching closely to assess the level of participation, especially in the Kashmir Valley. A high voter turnout could bolster the Indian government's stance that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and that democratic processes are functioning. On the other hand, a low turnout, especially in the valley, could suggest a disconnect between the people and the political establishment, complicating efforts to resolve tensions in the region. Elections are likely to impact the region's economy in a positive way. The new government will need to address unemployment, revive the tourism sector, and bring much-needed investments. A successful election could restore a sense of democratic normalcy but the task is daunting. A successful election, no matter who wins, will surely align J&K with the country's mainstream political landscape.

## PICTALK



Women devotees carry holy water in the 'Kalash Yatra' in Jaipur

## Lessons from the Wayanad tragedy



ATUL SEHGAL

To prevent future catastrophes, we must reassess our approach to urban planning and disaster management, ensuring that development is aligned with sustainable practices

The Wayanad tragedy—serious lessons for the future. The incident and news of the very recent Wayanad landslide tragedy seems to be passé. No one is talking about it now when the media headlines are being hogged by the fresh and more serious episode—of rape, mob violence and anarchy in Kolkata, WB. This does not suggest that we begin taking a lighter look at the long-term serious administrative steps required to forestall incidents of landslides occurring more due to misgovernance than climate change. More of such incidents are waiting to happen if we do not take urgent, timely steps. It is with great shock that we heard the tragic death of more than 400 persons in the landslides in Wayanad, Kerala and of another 250-plus persons who were reportedly injured or missing. The two large landslides that hit Mundakkai and Chooralmala in Wayanad in the early hours of July 30, resulted in wide destruction, several fatalities, and serious injuries to hundreds. While incidents of natural disasters are episodes apparently beyond the control of humans, there is much humans can do to prevent them and minimize the damage wrought by them after they occur. It is remarkable that just about a week before this tragedy the state government in Kerala was warned by the Union Home Ministry about the possibility of a catastrophe based on the feedback provided by an NDRF team deputed to assess the susceptible site. This is a sad and sobering reflection on the ham-fisted administrative machinery of the state government in India. The frequent incidents of collapse of buildings and bridges in our country have a direct and crying connection with unauthorised, faulty building construction in violation of prescribed safety norms of the government.

This illegal construction takes place right under the nose of regulatory agencies of the government. Corrupt government officials allow unauthorised construction and things appear normal till some major mishap occurs, capturing news head-



lines all over. The sadder part of the story is that state governments are inadequately equipped for disaster management. Invariably, central assistance is sought and the army has to come to the rescue of the hapless, distressed citizens. The case of landslides and the damage caused by them is not much different from that of buildings and bridges collapsing elsewhere. It would be in the fitness of things to systematically list out the reasons and preventive remedies for such catastrophic landslide events in our country.

**Heavy torrential rains:** Heavy torrential rains are not the core causal factors. They are only the triggering factors behind such landslides. Further, to say that the intensity and frequency of rainfall in any region or area is purely subject to uncertainties of nature is not quite correct.

Our living paradigms do influence rainfall patterns in various geographical areas. Climate change is the result of faulty living paradigms. There are things we can do to prevent interruption of normal rainfall patterns. Ancient scientific literature of India can provide useful guidance in this regard.

**Wrong building construction practices:** Our building construction and water management practices are not perfect. Our deficient under-



HEAVY TORRENTIAL RAINS ARE NOT THE CORE CAUSAL FACTORS. THEY ARE ONLY THE TRIGGERING FACTORS BEHIND SUCH LANDSLIDES

standing and practices based thereon regarding the earth's geographical interiors puts us in a vulnerable position.

Cracking and crumbling mountains are a direct outcome of these practices. In this regard, one has to merely cast a look at medieval time buildings that stand intact after hundreds of years while also maintaining the integrity of their surrounding hilly sites. Ancient and medieval buildings were built with stones. Modern buildings use RCC with heavy foundations that damage the host sites.

We need to learn and adopt some of our ancient building techniques which gave stronger, environment friendly and more durable structures. **Unauthorised mining:** Unauthorised mining activities in contravention of set safety regulations cause tremendous harm to the terrains, making them vulnerable to landslides. Strong deterrent and punitive legal measures are the need of the hour.

**Local violation of established building safety norms:** As stated above, corruption in municipalities and local government bodies accounts for many cases of unauthorised building construction in flagrant violation of safety norms. Violation of safety norms should be strictly penalised.

**Deforestation:** Deforestation

in hilly areas for indiscriminate construction—either of residential buildings or commercial buildings bridges highways or flyovers is a big factor in the wearing of underground natural plates that support hills and mountains. The adverse effects of deforestation may not be evident immediately. But long term, they show themselves in the form of natural disturbances leading to earthquakes and climate change.

This phenomenon needs to be studied at the institutional level, and supported by the government. We should not always depend on foreign agency research results. We have the capability and wherewithal to carry out research and devise remedial measures in the form of specific afforestation measures in identified regions.

**Inept state government machinery:** As indicated above, our state government agencies are neglectful, inefficient, callous and corrupt. What is the reason? Proper systems do not exist that will ensure the identification and penalization of the guilty in such matters. Slow and tardy judicial proceedings in an unsound judicial system only serve to encourage the inefficient and the corrupt.

(The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

## Tackling the water management crisis amidst rapid development

India needs to build a resilient water ecosystem that supports our growing urban needs and contributes towards the holistic vision of Viksit Bharat

India's urban landscape has undergone a tremendous transformation since independence, evolving from traditional townships into thriving metropolises that drive the nation's economic and cultural growth. The Government of India's ambition for a Viksit Bharat by 2047 and their efforts have provided the necessary impetus for this sector.

The Union Budget 2024-25 reflects this commitment with an allocation of Rs 11.11 lakh crore in capital expenditure and an emphasis on water supply, sewage treatment, and solid waste management projects in collaboration with state governments, multilateral development banks, and research institutions. Our cities, bustling with life and opportunities, stand as testaments to our collective aspirations and endeavours. Yet, beneath this vibrant facade lies a critical challenge that demands urgent attention and innovative solutions: water and wastewater management.

**The Past & the Present Status of Wastewater Management in India:** India's rapid urbanisation has



brought with it significant challenges in managing water resources. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) (data for 2020-21), India's urban centres generate around 72,368 million litres of sewage per day, but the treatment capacity is only 31,841 million litres per day. This gap leads to untreated wastewater being discharged into our rivers and lakes, contributing to pollution and posing severe health risks.

The Government has initiated several programs like the Namami Gange Programme, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), and the Smart Cities Mission to address these issues. These initiatives aim to enhance the sewage treatment infrastructure, promote sustainable urban development, and ensure clean

water availability. However, over the years, the path to achieving these goals has encountered numerous challenges, from inadequate infrastructure to the absence of innovation, funding constraints and lack of relevant stakeholder partnership. The gloom has taken a shift in the recent past with relevant stakeholders like youth from the communities, government, and private players all stepping up, discussing viable solutions, promoting innovation and emphasising the need to present sustainable solutions against water & wastewater challenges.

**Sustainable Management of Water in India:** In India, the future of water hinges on our ability to adopt the circular model, offering a holistic and integrated approach towards water management. Unlike the traditional linear approach, a circular economy emphasises reducing waste, reusing resources, and recycling materials to create a closed-loop system. In the context of water management, this means treating wastewater to high standards and reusing it for various purposes, such as industrial

processes, agricultural irrigation, and landscape maintenance. Thus, significantly reducing the demand for freshwater resources and ensuring treated water gets reintegrated into the supply cycle.

**A Blend of Factors to Achieve Water Management** The nation's urban development cannot be chalked down and implemented by a single entity especially for a country like ours with a huge geographic scale.

**Learnings and the Road Ahead:** Despite the global threat that water presents, every nation adapts to an approach more suited to its people and developmental needs. The urban development has picked up momentum in recent decades. We need to balance development ambitions and ensure the essentials. A practical way to fix that is by building a resilient water ecosystem that supports our growing urban needs and contributes towards the holistic vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

(The writer is the CEO of Suez India; views are personal)



RASMI RANJAN RAY

## MAMATA SHOULD STEP DOWN

Madam — Barring the emergency cases, number of State hospitals including private institutions have boycotted their OP (Out Patient) services to show their solidarity for the victim on the brutal rape and murder at RG Kar hospital Calcutta. The CM of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee must be crest fallen and should have taken up the moral responsibility and have resigned by now for this gruesome murder and rape of the intern doctor at RG Kar hospital. Who can understand better the pains of a woman other than a woman who's heading the State? Her party in power by taking out a rally when she herself is the Chief Minister, Home Minister and Health Minister is the height of a mockery when she failed in all the three counts even in maintaining the basic law and order in the state. The Calcutta High Court has lost its faith in the West Bengal government while shocked to observe the vandalism played upon post the incident at the hospital premises. Mamata can't have any defence and the enquiry by CBI is not the end of the case to bring real culprits to books. WB needs a disinfectant to clean the hospital as well as the minds of the team Mamata on the whole to ensure safety of the people is causing a greater concern.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

## CM SIDDARAMAIAH IN TROUBLE

Madam — The Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is poised to face prosecution in connection with the MUDA land scam case. The approval for legal action has been granted by Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot, following a private complaint. The allegations centre around the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) and claims of malpractices surrounding land allotments. It is alleged that Parvathi Siddaramaiah, the wife of CM benefited from irregularities when MUDA acquired her 3-

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Elections in J&amp;K after 10 years



The Supreme Court's order had been implemented meticulously by the election commission and election had been declared and have been welcomed by all including the radicals which is a momentous moment for citizens of the state and it will pave the way for the return of democracy to the Valley however complex a process it might prove to be.

acre plot in Kesare village, Mysuru, in 2021, seemingly in exchange for allocations of more valuable plots in the upscale Vijayanagar area of Mysuru. Critics assert that the market value of these new plots far exceeds that of the land she originally owned. Siddaramaiah maintains his innocence, vowing to battle the claims both legally and politically. He asserts that the land allocation to his wife was conducted following all legal procedures. The Opposition parties are leaving no stone unturned, undertook even a protest march from Bengaluru to Mysuru demanding CM's resignation. The investigating agencies will now have to start the process of prosecution. Needless to say, one cannot expect the CM to continue in office while agencies reporting to him, are investigating charges against him. But his political career with a clean image spanning over four decades is under clouds - facing toughest challenge in his public life.

N Sadhasiva | Bengaluru

Due to the elections in the state people will get the chance to elect the popular government in the state and people will have direct say in the government which is the representative way and the Indian way of upholding democratic values. It is the right step forward irrespective of what the changed status has meant in the last five years after

The arguments can be endless over the propriety of going back on a historical commitment, but there is no denying that democracy is now slated to return to a more egalitarian region, even if it has been divided into two UTs of J&K and Ladakh. Long-term stability and prosperity of the region can be assured if a popular government is in charge and works for the development of the people.

Yash Pal Rathnan | Jalandhar

## PARIS PARALYMPICS

Madam — In a warm send off ceremony of the athletes for Paris Paralympics 2024. India is sending its largest-ever contingent for the Paris Paralympic Games as 84 athletes will look to leave no stone unturned in their quest for glory in the French capital.

Those 84 athletes will be taking part in 12 sports archery, athletics, badminton, canoeing, cycling, blind judo and powerlifting among others. The para-athletes have a remarkable ability to overcome obstacles and turn challenges into opportunities. They have shown remarkable determination and perseverance in their preparation and hopes were made of getting the highest ever medal in the game. We wish them the very best and are sure they will inspire millions back home with their performances and medal tally. Hope this time, each and every athlete will perform well.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### THE ART OF OFFICE FRIENDSHIP

Be clear about where to draw the line, respect others' time, workload and personal space



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

In today's fast-paced corporate climate, the line that traditionally defines coworker and friend is becoming increasingly blurred. With the amount of time spent at work nowadays, professional connections are no longer optional, but rather required. At the same time, these interactions necessitate skill, awareness, and a healthy dosage of emotional intelligence. Imagine this: You're out for coffee with your work BFF, laughing about last night's reality TV drama, when your boss walks in. Do you switch to shop chat or keep the banter going? It's a circumstance that demonstrates the narrow line that must be walked in business friendships. What's the key? Mastering the art of context change.

Professionalism does not need you to transform into a robot from 9 to 5. It's knowing when and how to crack a joke, as well as when to go serious. For lunch breaks, a friendship's dimmer switch is extremely bright and vivid, slightly dim for group projects, and extremely professional during business meetings. Remember the phrase "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas"? Consider that in your workplace friendships. All those meaningful chats over after-work drinks? Not a water cooler material. Closed-door conversations and revelations made outside of the office should be treated as classified material. That's because your ability to maintain secrets may make or destroy your working relationships, and even your career.

Effective communication is crucial in all relationships, but business connections have a unique twist. As much as you want to keep communication open, you must also respect privacy. It's a difficult balance of being



there for the work friend without intruding into areas they're not ready to discuss. The benefits of working friendships include the ability to accept and provide honest feedback. However, if constructive criticism is not handled correctly, it may quickly turn into a friendship minefield. Wrap that severe love with genuine support. Remember that your goal is for both of you to succeed, not to win a point-scoring contest. Arguments will inevitably occur, even among the best of colleagues. Your adept handling of these hiccups in the path is an undeniable sign of friendship. Address disagreements directly on, but with sensitivity and professionalism; see it as a means to strengthen your partnership, not a friendship-ending disaster.

It's acceptable to get along better with some people than others, but try to avoid forming restricted groups. Instead, be the friend who draws everyone together. Organise inclusive team activities to help break down departmental barriers. Who knows, you might meet your next work bestie in accounting! We all have terrible days, but repeatedly unloading personal problems to your coworkers will put even the strongest relationships under strain. Consider the emotional strain you're putting on others. Sometimes a simple "I'm having a rough day" may suffice—save the deep dives for proper times and locations. The key to a working friendship is setting clear boundaries. Some suggestions include being clear about where to draw the line regarding each other's time, workload, space, or personal difficulties. Consider setting boundaries to be like a guardrail, keeping your friendship on track but not a wall. Finally, be sure to appreciate your victories, big and small. That fast high-five you received for acing that presentation, or the team lunch for sealing a major deal? Those boost office morale. These moments of shared joy are the glue that holds workplace friendships together. Lastly, success in business friendships requires establishing a balance between professionalism and personal connection. Hit the sweet spot, and you may find enthusiasm in your professional life while also developing potential lasting relationships outside of the confines of your current position. Go ahead, take the first step towards making your cubicle neighbour a true friend!

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

## Responsible tourism: Our promise to future generations



DIVYA BHATIA

The future of tourism hinges on responsible travel, where both travelers and industry stakeholders play a crucial role in preserving our heritage for future generations

Visit Agra, and you'll witness a heart-wrenching sight: graffiti marring the walls of its iconic monuments. Lovers etching their names into the Taj Mahal—a monument of love—are tarnishing the legacy of love with their reckless behavior. This is just one example of irresponsible tourism. From defacing historic sites to littering, damaging environments, and polluting water bodies, such behavior is widespread.

To counteract these issues, embracing responsible tourism is now essential. The tourism industry, one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors globally, holds vast potential for economic growth. Yet, this rapid expansion often brings environmental and social challenges. Over-tourism can damage natural habitats, exhaust local resources, and erode cultural traditions. Sustainable tourism aims to address these challenges by promoting responsible travel that supports local communities and preserves the environment.

Tourism's environmental footprint is broad, affecting ecosystems, biodiversity, pollution, and resource use. Popular destinations often see spikes in waste, water shortages, and habitat destruction due to tourist influxes. The Great Barrier Reef in Australia, for instance, is under threat from both climate change and tourism, highlighting the need for immediate conservation efforts. This underscores the significance of sustainable tourism practices that emphasise environmental care.

Governments are key players in driving sustainable tourism, establishing policies and frameworks that encourage eco-friendly practices. Australia, known for its diverse landscapes and rich biodiversity, has long understood this necessity. Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager for India & Gulf at Tourism Australia, explains the country's dedication to sustainable tourism: "Australia's culture, landscape, and wildlife form the heart of our tourism industry. We have a duty to manage them wisely." Through collaborations with tourism operators, Australia focuses on restorative and regenerative travel, especially at renowned sites like the Great Barrier Reef. Despite progress, challenges persist in conveying the importance of sustainable travel to markets prioritizing value and experience. Kashikar further states the steps taken to protect natural treasures: "Our operators provide eco-friendly accommodations and low-impact activities that complement conservation efforts at the reef. Initiatives such as carbon-neutral menus and zero-waste hotels are raising the bar in hospitality." He acknowledges ongoing challenges, stating, "Effectively communicating the value of sustainable tourism to markets like India, which are driven by value and experience, requires a tailored approach."

Moscow, a city famous for its historical and cultural richness, is also leading the way in sustainable tourism efforts. Evgeny Kozlov, Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee, highlights the city's environmental transformation: "Around 50% of Moscow is made up of green zones. Over the past decade, we have rejuvenated 900 parks and green spaces, as well as revitalized 40 embankments. This transformation not only beautifies the city but also offers unique opportunities for eco-friendly tourism."

Kozlov stresses the importance of building an urban ecosystem accessible to everyone, with incentives for investors in sustainable tourism infrastructure.



THE ECO-FRIENDLY TOURISM IS NOT JUST A TREND BUT A NECESSITY. THEIR INITIATIVES ARE PAVING THE WAY FOR A FUTURE WHERE RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL IS THE NORM, AND TRAVELERS PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN PRESERVING THE PLANET

Madhya Pradesh is becoming a leader in responsible tourism by blending community development with environmental preservation. Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, outlines the state's dual focus: "Madhya Pradesh is dedicated to both its people and its landscapes. Our Responsible Tourism initiative seeks to uplift local communities while preserving the state's natural beauty and cultural history." The promotion of rural homestays and support for local artisans drive economic development with minimal environmental impact.

He adds, "By promoting local craftsmanship and sustainable building practices, we ensure tourism development benefits both communities and the environment. Programs like Safe Tourism Destinations for Women and Responsible Souvenirs further strengthen this mission." Airlines and hotels are at the forefront of sustainable tourism efforts, addressing their significant environmental impact. As air travel continues to grow, the aviation sector's role in global greenhouse gas emissions has come under scrutiny. The hospitality industry is also increasingly adopting eco-friendly practices that aim to balance guest experiences with environmental responsibility.

Akash Garg, CMD of Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, acknowledges that transitioning to sustainable practices requires an upfront investment. However, he emphasizes that these costs are outweighed by long-term savings. "Initially, there are costs that a property has to bear when implementing sustainable practices. However, these investments often lead to long-term benefits and savings," says Garg. The resort's efforts include reducing single-use plastics and creating an onsite bottling plant, reinforcing its commitment to sustainability. Moreover, the resort engages with the local community, with 80% of its workforce from Himachal Pradesh, and promotes regional cultural experiences for guests. At the Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort, Mano Gunasekera,

General Manager, speaks about the broader impact of sustainability within Marriott International. The company is deeply committed to global best practices. "Marriott International, is focused strongly on best sustainability practices. At times such initiatives come with a cost, however with the proposition of there being a greater impact on the environment," says Gunasekera. The resort supports responsible tourism through projects like turtle conservation and encouraging guests to adopt eco-friendly habits, such as reusing linens and reducing water consumption. These initiatives align with Marriott's Serve360 program, which aims to lower energy usage and promote environmentally conscious products.

Anirban Sarkar, General Manager of Radisson Blu Greater Noida, underscores the importance of sustainability in shaping the hotel's long-term vision. Radisson Blu has set an ambitious target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, far ahead of many global initiatives. Sarkar believes that promoting sustainability and responsible business practices strengthens the brand's reputation and builds local support. "Focus towards Sustainability and Responsible Business practices actually strengthens the brand and shows the brand in a positive light," he explains. Vietnam's leading carrier Vietjet is also making strides toward sustainability. The airline's efforts have earned it recognition in categories like "Outstanding Sustainable Transport." By investing in a modern fleet that reduces fuel consumption by up to 20%, Vietjet is helping lower emissions. Additionally, the airline has transitioned to using eco-friendly materials, such as recyclable packaging, and is researching sustainable aviation fuel with a goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Sri Lankan Airlines is also taking a more gradual approach, integrating sustainability into its services through eco-friendly amenities in Business Class. The airline has introduced pillow and headrest covers made from recycled PET plastic, reducing its plastic footprint.

These efforts are part of broader initiatives, including the use of sustainable carpets onboard.

In the online travel space, Rikant Pittie, Co-Founder of Ease My Trip, highlights the company's role in promoting sustainability by working with local authorities to improve eco-friendly facilities. Ease My Trip has also launched educational campaigns to encourage travelers to choose green accommodations and reduce waste. "We tackle the lack of sufficient infrastructure by collaborating with local authorities to enhance eco-friendly facilities," says Pittie. For Manoj Kumar Tiwari, General Manager of Regency Holidays, promoting sustainable tourism is less of a challenge and more of an opportunity to educate guests. "Educating the guests to align them with our brand ethos to promote luxury sustainably is the key," Tiwari explains.

Daniel D'Souza, President and Country Head of Holidays at SOTC Travel, notes the increasing demand for sustainable travel, particularly after the pandemic. He observes a shift in travelers' preferences toward authentic, eco-friendly experiences. "Sustainable travel has gained momentum, with MICE groups increasingly emphasizing sustainable practices and unconventional accommodations," he says.

Trishal Rao, Chief Sales Officer at SKIL Travel, sees the challenges of promoting sustainable tourism as opportunities for innovation. SKIL Travel has incorporated electric vehicles into its fleet and is implementing eco-friendly technologies throughout its services. The eco-friendly tourism is not just a trend but a necessity. Their initiatives are paving the way for a future where responsible travel is the norm, and travelers play an active role in preserving the planet. As Evgeny Kozlov succinctly states, "We must build a tourism industry based on sustainable development principles to ensure that future generations can enjoy our world responsibly."

(The author is a travel writer and influences, she works with travel industry as a mentor; views are personal)

## Protecting our healers: Urgent action needed to end violence against healthcare providers

The recent assault on medics underscores the urgent need for legal protections and enhanced security measures to ensure their safety

The recent barbaric act of violence, rape, and murder against a resident lady doctor in Kolkata has sent shockwaves across the nation. This incident, coupled with the growing number of attacks on medical professionals, calls for an urgent need for a safe operating environment for those who dedicate their lives to saving others.



B K JHA

The entire country is deeply saddened by these events, and there is a collective call for the government and law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of healthcare workers. This is not just about protecting individuals; it is about safeguarding the sanctity of a profession that stands at the forefront of human sur-

vival. Healthcare professionals work tirelessly, often under immense pressure, to deliver care and save lives. Yet, reports of doctors being manhandled, threatened, and even killed are, unfortunately, not uncommon. Doctors are taught to prioritize the ABCs—Airway, Breathing, and Circulation—when a patient is in their care. Their primary focus is always on saving lives, regardless of

the circumstances. However, when medical professionals are themselves under threat, their ability to perform these critical tasks is compromised. The environment in which they operate must be one of safety and respect, allowing them to carry out their duties without fear of violence.

The issue of violence against healthcare workers is not unique to India; it is a global problem. However, many countries have implemented robust measures to protect their medical professionals, setting examples that India could follow. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the National Health Service (NHS) has a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against its staff. This policy is supported by a dedicated

security team that works closely with law enforcement to ensure that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Additionally, the NHS has implemented a comprehensive reporting system that allows healthcare workers to report any form of abuse or violence, ensuring that these incidents are documented and addressed. In the United States, several states have enacted laws that classify assaults on healthcare workers as felonies, carrying heavier penalties than those for assaults on other individuals.

This legal framework acts as a strong deterrent against violence, sending a clear message that attacks on medical professionals will not be tolerated. In Australia, hospitals



have introduced a range of safety measures, including the use of security personnel, panic buttons in consultation rooms, and mandatory training for staff on how to de-escalate potentially violent situations. India must urgently adopt similar measures to protect its healthcare workers. The government and relevant

authorities need to implement stringent actions that will create a safer environment for doctors and other medical professionals. First and foremost, the government should enact laws that classify any form of violence against healthcare professionals as a serious criminal offence, with severe

penalties for those found guilty. This legal framework should be supported by swift and decisive action from law enforcement agencies to ensure that justice is served promptly. In addition to legal protections, hospitals, especially those in high-risk areas, should be equipped with comprehensive security measures. These could include the deployment of trained security personnel, the installation of panic buttons, surveillance cameras, and secure entry points to prevent unauthorized access. Such measures would go a long way in deterring potential threats and ensuring that medical professionals can work without fear. Moreover, healthcare workers should receive mandatory training on how

to handle violent situations. This training should cover de-escalation techniques, self-defence, and the proper use of security measures available to them. The safety and security of healthcare professionals are non-negotiable. Those who dedicate their lives to saving others deserve to work in an environment free from fear and violence. The government, law enforcement agencies, and society at large must come together to ensure that the medical fraternity is protected and respected. It is time to take decisive action to safeguard those who save lives, ensuring that healthcare professionals can continue their noble work without fear. (The author is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



**'Improving low-cost deposit focus area for bank'**

Improving CASA or low-cost deposit mobilisation is the focus area for the Canara Bank, and efforts taken in the direction are yielding results, its Managing Director K Satyanarayana Raju has said. Current Account Savings Account (CASA) stood at 31 per cent of the total deposits, and the aim is to increase to 33 per cent by the end of the current fiscal, he said. Rapid growth cannot be expected on the current account side, and it is another challenge to keep them for the long term as businesses tend to move them to term deposits quickly, he said. On the savings side, he said, "Our initiatives have started giving the results. You can see the accumulation and creation of the deposits. From year-on-year basis, June to June, if you see, there is an improvement of Rs 12,000 crore. The focus of the bank will continue on savings bank individual deposits by introducing unique and innovative products, he added.

**Substantial progress likely in India-Aus FTA talks**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief negotiators of India and Australia will begin the next round of talks for the comprehensive free trade agreement from tomorrow in Sydney, where both sides are likely to close negotiations on several chapters of the pact, an official said.

Both countries have already implemented an interim pact and are in discussions to expand its scope under the CECA (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement).

The interim pact - Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) - came into force in December 2022.

The tenth round of negotiations is scheduled from August 19-22 in Sydney.

"Out of the total 19 areas of the agreement, we have completed our discussions on four chapters, and we are in very



advanced stages in a few others. We hope that in this round, we should be able to close altogether, maybe more than 10 chapters," the commerce ministry official said.

In this round, the official said that both countries are likely to get into market access discussions in goods and services.

CECA envisages deeper and comprehensive engagement on the five issues - goods, services, digital trade, government procurement and rules of origin - that were agreed under ECTA.

Collaboration in space, mining and sports are among 15 new areas mutually identified by India and Australia for negotiations under the comprehensive free trade agreement. For the first time, these new segments would become part of a trade pact being negotiated by India.

Australia is an important trading partner of India in the Oceania region, with merchandise trade between India and Australia reaching around USD 24 billion in 2023-24.

India's exports to Australia last fiscal stood at USD 7.94 billion, while imports were USD 16.15 billion. The trade between the two countries has been hovering at around USD 25 billion mark since 2021-22.

On the other hand, the

**MICROPLASTIC CONTAMINATION IN FOOD PRODUCTS**

**FSSAI to develop methods for detection**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food regulator FSSAI has launched a project to assess microplastic contamination in food products and develop methods for its detection.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched an innovative project to tackle the growing concern of microplastic contamination in food, recognising microplastic pollution as an emerging threat that requires immediate attention.

According to an official statement, the project -- Micro-and Nano-Plastics as Emerging Food

Contaminants: Establishing Validated Methodologies and Understanding the Prevalence in Different Food Matrices -- was started in March this year.

The aim is to develop and validate analytical methods for detecting micro and nano-plastics in various food products, as well as assess their prevalence and exposure levels in India.

"The primary objectives of the project include developing standard protocols for micro/nano-plastic analysis, conducting intra- and inter-laboratory comparisons, and generating critical data on microplastic exposure levels among consumers," FSSAI said.



**RIISING DEMAND IN RURAL MARKETS**

**FMCG players expect volume trends to sustain**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies expect to sustain volume growth in the coming quarters, buoyed by recovery of demand in rural markets and good monsoon, despite concerns over growing food inflation.

FMCG majors, including HUL, ITC, Dabur, Britannia, Nestle and Emami, in their June quarter earnings have reported 'green shoots' from the rural markets and strong growth from e-commerce channels, particularly from quick-commerce platforms.

The industry had around 6.6 per cent volume growth in the April-June period of this fiscal. However, companies are worried about elevated food inflation as coffee and cocoa prices have gone up unprecedentedly. Amid expectations of an increase in cereals and grains prices, some of the players have even indicated price hikes.

Dabur CEO Mohit Malhotra said, "Going forward, the volume will increase on the back of rural inching up for us. So I expect the subsequent quarters to be better than our

existing quarters, but definitely not worse."

He expressed optimism, saying that with a good monsoon, improving macroeconomic indicators and rural-centric govern-

ment spending, FMCG demand will see a gradual uptick.

Malhotra also mentioned inflation in food is very high today and "we might have to take some price increases in food, but it depends upon how the situation is."

Marico MD & CEO Saugata Gupta said the FMCG sector continued to witness gradual improvement in demand trends in the June quarter, with rural growth ahead of urban. "We expect vol-

ume trends to sustain the improving trajectory, aided by stable retail inflation, a healthily progressing monsoon season, and the government's budgetary allocation towards boosting the rural economy," he said.

However, Gupta also added, "elevated food inflation and spatial distribution of rainfall will be key factors to be monitored". Nestle, in its first quarter earnings statement, said: "Commodity prices are seeing unprecedented headwinds in coffee and cocoa with all-time high prices and an ongoing price rally."



**Air India cabin crew assaulted at London hotel**

A female cabin crew member of Air India was allegedly assaulted by an intruder at a London hotel earlier this week, with the airline saying it is pursuing the matter with the local police. Sources in the news said a homeless man barged into the room at the hotel where the female cabin crew was staying and assaulted her. As she shouted, others staying nearby came and rescued her and the person was caught, they added. One of the sources said the cabin crew was allegedly sexually assaulted at the hotel while two other sources claimed it was a physical assault. The incident happened at a star hotel near the London Heathrow airport. The cabin crew member has returned to India and is undergoing counselling, the sources added. In a statement, an Air India spokesperson said it was "deeply anguished by an unlawful incident of intrusion at a hotel, operated by a major international chain, that affected one of our crew members". The airline in the statement said it is providing all possible support to the colleague and their broader team, including professional counselling. "Air India is also working with the local police to pursue the matter to the fullest extent of the law, and with the hotel management to ensure such incidents are not repeated."



**India's holding of American securities reach US \$241.9 bn**

India's holding of US government securities touched a high of USD 241.9 billion in June as the country continued to increase its exposure for the third straight month. Japan was the top holder with securities worth over USD 1.11 trillion followed by China at the second spot with a holding valued at USD 780.2 billion in June, according to the latest data released by the US Treasury Department. At the third place was the United Kingdom with an exposure of USD 741.5 billion ahead of Luxembourg at the fourth position with a holding to the tune of USD 384.2 billion. Among the countries and jurisdictions, India was at the 12th place owning American government securities worth USD 241.9 billion in June, higher than USD 237.8 billion recorded in May. As per the data, India's holding is the highest in the last one year and it was at USD 237.8 billion in May 2024. In April this year, it touched USD 233.5 billion declining from USD 240.6 billion in March. In June last year, the exposure was at USD 235.4 billion. Other countries' jurisdictions among the top 10 holders were Canada at the fifth spot with a holding of USD 374.8 billion, followed by Cayman Islands (USD 319.4 billion), Belgium (USD 318 billion), Ireland (USD 308 billion), France (USD 307.2 billion) and Switzerland (USD 287.1 billion).

**FPIs turn net sellers; pull out Rs 21,201 crore from equities in Aug so far**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors continued their relentless selling in the Indian equity markets in August, offloading shares worth Rs 21,201 crore due to the unwinding of the yen carry trade, recession fears in the US and ongoing geopolitical conflicts.

This came after an inflow of Rs 32,365 crore in July and Rs 26,565 crore in June, data with the depositories showed.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused funds in these two months on the expectation of sustained economic growth, continued reform measures, better-than-expect-

ed earnings season and political stability.

Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

According to the data, FPIs withdrew a net amount of Rs 21,201 crore in equities so far this month (August 1-17). So far this year, FPIs invested Rs 14,364 crore in equities, data with the depositories showed.

FPI outflows witnessed in August were mainly driven by a combination of global and domestic factors.

**Stock markets to take cues from global trends, FII trading activity: Analysts**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the earnings season drawing to a close, stock markets will take cues from global trends and foreign investors' trading activity this week, analysts said.

The US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) minutes will be the major highlight this week, experts said.

"This week, there are fewer cues on the macro and micro fronts, as the Q1 earnings season has concluded. However, important global economic data, such as Japan's inflation numbers and the minutes from the US FOMC meeting, will be closely watched. The

uncertain geopolitical situation remains the primary near-term risk for the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investment Ltd.

Traders will also closely monitor institutional flows and crude oil price movement, he added.

Easing fears of a recession in the US triggered a global market rally on Friday.

"Positive US economic data like cooling inflation and robust retail sales numbers shrugged off recession fears while talks of a rate cut by the US Fed as early as next month fuelled a mega rally across global equities, including India," Prashanth Tapse, Senior

VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. The 30-share BSE benchmark jumped 1,330.96 points or 1.68 per cent to settle at 80,436.84 on Friday, marking its best single-day gain in more than two months. The NSE Nifty surged 397.40 points or 1.65 per cent to close at a two-week high of 24,541.15.

"The outlook for the market will be guided by the F O M C meeting minutes, US existing home sales and new home sales data,"

Palka Arora Chopra, Director, Master Capital Services Ltd, said. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 730.93 points or 0.91 per cent, the Nifty climbed 173.65 points or 0.71 per cent.



**Foxconn business in India crosses US \$10 billions**

PNS ■ SRIPERUMBUDUR

**Invests US \$1.4 billion till date**

iPhone contract manufacturer Foxconn's business in India has grown to over USD 10 billion till 2024, its chairman Young Liu said here.

Foxconn has invested USD 1.4 billion in India till date, according to the company.

"So far, till last year, we have done more than USD 10 billion in business size. We will do much more in this coming year," Liu said.

He was speaking on the sidelines of the inauguration of the company's women-only



residential complex near Foxconn's plant here on Saturday. Liu, a Padma

Bhushan awardee, said that during his current visit to the country he met chief ministers

of several states and feels that India is on the rise.

"After visiting so many states in India I felt that India is ascending. Foxconn wants to be a part of it. We will grow together with India's growth," Liu said.

This is Liu's first visit to India after he was conferred Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian award, on the eve of the 75th Republic Day this year. Liu started his about a week long visit to India with a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday.

**'Indian biz need to align cyber security budgets with growth objectives'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian businesses need to align cyber security budgets with their growth objectives to ensure sustainable expansion in the face of increasing digitalisation and associated risks, a top official of Kaspersky has said.

The emergence of new-age technologies, including artificial intelligence and GenAI, is critical for companies to boost their businesses.

"In order to grow businesses, you need to digitise. If you don't digitise, you are not going to have that business growth value," Adrian Hia, Managing Director for the APAC region at Kaspersky, told PTI.

At the same time, the digitalisation of businesses increases the attack surface area, opening avenues for risks like sophisticated cyberattacks.

If Indian businesses aim to

grow by 20 per cent, they also need to boost their cyber security budget by 20 per cent in the course of preparedness against these attacks, Hia noted.

Further, he said that organisations need to upkeep their systems and data while moving towards digital trans-

formation.

In India, malware attacks climbed 11 per cent to 13,44,566 in 2024 against 12,13,528 a year ago, a report by SonicWall said earlier this month.

The number of brute force or targeted attacks is escalating in India, with every third cyber incident reported due to ransomware in 2023, cyber security firm Kaspersky has noted.



**ISRO's SSLV, private players Skyroot, Agnikul eye share**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ISRO's latest satellite launch vehicle "SSLV" is the first rocket in its category to be ready for commercialisation with two others, 'Vikram' from Skyroot and 'Agnibaan' from Agnikul Cosmos, expected to vie for market share to place small satellites in orbit.

According to industry estimates, the satellite launch market in India is expected to grow from USD 720 million in 2022 to USD 3.5 billion by 2033 and small satellites are likely to be the most preferred modes for a number of applications ranging from providing internet connectivity to earth



observation.

Space start-ups such as Pixxel and Satsure have already announced plans

to have constellations of small satellites for the range of services they plan to offer and Indian launch vehicles will

vie to be the preferred rockets to place these satellites in orbit.

"Larger launch vehicles are there, but with a large number of satellites being launched, companies do not want to wait, they want to launch a satellite as soon as they can and small vehicles are tailor made for them," Lt Gen A K Bhatt (retd), Director General of Indian Space Association, told PTI. Pixxel is also considering using ISRO's launch vehicles to place its hyper-spectral satellites in orbit later this year.

"Right now, of the six satellites we are building, three of them will launch with SpaceX and three with ISRO,"

Pixxel CEO Awais Ahmed told PTI in July. Bhatt said the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe) was also in discussion with various government ministries for having a constellation of small satellites to meet their requirements.

"These satellites will be built by Indian companies and will help create a market for home-grown launch vehicles," he said.

Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace carried out the test of the Stage 2 engine that will power the Vikram-1 rocket it plans to launch later this year.



# what's brewing?

## NIKITA DUTTA DESIRES TO TAKE ON AN ACTION ROLE

Nikita Dutta, known for her standout performances in films like *Gold*, *Kabir Singh* and *The Big Bull*, continues to captivate audiences. Recently, she ventured into Marathi cinema with her debut in *Gharat Ganapati*, winning acclaim and admiration for her compelling performance. In a recent interview, Nikita shared her enthusiasm for exploring new genres, particularly action. "I've always wanted to take on an action role, and it's something that's been on my mind," she revealed. Having already showcased her versatility across various genres, it will be intriguing to see Nikita embrace action-packed roles. With Indian cinema evolving, many actresses are stepping into action roles and Nikita's talent and dedication make her a promising fit for this genre.

On the professional front, Nikita Dutta is set to star in Siddharth Anand's upcoming Netflix production, *Jewel Thief: The Red Sun Chapter*.



## Zoya Akhtar confirms a crime mafia in the process

Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar has confirmed that she is in the process of making a crime-mafia movie. She also discussed the writing style of her father, Javed Akhtar and his former screenwriting collaborator, Salim Khan. The director of *The Archies* is currently occupied with promoting the docu-drama series, *Angry Young Men*. In a recent interview, the famous filmmaker also shared how her father's work has impacted her own work. Zoya Akhtar was asked in a recent interview about the rumours of her making a gangster film inspired by the style of Salim-Javed, following her work on *The Archies*. Confirming the same, the filmmaker stated that she has been focusing on the script in her reply. She said, "I am working on the crime-mafia film! I am working on the script right now. So fingers crossed that it comes to something, some heft!"

## Emily reveals how Judi Dench talked her out of becoming pop star

Emily Blunt is well-known for her memorable movies earning her broad acclaim. The British actress is now highly respected and in demand in Hollywood, but were you aware that she nearly pursued a career in pop music? Yes, you heard correctly! The actress desired to achieve great success in the music business. She attributes the disruption of those plans to Judi Dench.

In a nostalgic episode of *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, the actress told host that she nearly pursued a music career as a pop star, confessing that she had even made some song recordings. Nevertheless, Dame Judi Dench convinced her not to do it. Additionally, Emily Blunt stated that she could have been the next Britney Spears. Emily Blunt told Kimmel, "I could have been Britney." She went on to explain why she gave up a career as a pop star stating she realised that she was not good at dancing and didn't want to be Britney. She said, "I don't want to tell you too much because I feel like someone is going to find these songs that I recorded."

The *My Summer Of Love* actress hinted at one of the songs, *Ring It Up*, sharing that the song will never see the "light of the day." When Kimmel asked if she wrote the songs herself, Blunt jokingly responded, "No, I can't write. I can't really sing," admitting that someone wrote the songs for her. She added, "They said, 'I think you have a nice voice and I think that you could be a pop star.' I said, 'I can't dance.' They said, 'Don't worry about it, we'll teach you.' It didn't work, I tried to learn."



## LOOKBOOK

The Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) awards night culminated in a spectacular awards ceremony, celebrating the best of Indian cinema in grand style. This year's awards honoured some of the most outstanding talents and films from the Indian film industry, marking an unforgettable night for both the winners and the attendees. Ram Charan and Dr AR Rahman bagged the top two honours for their incredible cinematic achievements.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



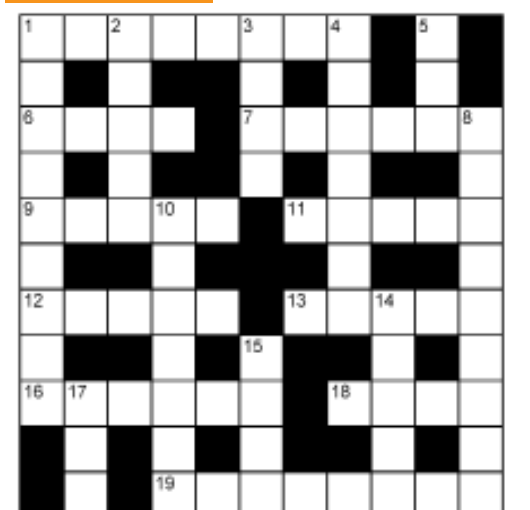
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



### SUDOKU

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

#### Yesterday's solution

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

#### Rules

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

### ACROSS

- Cold floating chunks in the sea
- Peas grow in these
- A type of bird
- Of greater age
- A long narrow piece
- Opposite of outer
- Seven plus five minus nine
- Keep a car in here
- A hired car
- A prickly animal
- A passenger vehicle
- Occurring
- A hair near your eye
- Get to
- A heavy metal
- Enquire

### DOWN

- Getting better
- Came to a finish
- Animals like large mice
- Make longer by pulling

#### SOLUTION

8	0	5	W	9
A	A	T	O	A
L	I	G	H	T
M	I	L	L	I
I	L	D	K	L
N	U	R	S	E
I	A	V	I	A
U	N	F	R	I
M	T	L	K	E

## 'My emotional breakdown during shoot of *Adha Re Adha* made me realise *Chalti Rahe Zindagi*'

TEJAL SINHA

**ONE OF THE MOST ACCLAIMED ACTORS FOR HER SUBTLE AND POWERFUL PERFORMANCES, MANJARI FADNIS IS NOW BASKING IN THE PRAISE SHE'S GOTTEN FOR HER MOST RECENT ENDEAVOUR, *CHALTI RAHE ZINDAGI*. IN AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION, SHE SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON THE MOVIE AND DIVULGES SOME NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN INFORMATION**

The challenging stages of life are truly the trials that can either build you up or tear you down. How you proceed with it will vary based on how you want to move forward with it. This is what we get to see in Zee5's latest venture, *Chalti Rahe Zindagi*, translating to 'Life Moves On'.

Directed by Aarti S Bagdi, the film revolves around the emotional turbulence experienced by three families during the pandemic. After her remarkable performances in a few notable films, we see Manjari Fadnis playing the character of Naina in the final part of 'The Intergenerational Conflict' in the Seth family.

With her years-long bond that she has shared with the director, it was a no-brainer for her to get on board. Having previously worked on a short film, *Khamakhan*, that won a Filmfare Award, the kind of project that she invests in is what really attracts her the most about her project. "The kind of project director makes are so lighthearted and slice-of-life, while they are also life-performing," begins Manjari, who is currently enjoying the love she's been receiving for *Chalti Rahe Zindagi*. Initially, when the director approached her and she read the script, she was already in love with the character and the way the story was divided into three parts. She's always smiling every time she watches her films! *Chalti Rahe Zindagi*, she says, brings that light-hearted feeling to the viewers.

In her part, she plays the character of the OCD-afflicted matriarch Leela's (played by Seema Biswas) daughter-in-law. She feels the serious subject that the part was based on was portrayed in the most entertaining way. "Without being preachy, the audience will understand the message in the best of its



way," shares the *Jaane Tu... Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na* fame. She, in fact, goes on to reveal that the script was written during the lockdown. "The DOP, Barkha, Indraneil and Aarti were all living in the same society and were quarantined during the pandemic. They ended up making a short story, which was the first part of *Chalti Rahe Zindagi*. Later, she was like, why don't we make a film with three different stories?"

With the COVID outbreak, their team had worked with about only 15 people on the sets, which seemed like a family. Her part was, in fact, shot in the director's house. The shooting felt like a 'work from home' experience.

"It was a blessing," says Manjari, who was pretty ecstatic to closely work with Seema Biswas on the project. "Working with an actor who has been so dedicated to the craft for so many years. She's such a fine actress. Just watching her perform was such a pleasure. I was lucky that my entire track was back and forth with her. The whole episode is about the chemistry between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. It's beautifully written and executed. I really enjoyed playing the entire role. The layers that she brought into her character with some beautiful elements were just commendable. She has dedicated so many years of her life to the craft."

*Chalti Rahe Zindagi* also aims to portray the emotional turmoil faced by three families amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Speaking of their part of the concept, it was certainly not much relatable to the *Muthirai* actress because, "I am a very different person in real life. Naina is a widow who is the

breadwinner of the family and is taking care of her mother-in-law. My whole life revolves around taking care of the family. The kind of pressure the character goes through is so intense, but again, that's the fun of being an actor. When you get to play a character who is very different from your life, it is very important to have an understanding of someone else's life. I had to put myself in the shoes of the character. Otherwise, I'm a very pampered one in my house. I'm the only child of my parents, so they have been spoiling me rotten (she laughs out loud)."

There was an unhappy occurrence that Manjari revealed to us. "Just five minutes before I had to leave to shoot the song, *Adha Re Adha*, a joyous tune in which Naina dances in excess, I received really sad news: I sadly lost my dog, Pari, in Pune. To be honest, I have no idea how I shot the music. She was like my little kid and when my mother called, she was inconsolable. I simply couldn't think of anything, so I asked Aarti and the crew for ten minutes. After that, I went to the make-up room, phoned my mother and had one more look at Pari (she was emotional)."

She goes on, "I was completely broken and I did not know how I was going to shoot. I shut myself down for 10 minutes and I was like, the whole unit is waiting for me. I did not want to waste a day of shoot and honour the commitment I have given. I just blocked my emotions, went out and shot for 16 hours straight and just broke down. But yeah, that was the one moment I realised, *Chalti Rahe Zindagi* and the show must go on."

The talented actress, who has *Pune Highway*, a cameo role in Abbas Mastan's next and *Zindagi Namkeen* with Shreyas Talpade in the kitty, brings an exclusive revelation as we head towards the end of this chat: "Not many people are aware that I'm a singer too and just a while back, I had my song *Aao Na* from the album *Lo-Fi Baarish* out, which was directed by Gaurav Das Gupta."

So, here's more about her music coming in the future, along with her acting ventures!

### EVENT COVERAGE

## PAY AS YOU PLEASE!

AARTI SREENATH

Akan Hyderabad, celebrating the occasion of the 78th Independence Day, transformed into a sanctuary of culture, community and charity with its first fundraiser event, *Akan Aahvaanam*. This event, a unique 'pay as you please' lunch, beautifully merged the rich culinary traditions of our region with a profound spirit of philanthropy.

The idea of this one-day affair was simple yet impactful: serve local delicacies on banana leaves, take us back to our roots while allowing guests to contribute whatever they felt was fair, all in the name of supporting a worthy cause.

Walking into Akan, I was immediately struck by the transformation. The contemporary vibe of the resto-bar had given way to an aesthetic steeped in tradition. The sunlight bathed every corner and the servers, dressed in dhotis with tricolour scarves draped over their shoulders, added to the uniquely Indian atmosphere. The décor was complemented by the soulful strains of a live sitar performance by the acclaimed Swamyam Siddha, creating an ambiance that was both serene and deeply connected to our heritage.

*Motichoor Rabri Parfait*, with its naturally tri-coloured layers, was not just a treat for the taste buds but also a visual delight, perfectly symbolising the spirit of the day.

Amidst the aroma of these traditional dishes, there was a palpable sense of community. Shilpa Reddy, a holistic lifestyle influencer, captured the sentiment perfectly when she shared, "Akan Hyderabad has put together an amazing traditional meal and the fact that guests can pay as they please to support the cause is an incredible thought. It's a drop in the ocean, but as we know, drops like these make an ocean."

The event wasn't just about food; it was about giving back. Nageshwar Reddy Gurralla, one of the key organisers, shared his vision for *Akan Aahvaanam*, saying, "As the spirit of Independence Day beckoned us to reflect on freedom and unity, the team at Akan felt a deep-seated desire to give back in a meaningful way. Reflecting on six months of creating beautiful memories and hosting successful events, we sought to honour our journey and the community that has supported us. Just as trees do not consume their own fruit and rivers do not drink their own water, we believe that our purpose extends beyond ourselves—to uplift others selflessly, embodying the true essence of humanity."

The funds raised from the event were directed towards the Extra Mile Foundation, an organisation dedicated to providing critical aid to premature babies in NICU units within underprivileged families. Nihal Reddy Gurralla expressed his gratitude, noting, "Every rupee raised will support the Extra Mile Foundation. By participating, each of our guests helped to make a tangible difference in the lives of those in need. We plan to do more such events in the future."

Adding to the event's appeal were the appearances of actors Rag Mayur and Priya Vadlamani from the latest ETV Win release, *Veeranjaneyulu Vihara Yatra*. Their presence brought an additional layer of excitement, with Rag Mayur commenting, "This is a unique event for a good cause. We are delighted to be part of this amazing deed on Independence Day."

Dr. Nitisha Bagga of the Extra Mile Foundation was also present, underscoring the event's significance. She witnessed firsthand the generosity of the guests, who not only enjoyed the traditional Telugu vegetarian meal but also contributed generously to the cause.

Akan's 'Aahvaanam' was not just a culinary experience; it was a celebration of community, a reminder of our cultural roots, and most importantly, a powerful weapon for the impact of coming together for a cause that truly matters. This fundraiser set a new benchmark for charitable events in the city and I eagerly anticipate many more to come.



## 'Every detail was a clue': UMESH BIST ON *GYAARAH GYAARAH*

PNS|HYDERABAD

For filmmaker Umesh Bist, mysticism and mystery are not just narrative devices; they are the essence of his latest creation, *Gyaarah Gyaarah*. This series explores the fluidity of time, where the past, present and future intertwine in unexpected ways, blurring the lines between what is real and what is surreal.

With *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, he has crafted a story that transcends conventional narrative structure, turning it into a complex puzzle that challenges viewers to look beyond the surface. The series invites audiences into a world where the ordinary collides with the extraordinary and every moment is layered with deeper meaning. Time seems to bend and stretch, creating a delicate interplay between the familiar and the fantastical.

"When I first encountered the concept of *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, I was immediately drawn to its core elements—mysticism and mystery. These are themes that have always fascinated me and *Gyaarah Gyaarah* presented a unique opportunity to explore them in depth," he reflects. But the challenge wasn't merely to explore these themes; it was to structure them in a way that would be both intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant for the audience. "The key was to create a multi-layered narrative that was intricate but not overwhelming, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in the story without getting lost in its complexity."

But bringing such a complex and layered concept to life required more than just a strong storyline—it demanded meticulous attention to detail and a deep understanding of the viewer's journey. *Gyaarah Gyaarah* unfolds across multiple timelines, each distinct yet interconnected. For Bist and his team, the challenge was to ensure that these timelines were not only clear but also engaging. "We knew from the beginning that this series wouldn't be one that viewers could watch passively. It's an interactive experience. The audience needs to be fully present, questioning and seeking answers that may only come much later in the series. It's this gradual unfolding that makes *Gyaarah Gyaarah* so rewarding for those who invest in it," the *Pagglait* fame explains.

To help viewers navigate the complexity, he employed subtle yet effective visual cues. The use of different color palettes to distinguish between timelines is a masterpiece in visual storytelling. "We played with colour to guide the audience subconsciously. For instance, scenes from the past with Shaurya are bathed in warm tones, while the present with Yug in 2016 is depicted in cooler hues. By the end of the first episode, your senses are trained to recognise which timeline you're in just by the colour on the screen," he elaborates. This attention to detail extends beyond color—production design, costumes and camera work all contribute to a seamless experience that keeps the viewer anchored in the story no matter how many layers it unfolds.

As *Gyaarah Gyaarah* continues to captivate audiences, his vision remains clear: to create a series that is as intellectually challenging as it is emotionally fulfilling. "It's not just about telling a story; it's about inviting the audience to participate in it, to feel the synchronicity and to be as much a part of the journey as the characters themselves. That, to me, is the essence of *Gyaarah Gyaarah*," he concludes.

With *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, Umesh Bist has not only crafted a series but an experience—one where every detail is a clue, every scene a step closer to uncovering the mysteries that lie at the heart of this enthralling tale. It's a journey through time, space and the very fabric of reality itself, leaving viewers both mystified and mesmerised long after the screen fades to black.



# Our fight will continue, truth will prevail: Vinesh

PTI ■ BALALI (HARYANA)

Overwhelmed by the grand reception she received on her arrival from the Paris Olympics, wrestler Vinesh Phogat said that her fight against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) "will continue and hoped that 'truth will prevail'". Hundreds of supporters had gathered outside the IGI airport here on Saturday to give a rousing welcome to Vinesh who was disqualified for being overweight after reaching the 50kg final at the Olympics.

Vinesh's appeal against her disqualification was rejected by the ad-hoc division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

On her way to Balali from Delhi, Vinesh was felicitated by her supporters and 'khap' panchayats in several villages as it took her almost 13 hours to cover 135 kms. She reached her native village in Balali around midnight and was accorded a grand welcome by the villagers. Her neighbours and friends met her with tears and smiles and patted her for the courage she had shown. Exhausted after a tiring journey that began in Paris, Vinesh addressed the gathering before calling it a day.



"Our fight has not ended and the fight will continue and I pray to god that the truth will prevail," said Vinesh while addressing the people. During their sit-in at Jantar Mantar, Vinesh along with Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik had spent nights on the streets. They had accused the then WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexual harassment of women grapplers. They were evicted when they tried to march towards the new Parliament building.

The case against Brij Bhushan is being heard by a Delhi court. Vinesh said that the welcome she had received on arrival would give her the courage to pick up the threads and get on with life. "As I got love from my fellow Indians, my village and my family members, it would give me some courage to make this wound heal. Maybe, I could return to wrestling," said the 29-year-old Vinesh. "Missing the Olympic medal is the biggest wound in my life. I don't know how much time it would take to heal this wound.

I don't know if I would pursue wrestling or not but the kind of courage I got today, I want to use that in the right direction," she added. Vinesh said she does not know if she deserved the accolades or not. "But I feel extremely lucky to be born in this village. I would always fight for the honour of the women and of this village." The two-time World Championships medalist wished that someone from Balali would better her wrestling achievements. She is a two-time CWG gold

medallist, Asian Games champion and has won eight Asian Championships medals. "I want it from the bottom of my heart that somebody from the village carries my legacy forward and breaks my records. If I can promote women wrestlers of my village, it would be my biggest achievement," she said. "It would be disappointing if no wrestler emerged from this village. We have paved the way with your achievements. I request you all to support the women in this village, they need support if they have to replace us. "They can achieve a lot. All they need is your support. I will always be indebted to this nation, this village. Whatever I have learnt, I will share with my sisters from this village and I wish someone from this village breaks my record." Vinesh had announced her retirement from the sport after her disqualification. In an emotional post on social media, Vinesh shared her childhood dream, the hardships she faced after losing her father, and also put on record the contribution made by people in her extraordinary journey. However, she did not mention her uncle Mahavir Phogat, something that irked her cousin sisters Geeta and Babita.

## BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY

# Lyon seeks English spinner Hartley's inputs to tame Yashasvi

PTI ■ SYDNEY



Ace off-spinner Nathan Lyon has already started his homework on rising batting sensation Yashasvi Jaiswal with England spinner Tom Hartley's inputs on the southpaw safely stored in his memory bank ahead of the five-Test Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia starting from November 22.

Jaiswal, who scored a century on debut in the West Indies last year, scored an astounding 712 runs in the five Test series against England at home earlier this year. But the pace and bounce on offer on Australian tracks will pose a different challenge for the Mumbaikar. "I haven't come across him [Jaiswal] yet, but that will be a massive challenge for all us bowlers," Lyon was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. "The way he (Jaiswal) played against England, I watched that quite closely and thought that was quite amazing. "I had some really good chats with Tom Hartley (England left-arm spinner) about different ways he went about it to different guys which I found quite interesting." Lyon had a stint in English county with Lancashire and had an opportunity to share notes with Hartley, who had 20 wickets in four Tests

against India and he is someone who has first-hand knowledge of Jaiswal's exploits. The 36-year-old Lyon, who has 530 wickets from 129 Tests, feels that with so much information "floating around", Aussies have the best chance to accomplish the "unfinished business" against India. "I love talking about cricket, so if I can talk to someone who has played Test cricket, I might be able to pick up something I'm not aware of. There's so much knowledge floating around this game that we can always tap into." Since winning the 2014-15 Border-Gavaskar 2-0, Australia have lost the next four series against India -- two to Virat Kohli's side (2016-17, 2018-19), Ajinkya Rahane (2021) and Rohit Sharma (2023). "If the plans we've spoken

about come to true, then I think it will be." Along with Lyon, Josh Hazlewood is another survivor from the 2014-15 series and conceded Australia's recent results against India present a significant hole in their record. "It's been ten years of unfinished business, it's been a long time, and I know we're extremely hungry to turn things around, especially here at home," Lyon said. "Don't get me wrong, India is an absolute super star side and extremely challenging but I'm extremely hungry to turn things around and make sure we get that trophy back," he said. Lyon feels that this Australian team under Pat Cummins is slightly different compared to Tim Paine's team that lost back-to-back series against India at home.

## Maharaj helps South Africa secure 40-run win over West Indies in 2nd test

AP ■ PROVIDENCE (GUYANA)

South Africa bowled out West Indies for 222 to secure a 40-run victory on day three of the second test Saturday after Keshav Maharaj wrapped up the win with his fifth wicket of the match.

It was South Africa's tenth consecutive test series win against West Indies and was highlighted by Maharaj becoming South Africa's most successful spinner in tests with 171 wickets after taking his series tally to 13 when he had Jayden Seales out for the final wicket.

That overshadowed a six-wicket haul by Seales in South Africa's second innings as the tourists were dismissed for 246 after resuming on 223-5. That set the West Indies a winning target of 263 but they were in big trouble on 104-6 before Gudakesh Motie and Joshua Da Silva put together a 77-run stand to give the hosts hope of a victory. But Maharaj accounted for them both and then surpassed Hugh Tayfield as South Africa's most successful spinner when Seales was caught by David Bedingham at short leg to cue the South African celebrations.

South Africa scored 160 in its first innings after choosing to bat first and West Indies replied with 144. The teams played to a rain-affected draw in a first test in Trinidad.

# India to open campaign against WI in 2025 Women's U19 T20 WC

PTI ■ DUBAI

Defending champions India will open their campaign against the West Indies in the second edition of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup to be played in Malaysia from January 18 to February 2 next year. India have been clubbed along side hosts Malaysia, West Indies and Sri Lanka in Group A. India defeated England to win the inaugural edition of the tournament in South Africa last year. England, neighbours Ireland, Pakistan and the USA are

placed in Group B. South Africa, along with New Zealand, new entrants Samoa and a qualifier from Africa will form Group C, while Group D comprises Australia, Bangladesh, Scotland, and a qualifier from Asia. Each team will play the other sides in the round-robin phase, making for three games each in the group stage. The top three sides from all four groups will then progress to the Super Six stage. The bottom-ranked sides from Groups A and D, and B and C will contest in last place play-off on January 24. The 12 sides in the Super Six



stage are further divided into two groups, with the top three teams from Groups A and D making up Group 1, and those of Groups B and C making up Group 2. In this stage, each side will

carry forward the points, wins and NRRs (Net Run Rate) they secured against fellow Super Six qualifying sides. Each side will contest two fixtures in the Super Six, against opponents of

corresponding groups that finished at different group positions. The top-two sides from each group will qualify for the semifinals to be held on January 31, with the final slated for February 2. The semifinals and final will all be played at Bayuemas Oval. If India qualify for the semifinals, they will play semifinal 2, which will take place on January 31. There are reserve days for both the semifinals and final. While February 1 is a reserve day for the semifinals, February 3 has been kept as a reserve day for the summit clash.



## Durand Cup: QF fixtures announced; Bagan, EB head for potential derby final

PTI ■ KOLKATA

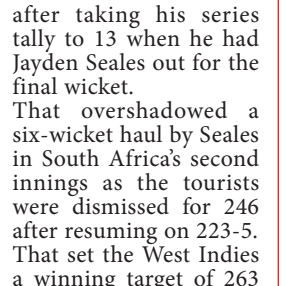
The quarterfinal fixtures of the 133rd Durand Cup was announced on Sunday with the city hosting Bengaluru FC versus Kerala Blasters match of the tournament at the Salt Lake Stadium on Friday.

Fearing security concerns in the wake of widespread protests for a trainee doctor's alleged rape and murder case in Kolkata, the organisers had on Saturday abandoned the Durand Cup marquee league fixture between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal. Both the teams were awarded one point each as reigning champions Mohun Bagan qualified as group A toppers to be pitted against Punjab FC in the third quarterfinal which will be held at Jamshedpur.

East Bengal made the cut as one of the two best second-placed teams to be drawn against Shillong Lajong FC for the second quarterfinal which will now be held in Shillong instead of the Salt Lake Stadium because of the prevailing unrest in the city. Salt Lake Stadium, however, will get to host the fourth quarterfinal, the match that

does not involve the two Kolkata heavyweights. "After the FC Goa versus Shillong Lajong FC Group F game in Shillong concluded on Saturday evening and it became clear who the eight qualified teams were, a video call was arranged where representatives of all qualified teams came on board. A live draw of lots was then conducted in front of them and two teams to play in each venue was finalised," stated a release. Both Mohun Bagan and East Bengal now find themselves in the opposite end of the draw with a potential derby clash in the Durand Cup final on August 31. The organisers are however yet to confirm the venue for the semifinals and final which are slated at the Salt Lake Stadium. QF Lineups

August 21: Northeast United FC vs Indian Army FT (SAI Stadium Kokrajhar; 4pm); Shillong Lajong FC vs East Bengal (Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Shillong; 7pm). August 23: Mohun Bagan vs Punjab FC (JRD Tata Sports Complex, Jamshedpur; 4pm); Bengaluru FC vs Kerala Blasters FC (Saltlake Stadium; 7pm).



## Abhay wins maiden Formula 1600 National Championship

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Bengaluru's Abhay Mohan clinched his maiden national title by winning the prestigious Formula 1600 National championship with 10 consecutive wins after the end of the fourth and final round of the MRF-MMSC Indian National Car Racing Championship on Sunday. The 2022 junior national karting champion, who graduated to single seater racing this year, took to the powerful Formula cars like a duck to water, with a phenomenal all-win record till

the penultimate race of the last round. The 16-year-old had an impressive unbeaten run of 10 consecutive races and conceded points only after clinching the championship that featured 12 races. Two Mumbai drivers -- Zahan Commissariat and Raaj Bakhr -- finished second and third respectively in the championship. "This is my first year in single seater Formula cars, but it has been a memorable season. It feels really amazing to be the National champion and to have 10 consecutive wins," said Mohan.

## Priya helps India A beat Australia A in final one-dayer

PTI ■ MACKAY (AUSTRALIA)

Rookie leg-spinner Priya Rmishra grabbed five wickets while Tejal Hasabnis and Raghvi Bist scored half-centuries as India A thrashed Australia A by 171-run in the third and final one-dayer here on Sunday. India A finally achieved success in the third and final one-dayer after having lost five successive games -- three T20s in Brisbane and two one-dayers here -- in the six-match white-ball series. India A scored a modest 243/9, thanks to middle-order batter Tejal's 66-ball 50 and Raghvi's 64-ball 53 before 20-year-old Delhi cricketer Priya took a fiver (5/14) to dismiss the Australia A batting for just 72 runs for a massive win. Playing in only her first match on the tour, Priya dismissed opener Maddy Darke (22) and top-order batter Tess Flintoff (20) as the home team was left



reeling at 52/4 in the 15th over of the chase. She then destroyed the middle order taking the wickets of Nicole Faltum (2), Kate Peterson (1) and Nicola Hancock (0) as the hosts were dismissed in 22.1 over, which gave India A a consolation win. The one-off unofficial Test will be played in Gold Coast from August 22. Earlier, a 104-run partnership between Tejal and Raghvi helped India A overcome a shaky start, which saw them reeling at 43/3 in the ninth

over. The duo, which has stood out in the series for its batting, then carried the team to 147 before Tejal was dismissed in the 28th over. Raghvi too followed suit before Sajeevan Sajana (40) and captain Minnu Mani (34) took the team beyond the 200-run mark. Brief scores: India A 243 for 9 in 50 overs (Tejal Hasabnis 50, Raghvi Bist 53, Sajeevan Sajana 40, Minnu Mani 34; Maitlan Brown 3/39, Charli Knott 2/26). Australia A 72 in 22.1 overs (Priya Mishra 5/14, Minnu Mani 2/4).

# Top-ranked Iga, Jannik reach semifinals in Cincinnati

AP ■ MASON (OHIO)

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek and Jannik Sinner fended off challenges Saturday to reach the semifinals in the Cincinnati Open. Swiatek extended her match winning streak to 15 with a 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 victory over 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva. Swiatek will face third-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, a 6-3, 6-2 winner over 10th-ranked Liudmila Samsonova 6-3, 6-2. Sinner avenged last week's loss to No. 6 Andrey Rublev in the quarterfinals in Montreal with a 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 victory to become the first Italian man to reach the Cincinnati semis in the Open era. "It was very windy and I tried to

be as consistent as possible," Sinner said. "First time that I've played a semifinal in this place, so that's very positive." Swiatek and Sabalenka have met twice already this year, with Swiatek winning finals at Roland Garros and Madrid. Swiatek is 8-3 against the two-time Grand Slam winner. "We're both players that kind of deserve to be in semifinals and finals, because we're working very hard," Swiatek said. "I respect Aryna so much. Physically, she's always fighting and has lots of power." Neither player has reached the final in Cincinnati. Swiatek lost to eventual



champion Coco Gauff last year in her first semifinal appearance. Sabalenka is a three-time semifinalist, including each of the past two years. "We've had a lot of great battles in the past," Sabalenka said. "It's always a high-intensity match. I'm really looking forward to another great battle against her." Sinner will face No. 3 Alexander Zverev. Zverev, the only remaining former champion in the draw, beat Ben Shelton 3-6, 7-6, 7-5. Zverev has won four straight against Sinner. Frances Tiafoe advanced to

the semifinals for the second consecutive year when Hubert Hurkacz retired in the second set because of a calf injury. Tiafoe will face the winner of the late match between Holger Rune and Jack Draper. In the other women's quarterfinals, No. 6 Jessica Pegula outlasted Leylah Fernandez, 6-2, 6-7, 7-6 for her first semifinal berth in Cincinnati. Pegula, coming off a successful title defense Monday in Canada, will face Paula Badosa. Badosa beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-3, 6-2. "Paula is really playing some good tennis," Pegula said. "She turned her year around and is finding some form.

# Ankith Koyya's big break in *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*!

AARTI SREENATH

Ankith Koyya, a budding actor from Vizag, is set to make a mark with his role in the upcoming film *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*, slated for release on August 23. Despite having a string of notable projects under his belt, including *Majili*, *Johar*, *Aswathama*, *Shyam Singha Roy* and the latest *Aay*. He opens up about his journey into acting, the challenges he faced and the excitement surrounding his latest project.

Born and raised in Vizag, Ankith pursued a B.Tech degree from GITAM, Vizag, but it was during his college years that his passion for acting truly blossomed. "I started training aspiring actors in college and that's when I realised that acting was something I wanted to pursue seriously," he reflects. His big break came when he was selected for an OLV ad alongside Allu Arjun, a moment that still fills him with pride. "What made it special was that Allu Arjun personally chose me after seeing my audition," he recalls.

Coming from a family of educators, with his father being a teacher and his grandfather a retired headmaster, Ankith's decision to pursue acting was met with skepticism. "The dream of becoming an actor felt distant, almost impossible," he admits. He had to strike a deal with his parents, promising them that he would give himself a year to break into the industry, after which he would return to a more con-

ventional career if acting didn't work out. Fortunately, things began to fall into place, with roles in films like *Majili* and *Johar* proving his mettle.

The opportunity to play a pivotal role in *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam* came through a fortunate turn of events. "Indraja, who plays my mother in the film, was the one who suggested me for the role," he shares. Initially, director Lakshman Karya was unsure about casting him, but Ankith's successful audition convinced him otherwise. "Lakshman Anna had his doubts, but after seeing me perform, he decided to take a chance on me."

His role in the film is both peculiar and entertaining. He portrays a character with a delusional sense of self-importance, adding a humorous twist to the narrative. "My character has this attitude as if he wasn't born in this house; instead, he believes he's Allu Aravind's son and Allu Arjun's brother!" he shares, noting how this quirkiness brings a lot of fun to the film.

Fate seems to have linked Ankith's career with the illustrious Allu family. "It's funny how my first project was an OLV ad with Allu Arjun and now *Aay* was presented by Allu Aravind garu," Ankith reflects. In a recent meeting, Allu Aravind humorously remarked to him, "I heard you're playing my son in *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*; what's that about?"

Despite his growing experience, he remains grounded, considering himself a "blind actor"



who delivers exactly what the director envisions. He fondly recalls a moment on set when he nervously asked his co-star Rao Ramesh for feedback. "I asked Ramesh if I was doing well and he reassured me, saying, 'You're doing fine; just keep going as you are,'" he recounts. With a lineage of stage actors in his family, he believes that perhaps the acting gene was passed down to him. "My father and grandfather were into stage plays, and maybe some of that talent was inherited." Another significant aspect of *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam* is the support it has garnered from industry heavyweights.

Sukumar's wife, Tabitha Sukumar, is presenting the film, marking her maiden presentation. "Although I haven't had the chance to meet Sukumar yet, Tabitha has been incredibly supportive throughout this journey," he acknowledges. He adds that director Lakshman shared how Sukumar had watched the film and appreciated the performances of all the actors.

His connection with Niharika Konidela goes back to their collaboration in *Happy Wedding*. Now, working under her production house, he couldn't be more thrilled. "Niharika encouraged me not to miss the opportunity to work in *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*. She spoke highly of Lakshman Anna as a director and even helped connect me with the top hierarchy at Pink Elephant production," he reveals, expressing his hope that the film will become a huge success.

As *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam* gears up for its release, he is filled with anticipation and excitement. With a promising role, the backing of industry stalwarts and a unique connection to some of Telugu cinema's biggest names, Ankith Koyya is on the brink of what could be his most significant breakthrough yet. This film may well be the stepping stone to a bright and enduring career in the film industry.

**ACTOR ANKITH KOYYA, KNOWN FOR HIS PERFORMANCES IN MAJILI, JOHAR AND AAY, AMONG MANY OTHERS, IS ALL SET TO BRING A REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE WITH MARUTHI NAGAR SUBRAMANYAM. AS THE FILM NEARS ITS RELEASE, HE SPEAKS OF HIS FORMATIVE YEARS, WORKING WITH INDRAJA AND MORE**

## MANORATHANGAL: CELEBRATING VASUDEVAN NAIR'S LEGACY

PNS|HYDERABAD

M.T. Vasudevan Nair, fondly known as MT, is a monumental figure in Malayalam literature; his works are considered gold in Indian literary history. Over decades, MT has crafted stories that deeply explore the human condition, blending the everyday lives of Kerala's people with rich emotional and cultural nuances. His ability to capture the essence of ordinary life and elevate it into profound narratives has left an indelible mark on readers across generations. Through his characters, MT gives voice to the often silent and overlooked, solidifying his legacy as one of India's most revered storytellers.

*Manorathangal* (celebrating MT Nair's 90-year legacy) is a fitting homage to this literary giant, bringing together nine of his most cherished stories into a cinematic experience.

**Plot:** Each 45-minute segment begins with Kamal Hassan traversing a vast library, underscoring the profound influence of MT Nair's writing on both himself and society. The series spans a diverse range of themes, from a couple's quest against adversity in *Olavum Theeravum* to a journalist's search for a lost sibling in *Kadugganna Oru Yathra* and the unintended consequences of a sister's pet in *Sherlock*. Other episodes tackle familial disputes, personal connections and life-altering decisions, like a poignant exploration of legacy and mortality in *Swargam Thurakkunna Samayam*.

**The plus:** What sets *Manorathangal* apart is its commitment to character-driven storytelling. Undoubtedly, the USP of the series is the writing, with multidimensional characters who

feel real and relatable. The series doesn't shy away from exploring complex emotions, often leaving the audience with more questions than answers—a testament to its depth and sophistication. The performances across the board are outstanding, with Indrans delivering a particularly memorable performance in the episode *Swargam Thurakkunna Samayam*, which explores human responses to death.

As Kuttynarayan, a figure who aids people during pivotal life moments and is known for predicting the time of death, Indrans' portrayal is striking.

His precise body language and intense expression make his performance truly compelling and unforgettable. In *Shilalikhitam*, Biju Menon portrays

Gopalankutty, an archaeologist who returns to his village with his teenage daughter. The narrative ultimately undermines the romanticised notion of rural life as idyllic and the villagers as inherently benevolent. Ranjith's *Kadugganna Oru Yathra Kurippu* features Mammooty as a journalist searching for his long-lost step-sister in Sri Lanka, exploring themes of guilt and emotional disparity with poignant sensitivity. In contrast, the reimagined *Olavum Theeravum* (now *Ripples and the River Bank*), directed by Priyadarshan and starring Mohanlal, delves into themes of broken dreams and romance, using black-and-white cinematography by Santhosh Sivan to enhance its visual depth and narrative intimacy.

**The minus:** While the anthology format allows for a variety of stories, it also means that not every episode hits its mark. Some segments feel underdeveloped, leaving viewers yearning for more depth and closure. Additionally, the series' slow pacing can be exhausting, suggesting that a tighter selection of episodes

or a more concise duration might have kept the audience more engaged.

**Technical aspects:** Each episode of *Manorathangal* excels in its portrayal of Malayalam culture through stunning cinematography. The series captures the essence of traditional Kerala with scenes of ancestral homes bathed in the soft glow of oil lamps, evoking a profound sense of nostalgia. The verdant landscapes—spanning lush paddy fields and verdant coconut groves—serve as a picturesque canvas that enriches the storytelling. Everyday details, such as a breakfast of dosas elegantly served on plantain leaves, are rendered with a meticulous eye for authenticity, offering a genuine glimpse into the Malayali way of life.

Rathish Ambat's direction of episode 6, titled *Kadakkattu* (Sea Breeze), is highly commendable. It explores Keshav's (played by Indrajith Sukumaran) struggle with balancing his love for a woman, his job, and his family. Each frame is exquisitely edited by Dilip Damodar, appealing to those with a keen eye for meticulous editing. The soundtrack deserves a special mention. The title track, composed by M. Jayachandran, beautifully encapsulates the mood of each episode, significantly enhancing the emotional depth of the stories. For instance, in episode three, titled *Kazhcha*, which centers around Sudha, a singer grappling with marital strife and complex family issues, the soothing music adds a profound layer of emotional resonance.

**Verdict:** *Manorathangal* stands as a remarkable tribute to M.T. Vasudevan Nair's literary genius, offering a cinematic experience that is both profound and introspective. For those who appreciate cinema in its purest form—where storytelling is paramount, and characters mirror the complexities of real life—this anthology is a must-watch. However, the series requires patience and a willingness to engage with its slower pace and open-ended narratives.



### Nidhi Agerwal joins cast of *The Raja Saab*

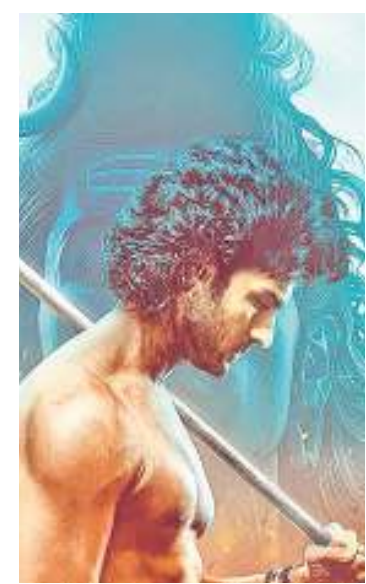
The much-anticipated PAN India film *The Raja Saab* surprises fans with an exciting update, announcing the addition of Nidhi Agerwal to its star-studded cast. The announcement, which coincided with Nidhi's birthday, was made by the film's production house, People's Media Factory, through a celebratory social media post. The announcement has sparked curiosity and excitement across the film industry as Nidhi Agerwal joins a stellar cast that already includes superstar Prabhas. The fresh on-screen pairing has instantly become a hot topic, with expectations soaring for the film. Adding to the excitement, the announcement is accompanied by a series of photos shared on Instagram, where Nidhi can be seen celebrating her birthday on set. She is seen cutting a cake and posing with the crew, marking a warm and festive welcome to the team. The post from People's Media Factory read: "Team #TheRajaSaab is thrilled to welcome the stunning @nidhiagerwal onboard! Celebrating her birthday on set with loads of love and excitement."

Produced by People's Media Factory, *The Raja Saab* features a star-studded lineup including Riddhi Kumar, Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, Jishu Sengupta, Brahmanandam and Yogi Babu in key roles. With music by the acclaimed SS Thaman, the film is slated for a grand release on April 10, 2025, in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, ensuring a Pan-India reach.

### Sudheer Babu enters supernatural cinematic universe

Sudheer Babu is all set to elevate with the pan-India film *Jatadhara*, a supernatural fantasy led by ace producer Prerna Arora, who also produced *Pari* with Anushka Sharma in similar genre. The film's first look, featuring Sudheer Babu in a mysterious and powerful avatar with a leading Bollywood heroine and one of the most powerful antagonists is set to join the cast of *Jatadhara*.

Presented by producer Prerna Arora & Sudheer Babu Production, *Jatadhara* aims to raise the bar for Indian cinema, much like the recent cultural sensations *Munjya*, *Stree* and *Kantara*. But *Jatadhara* promises to push the envelope even further, combining mythology, supernatural elements and powerful storytelling into an unforgettable cinematic experience. The film will begin shooting soon in Hyderabad and is slated for a grand release on Mahashivratri 2025!



### Nayan Sarika introduced as 'Satyabhama'

The upcoming project *KA* will mark the grand comeback of Kiran Abbavaram, a dynamic and youthful actor renowned for his series of hit movies. After taking a year off, Abbavaram is getting ready to impress viewers with a grand historical action movie. The fascinating pre-announcement poster with a retro postcard design has generated interest.

*KA* is a film with a significant budget, created by Chinta Gopalakrishna Reddy and produced by Srichakraas Entertainments. The talented debutant directors Sujeeth and Sandeep are at the helm of the film.

On Sunday, the makers released the first look of lead actress Nayan Sarika and introduced her as Satyabhama. In the poster, Nayan looks like a typical South Ammayi. Meanwhile, the makers also announced that the 'World of Vasudha' will be released today at 4:05 pm.



### SREELEELA TURNS DOWN MEGA OFFER IN VISHWAMBHARA

*Vishwambhara* is among the most anticipated movies in the Telugu film industry. The main role is played by the famous superstar Chiranjeevi. Vassishtha, known for *Bimbisara*, is helming the movie with a huge budget. The movie is almost in its final leg and it will feature a special item number. There is a lot of talk in the movie industry that the producers asked Sreeleela to sing a special song, but she surprised everyone by turning down the opportunity. Yes, you read that right. If the latest buzz is to be believed, Sreeleela rejected the offer even though she was offered a large sum of money for it.



### STANDALONE

Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce, Telugu Film Producers Council, Telangana State Film Chamber of Commerce, Director's Association, Movie Artist Association, Telugu Film Employees Federation invited Megastar Chiranjeevi to Nandamuri Balakrishna's Golden Jubilee celebrations. On the occasion of Nandamuri Balakrishna's 50 years of entering the film industry, a grand celebration has been planned by the Telugu film industry at Hyderabad Hitec Novotel Hotel on September 1.