

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
The Government got a report that 41,78,892 farmers took loans from bankers which amounts to Rs 31,000 crore. Small and marginal farmers majorly have loans under Rs 2 lakh; so, we decided to clear off those loans first. We are working closely with banks and local authorities to ensure that every farmer who is eligible receives the benefit of the loan waiver.
 - Tummala Nageshwar Rao, Agriculture Minister, Telangana P4



Poland visit will add momentum to bilateral friendship:

PM

'INDIA, AFRICA

MUST TARGET \$200 BN TRADE IN NEXT 7 YEARS'



Mahesh to lend his voice for 'Mufasa' in The Lion

KING TELUGU



DON'T MISS...

Viral infections surge among...

A significant rise in viral infections among children has alarmed pediatricians in the city, with experts attributing the surge to climate change. The most prevalent conditions include exanthema and hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD), both characterised by painful symptoms and a high rate of transmission. Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Dr S Chandrasekhar, a pediatrician at Government Victoria General Hospital, also known as Gosha Hospital, revealed that this year has seen an unprecedented surge in exanthema cases...

-PAGE: 3

Kerala issues mpox alert amid...

The Kerala Health Department on Wednesday sounded an alert in the state following reports of mpox (formerly known as monkeypox) outbreaks in several countries. The state has gone into high vigilance mode, with surveillance teams in place at all airports to screen passengers arriving from affected nations, as the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared mpox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in view of its prevalence and spread across many parts of Africa. According to...

-PAGE: 5

72% of employers plan to hire...

With gradual improvement in the job market, a report on Wednesday has revealed that 72 per cent of employers interviewed intend to hire freshers in the second half (July-December) of this year. The 72 per cent hiring intent represents a 4 per cent increase from the first half of this year and a 7 per cent rise compared to the second half of 2023, suggesting a gradually improving employment landscape for fresh talent. TeamLease EdTech's 'Career Outlook Report HY2' (July-December...

-PAGE: 8

Border Gavaskar Trophy on par...

Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc believes that with the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India becoming a five-Test affair for the first time in over three decades, it would be "right on par" with the esteemed Ashes series for his team. The marquee series between India and Australia, set to begin in November, was extended by a match this year for the first time since the 1991-92 season. "Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series," Starc told Wide World of Sports...

-SPORTS

Explosion claims 17 lives in Atchutapuram SEZ

- Death toll may rise
- Outcry over safety lapses

PNS ■ ATCHUTAPURAM

At least 17 workers died and over 40 others sustained severe injuries after an explosion and subsequent fire in a reactor at the Escientia pharmaceutical unit in Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on Wednesday. Authorities and medical experts anticipate that the death toll may rise as rescue operations progress.

The explosion, which happened around 2 PM, sent thick black smoke into the sky, obstructing rescue efforts. Hundreds of workers were present at the site when the blast occurred, resulting in numerous injuries, with several individuals in critical condition.

"The situation is dire," stated an official from the Atchutapuram Police Station. "The thick smoke is



making it difficult for our teams to access and control the blaze." The scale of the disaster overwhelmed emergency services, and it took several hours for dozens of fire engines to bring the flames under control.

Krishnan confirmed that the explosion happened during the afternoon shift when hundreds of workers were present.

Continued on Page 2

LEADERS RALLY FOR IMMEDIATE RELIEF

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A catastrophic explosion at a chemical factory in the Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone has plunged the public into mourning. The devastating incident, which

All necessary measures must be taken to save lives: CM

occurred on Wednesday, has resulted in numerous fatalities and left many others injured. The scale of the disaster has elicited swift and empathetic responses from the

State's top leaders. Governor S. Abdul Nazeer has mourned the tragedy, offering his heartfelt condolences to the affected families.

Continued on Page 2



Soaring sand prices hit construction sector in Port City

A racket sells sand purchased from government depots at Rs. 1,067 per tonne at inflated prices of up to Rs. 2,000 per tonne

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The city's construction sector is facing a severe crisis due to the interference of a sand-selling racket. The Aganampudi Depot has emerged as a hotspot for this illegal activity, where sand purchased from government depots at Rs. 1,067 per tonne is being resold at inflated prices of up to Rs. 2,000 per tonne. The steep price hike has sparked concerns among builders and residents, highlighting a growing disparity between supply and demand.

A senior official from the Department of Mines explained,

"The State government initially introduced a free sand policy to ease the financial burden on builders and homeowners. However, due to the current scarcity of sand resources in Visakhapatnam, a fee covering only transportation and sanitation has become necessary for sand sourced from Rajahmundry and Srikakulam."

The crisis at the Aganampudi depot has been exacerbated by the depletion of sand reserves at the Bhemili depot.

"There's approximately 10,000 tonnes of sand left at Bhemili, but it's been contaminated by a nearby dumping yard," explained a local contractor. This contamination has led to a surge in demand at Aganampudi, where operators of tractors, lorries, and tipplers are buying sand at the official rate and hoarding it for later resale at higher prices.

Continued on Page 2



Two permanent judges for AP HC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As per the recommendation made by the Supreme Court (SC) Collegium, the Centre, on Wednesday, notified the appointment of two additional judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court as permanent judges.

"In exercise of the power conferred by clause (1) of Article 217 of the Constitution of India, the President is pleased to appoint Justice Venkata Jyothirmai Pratapa and Justice Venuthurumalli Gopala Krishna Rao, Additional Judges of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, to be Judges of that High Court with effect from the date they assume charge of their respective offices," said a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice.

Last week, the SC Collegium, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, recommended the appointment of two additional judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court as permanent judges.

Continued on Page 2

YSRCP neglected VSP: Kollu

Says critical issues overlooked during previous regime

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Minister for Mines, Geology, and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, has sharply criticised the previous YSRCP government for its alleged neglect of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP). During a visit to the plant on Wednesday, the Minister expressed serious concerns over the plant's diminished operational capacity, attributing it to minor but critical issues that were overlooked during YSRCP's tenure.

"The YSRCP government has failed to renew even some of the crucial mines that were supposed to be renewed under its tenure," Ravindra stated. He highlighted the administration's lapses that have significantly contributed to the plant's current struggles.

However, the Minister assured that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is fully committed to protect-



ing VSP and is actively engaging with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy to find viable solutions and secure the plant's future. Minister Ravindra emphasised

the importance of VSP to the State, saying, "The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is the pride of Andhra Pradesh. It came into existence through immense sacrifice, and it is our duty to protect it at all costs."

Continued on Page 2

Brookfield to invest Rs 50,000 cr in AP



Company proposes to invest the amount in 3-5 years, focusing on wind and solar formats

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Investors are keen to invest in the renewable energy sector in Andhra Pradesh. Brookfield, a global owner and operator of real assets, has proposed to invest over Rs 50,000 crore in the State in the next three to five years in renewable energy, focusing on wind and solar formats.

A delegation from the Canadian company and its Indian partners met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Energy Minister G Ravi Kumar in Amaravati and proposed to build the renewable energy projects.

"Evren, Brookfield and Axis Energy promoted a clean energy platform and committed to invest in AP, during the meeting on Tuesday with the CM and the



Energy Minister," said a release from the Energy Minister's office. In a post on micro-blogging site X, the CM noted that the Canadian company, Brookfield, which manages global assets worth \$1 trillion expressed keen interest in the southern State's renewable sector.

Continued on Page 2

65 lakh students did not clear class 10, 12 in 2023: MoE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 65 lakh students did not clear class 10 and 12 boards last year with the failure rate being higher in state boards than national boards, according to Ministry of Education (MoE) sources.

An analysis of class 10 and 12 exam results of 59 school boards, including 56 state boards and three national boards, revealed that more girls appeared in class 12 exams from government-managed schools but it is opposite in private schools and government-aided schools.

However, across school management girls are outperforming boys by a big margin. The pass percentage is also in favour of the girls by more than six percentage points.

"Around 33.5 lakh students of class 10 did not reach next grade. While 5.5 lakh candidates did not appear, 28 lakh failed. This is one of the cause for low retention rate and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at higher secondary level," a source said.

Similarly, around 32.4 lakh class 12 students did not complete the grade. While 5.2 lakh did not appear, 27.2 lakh failed.

In class 10, the student failure rate in national boards stood at six per cent while that of state boards was much higher at 16 per cent.

Moon's surface once an ocean of magma

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Data from ISRO's Chandrayaan-3 mission supports the theory that the Moon was once covered in an ocean of magma, or a 'magma ocean', an analysis, published in the journal Nature, has suggested. The analysis pertained to measurements of the lunar soil, recorded by the Pragyan rover and taken at multiple points along a 100-metre track on the surface.

The rover was deployed by the Vikram lander, which made a soft landing near the south pole of the Moon on August 23, 2023. Chandrayaan-3, consisting of the lander and rover, was launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Bengaluru.

The study's authors, including those from the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, said that previous mis-

sions, such as NASA's Apollo and the Soviet Union's Luna, have mainly relied on samples of soil taken from equatorial and mid-latitude regions of the Moon, respectively.

Analysing Pragyan's data, which came from the Moon's south pole, the researchers found that the samples suggested that the lunar soil was uniformly composed of a single rock type - ferroan anorthosite, or FAN.

The authors said that their results were similar to those from analysis of

samples taken from the equatorial and mid-latitude regions.

Further, the similar composition of samples taken from geographically distant locations supports the lunar magma ocean hypothesis, a widely accepted scenario for Moon's early evolution, they said.

The hypothesis provides one of the possible explanations of how the Moon's crust, mantle, and core formed.



'Bharat Bandh' partial, peaceful in coastal districts of AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Bharat bandh call given by various Dalit organizations opposing the classification of Scheduled Castes, evoked mixed response in Guntur, Eluru, Konaseema, Krishna, Tirupati and other districts on Wednesday.

In Guntur, the activists took out rallies in Guntur and Tenali to enforce the bandh. However the response to the bandh was partial as most of the commercial establishments were open in many areas. The RTC buses were off the road for some time but they played as usual. However the activists led by their leaders blocked the roads at some places obstructing the RTC buses. The activists deboarded the passengers and detained the RTC buses on the roads at some places.

Addressing the gathering, the JAC leaders alleged that in a bid to divide the people of Scheduled Castes, the SCs were classified as APCD groups. It is aimed to divide the Mala and Madiga castes people in the state by implementing the classification, they alleged and warned of intensifying agitation, unless the classification of Scheduled Castes repealed. They accused Manda



In Guntur, the activists took out rallies in Guntur and Tenali to enforce the bandh. However the response to the bandh was partial as most of the commercial establishments were open in many areas. The RTC buses were off the road for some time but they played as usual. However the activists led by their leaders blocked the roads at some places obstructing the RTC buses. The activists deboarded the passengers and detained the RTC buses on the roads at some places.

Krishna Madiga of hatching a conspiracy to divide Mala and Madiga castes people on the behest of Chandrababu Naidu. Since independence, the population of Scheduled Castes has increased considerably and the reservations should be enhanced as per their population ratio, they demanded.

In Tirupati, the bandh was partial and some Dalit leaders obstructed the RTC buses in the bus stand here. They staged a darba at the Ambedkar statue raising slogans opposing the classification of the SCs. They recalled that earlier, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition on the classification of

Scheduled Castes. The Dalit leaders stated that the Mala and Madiga community people have been living like brothers for the last seven decades but suddenly they are being divided.

In Amalapuram in Konaseema district, the activists burnt the effigy of Narendra Modi in Mummidiaram. The RTC buses did not come out of depots for a few hours as activists staged darnas in front of the depots. The bandh was partial in Amalapuram, Rajolu, Narasapuram and Mandapeta towns.

The activists enforced the bandh by forcing the shop

owners to down shutters. The banks also remained closed for some time and the education institutions declared a holiday today. YSRCP leaders including former MLA Rapaka Varaparasad and Gollapalli Surya Rao were among those who enforced the bandh.

In Nuzvid the bandh was peaceful but partial. The schools and college going students and office goers were seen going in auto rickshaws as the RTC buses were off the road in the morning hours.

However, an untoward incident took place during the bandh at Bandamcharla village in T Narasapuram as an activist

was stabbed by a hotel owner when bandh was being enforced. The victim suffered bleeding injuries and he was admitted to the GGH at Chintalapudi where his condition is said to be out of danger.

In Machilipatnam, the bandh was peaceful and partial. The commercial establishments in the busy areas remained closed and RTC buses were off the road for a few hours. The activists of various Dalit organizations staged darba at the bus depots obstructing the buses. DSP Abdul Subhan said that no untoward incident took place anywhere in the Krishna district.

Somasila reservoir works will start soon: Anam

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Endowment Anam Ramanarayana Reddy has said that the works of Somasila reservoir project will begin soon and will be completed at the earliest.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, the Minister said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu inspected the Somasila project recently and he was explained about the reservoir works to be carried out by the engineers. The Chief directed the officials to carry out repairs to the apron and crest gates. He assured of releasing required funds for the purpose.

The Chief Minister laid special focus on the safety of the Somasila project and discussed the matter with the engineers, he noted, alleging that the erstwhile YSRCP government had neglected the maintenance of major irrigation projects in the state. Since the Annamayya dam washed away in the floods, the heavy flood water gushed into the Somasila project causing damage to the apron of the project, he explained.

"Appeals have been made for the last three years to the government to carry out repairs to the Somasila reservoir and the apron of the project. But the



erstwhile YSRCP government did not regard the cautions of engineers. Now the Naidu led new government has approved to carry out required works," Ramanarayana Reddy acknowledged.

The Minister said that the farmers in the region expressed their concern cautioning that the Somasila project dam might be washed away as like the Annamayya project, unless repairs were carried out at the earliest.

Minister Ramanarayana Reddy justified the removal of the name of the Sangam barrage which was given by the previous government. Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu had inspected the Somasila and Kandaleru reservoirs and the engineers briefed

him about the projects' status, the Endowment Minister observed. "The Government has released Rs 5 crore to carry out repairs to the head regulator through which water is released to the Kandaleru project. The Somasila high level canal works have come to halt since the second phase of works were carried out before completing the works of the first phase," the Minister claimed.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directed the officials to complete the AS High Level canals works. Padamati Naidupalli and Ponguru reservoirs' works expeditiously to provide irrigation water to 20,000 acres, Anam Ramanarayana Reddy informed. MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy was also present.

Midhun Reddy decries 'propaganda' in Madanapalle files burning case

PNS ■ GUNTUR

YSRCP MP P V Midhun Reddy criticized the TDP Coalition Government and a section of the media for spreading false propaganda and making baseless allegations against him, particularly concerning the Madanapalle files issue.

Speaking to the media at the party's central office at Tadepalli on Wednesday, the MP stated that despite requests for evidence, nobody has come forward with any substantial proof to support the claims of his involvement



in the fire incident at the Madanapalle Sub-Collector office.

Confirming that legal action has been initiated against those responsible for

the false propaganda, he noted that the campaign against him has only intensified, with more fabricated stories being spread. This malicious targeting, he said, is causing significant mental harassment.

The MP described the Margadarsi Scam as the largest in the country and assured that this issue would be brought to the forefront in Parliament for discussion. He also stated his intention to consult with key political figures, such as Undavalli Arun Kumar, to determine the appropriate course of action regarding this scam.

He further expressed concerns about the deteriorating law and order situation in the state, citing incidents in Punganur and Angalla where public violence was incited, leading to severe consequences, including an incident where a constable lost his eye.

In the Punganur constituency, homes are being demolished, and hundreds of false cases have been filed against individuals, he added.

He affirmed that he and his supporters would continue to fight all these injustices legally and ensure that the truth prevails.

Dwaraka Tirumala temple hundi collections touch Rs 2.39 crore



PNS ■ ELURU

The hundi collections have fetched a whopping of over Rs 2.39 crore to the famous hill shrine Venkateswra Swamy in Dwaraka Tirumala.

The Dwaraka Tirumala Venkateswara Swamy temple officials took up the hundi col-

lections on Wednesday. The temple received from the devotees through hundi Rs 2,39,96,220 cash and 145 grams of gold. Temple EO V Trinada Rao said that the temple received 48 numbers of 2000 notes. The temple also received foreign currency notes through the hundi.



Constable killed as lorry knocks down bike

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A constable was killed when the motorcycle which he was riding was knocked down by a lorry on the Kanakadurga Varadhi near here on Wednesday. Police said that the deceased constable was attached to the sixth battal-

ion of AP special police, Mangalagiri. When he was going to Vijaywada on a motorcycle, a speeding lorry knocked down his bike killing him instantaneously. The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH. The lorry driver is absconding.

One boy electrocuted, another injured seriously

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a shocking incident, a boy was electrocuted and another boy suffered serious injuries when they came into contact with live high tension electric wire which got snatched and fell across the road at Agadi street at Bellamandi area here on Wednesday.

Police said that Tanvir (11) and Aadam (10) were going on a bicycle on the road. A high tension wire got snapped and fell across the road.

The two boys did not notice

the wire and came into contact with the wire resulting in Tanir electrocuted and died instantaneously. Aadam suffered critical burn injuries and he was admitted to the RIMS hospital where he is battling for life. His condition is said to be very critical.

The bicycle burnt in the mishap. The family members of the deceased alleged that the electricity officials' indifference cost the life of their son. Though the high tension wire fell across the road the officials did not take steps to disconnect power



supply till the incident took place.

It may be mentioned here

that in a similar incident, three students were electrocuted and burned alive when they came

into contact with the high tension wire which fell across the road in Prakasam district last month.

Meanwhile, Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar expressed shock and grief over the death of a boy and critical injuries to another.

The Minister expressed his anger over the indifference of the electricity officials. The Minister held an emergency review meeting with the officials concerned and inquired about the incident.

The officials told the Minister

that the local cable operator was responsible for snapping of the high tension wire. When the cable operator was trying to tie a cable wire, he pulled the electricity wire mistakenly and left without informing the electricity officials.

If the local electricity officials had got information, they would have disconnected the power supply and the mishop could have been averted, the officials apprised the minister. The Minister assured of extending all needed help to the bereaved family.

NAVEENA GHANATE
naveena.ghanate@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

The ruling Congress government in Telangana and the opposition Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) are headed for a showdown over conflicting claims relating to the implementation of the loan waiver scheme for farmers.

During a press meet at the Telangana Bhavan here on Wednesday, BRS working president KT Rama Rao launched a scathing attack on the Congress government, accusing Chief Minister Revanth Reddy of misleading the public and farmers by making grand promises relating to loan waivers and not delivering them.

KTR pointed to significant discrepancies in the government's narrative, highlighting that the Chief Minister had declared the "completion of the loan waiver process", while ongoing protests by farmers mirrored a different story altogether. He criticized the reduction in the originally promised Rs. 40,000 crore funds towards loan waiver to a mere Rs. 7,500 crore, due to which most farmers had been left high and dry without the promised relief.



"The government's claims are not matching the ground reality. Farmers are still protesting because the promised relief has not materialized. This is a clear indication of the government's failure to honour its

commitments," KTR stated. He condemned the government's decision to file non-bailable cases against protesting farmers in Adilabad district, labeling it as an attempt to criminalize the airing of genuine grievances of the farming community.

"The BRS will hold protests in every village and mandal until the government fulfils its promises to the farmers. Before the protest, we will clean up the Telangana thalli statue and

begin the protest," KTR declared, signaling a new phase of intensified agitation.

Infusing intercessory prayer in the political discourse, former Minister Harish Rao announced that he and other BRS leaders would visit the Yadadri temple to perform special prayers and seek divine intervention for the state's well-being and for expiation of the 'sins' of the Chief Minister. "Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

promised to waive all farmers' loans by August 15, but has failed to do so. We will pray that his broken promises do not bring misfortune upon the people of Telangana," Harish Rao expounded. He mentioned that he would participate in a protest rally in Aleru to demand accountability from the government.

State Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, while addressing the media, sought to clarify the current status of the loan waiver scheme. He acknowledged that there were delays in the implementation of the scheme, but assured that the government was committed to waiving loans up to Rs. 2 lakh for all eligible farmers.

"We got a report that 41,78,892 farmers took loans from bankers which amounts to Rs 31,000 crore. However, small and marginal farmers have loans under Rs2 lakh; so, we decided to clear off the loans. We are working closely with banks and local authorities to ensure that every farmer who is eligible receives the benefit of the loan waiver. Any mistakes or delays will be rectified immediately," Tummala said. He

urged farmers to contact their local agriculture offices if they had not yet received their waiver and assured them that their cases would be addressed promptly.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, during a meeting in his Madhira constituency, vehemently rejected KTR's allegations. He accused the BRS of spreading propaganda to discredit the Congress' efforts. Contrasting the present govern-

ment's approach with that of the previous government, he claimed that under the BRS regime loans only up to Rs. 1 lakh were repaid in four installments over five years, requiring farmers to incur additional interest costs and hindering their ability to secure new loans. "The Congress government implemented the loan waiver within the first year of coming to power, despite the state's challenging financial sit-

ACROSS THE STATES



Panel on Waqf Bill to hold first meeting today

Parliament's Joint Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will hold its first meeting on Thursday and its members are scheduled to interact with representatives of the ministries of minority affairs, and law and justice. The 31-member committee, headed by BJP member Jagdambika Pal, has been tasked by the Lok Sabha to scrutinise the contentious bill, which has drawn protests from the opposition parties and Muslim organisations. The representatives from the minority affairs ministry are expected to brief the committee on the "amendments proposed on the Bill", the Lok Sabha secretariat said. The Bill is the first major initiative from the BJP-led NDA government aimed at reforming the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised portal. It proposes several reforms, including establishing a Central Waqf Council alongside state Waqf Boards with representation to the Muslim women and non-Muslim representatives.



Woman 'beats up' prosecutor on court premises

A case has been registered after a woman allegedly assaulted a special public prosecutor on the court premises in CBD Belapur area of Navi Mumbai, police said on Wednesday. No arrest has been made in the case yet. Shalini Veerbhadra Panda (39) allegedly abused and beat up special prosecutor Ravindra Jadhav on Tuesday afternoon. Panda, a resident of Seawoods area, was the complainant in a criminal case, and she was apparently angry with the prosecutor as the court acquitted the accused, said an official of CBD police station. The First Information Report was registered against her on Tuesday evening under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 132 (assault or use of criminal force to deter a public servant from doing his duty) and 352 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace). Further probe is underway.



Delhi HC to hear PFI's plea against ban on Sept 11

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday listed for hearing on September 11 a petition filed by the Popular Front of India (PFI) challenging an order of an Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) tribunal confirming the five-year ban imposed on it by the Centre. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the counsel for the banned organisation to give a short note to define the "contour" of jurisdiction that can be exercised by the court while examining the UAPA tribunal's order. Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma said the petitioner cannot assail the UAPA tribunal's order on "merits" as it is not permissible, while asserting that the decision was taken after duly considering all the relevant material. The petitioner's lawyer said the tribunal passed the order after considering material in a manner that was "contrary to the known tenets of law".

Give interest on delayed compensation payment to 1984 riots victim: HC

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to pay within six weeks the interest on the delayed compensation to a 1984 anti-Sikh riots victim, observing that the appellant and his family suffered first at the hands of the rioters and then due to an "insensitive and callous" administration. The interest will be paid at a yearly rate of 10 per cent for the period between April 8, 2016, when the ex-gratia compensation of Rs 1 lakh was released, and January 16, 2006, when the Rehabilitation Policy was announced. A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan also imposed Rs 25,000 as costs on the central government while dealing with the appeal of the victim against a single judge's order which held that he was not

entitled to the interest. The appellant claimed that his house in Shahdara was ransacked and looted following the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, and his father had registered an FIR with the police. The screening committee, after examining the claims of the appellant pursuant to court orders, recommended the payment of ex gratia compensation of Rs 1 lakh in 2015, which was finally paid in April 2016. The bench, also comprising Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, observed that though the policy sanctioning ex gratia compensation did not include any component of interest on delayed payment, the same can be awarded by the court in suitable cases as the policy, which was brought for the rehabilitation of the 1984 riot victims, cannot be rendered meaningless.



Poland visit will add momentum to bilateral friendship: PM

PNS ■ WARSAW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Wednesday his maiden visit to Poland will add momentum to the bilateral friendship and benefit the people of the two countries as he arrived here on the first leg of his two-nation visit during which he will also travel to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. Modi, who will meet Poland's President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, said he was looking forward to the various programmes in the Polish capital here. "Landed in Poland. Looking forward to the various programmes here. This visit will add momentum to the India-

Poland friendship and benefit the people of our nations," Modi said in a post on X soon after his arrival at the Warsaw

The Indian community members in Poland gave a warm welcome to Prime Minister

we mark 70 years of our diplomatic relations. Poland is a key economic partner in Central Europe," Modi said in his departure statement earlier today. "Our mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism further reinforces our relationship. I look forward to meeting my friend Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Andrzej Duda to further advance our partnership," he said. Prime Minister Modi's discussions with the Polish leadership during his two-day visit will allow the two sides to exchange views at the top level on a variety of subjects and it will be a kind of real "useful exchange" of views, Indian Ambassador to Poland Nagma Mohamed Mallick told here.



military airport here.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Poland is the first trip by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in the past 45 years.

Modi when he arrived at the hotel where Polish and Indian artists performed Gujarati traditional dance. "My visit to Poland comes as

Govts, parties must brainstorm on steps to ensure safety for women: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of the Badlapur sexual assault incident, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi Wednesday said it "forces us to think where are we heading as a society". He also said all governments and parties need to brainstorm on what steps should be taken to provide a safe environment for women. A massive protest broke out in the Badlapur town of Thane district on Tuesday after a large number of people blocked railway tracks and ransacked a school, where two kindergarten girls were sexually abused by an attendant last week. In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "After West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and



Bihar, the shameful crimes against daughters in Maharashtra also force us to think where are we heading as a society? After the crime against two innocents in Badlapur, the first step to give them justice was not taken until the public came out on the streets demanding justice." "Will we now have to protest to even register an FIR? Why has it become so difficult for

victims to even go to the police station?" the former Congress chief said. He said that more efforts are made to hide a crime than to provide justice, and the biggest victims of this are women and people of weaker sections. "Not filing an FIR not only discourages the victims but also encourages the criminals. All governments, citizens and political parties will have to seriously brainstorm on what steps should be taken to provide a safe environment for women in the society," Gandhi said. Justice is the right of every citizen and the citizen cannot be made dependent on the "will of the police and administration", the Congress leader said.

Rahul should clear Congress' stand on Article 370: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking aim at Rahul Gandhi's visit to Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP on Wednesday asked the Congress leader to clear his party's stand on the Article 370 and Article 35A. BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh, who is his party's organisational in-charge for the Union Territory, said Gandhi's visit will introduce him to the "peace and develop-

ment" ushered in the region by the government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He alleged that three families, a reference to the Congress, the National Conference and the PDP, over the last several decades stoked embers of separatism and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir with their policies before the BJP government at the Centre turned things around since 2014.



Red meat linked with increased diabetes risk: Lancet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consuming red meat is related to a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, according to an analysis of more than 19 lakh adults from 20 countries across world regions, including southeast Asia, providing the "most comprehensive evidence to date." Published in The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology journal, the analysis found that a habitual consumption of three types of meat and their daily amounts - 50 grams of processed meat, 100 grams of unprocessed red meat and 100 grams of poultry - was related to 15 per cent, 10 per cent and eight per cent increases in risk of developing type 2 diabetes, respectively. The international team of researchers from the US, UK, Brazil, Mexico, among others, said that intake of meat exceeds recommended levels in many regions of



the world and has been correlated with non-communicable diseases, including type 2 diabetes. However, all the existing evidences are largely based on studies from high-income countries, mainly in North America and Europe, they said. For this study, the researchers included 31 cohorts from the InterConnect project, data for which was compiled from scientific studies and online registries,

including unpublished information. Of the total 19,66,444 participants, more than a lakh developed type 2 diabetes during follow-up, typically lasting 10 years. "The positive associations of unprocessed red meat and processed meat with incident type 2 diabetes were significant in the region of the Americas (13 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively), in the European region (six per cent and 13 per cent), and in the Western Pacific region and east Asia (17 per cent and 15 per cent)," the authors wrote. They also estimated that replacing 50 grams of daily intake of processed meat with 100 grams of unprocessed red meat lowered the risk of type 2 diabetes by seven per cent on an average. Further, diabetes risk was found to fall by 10 per cent on replacing 50 grams of processed meat daily intake with 100 grams of poultry a day.

Kerala issues mpox alert amid global reports of viral infection

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Health Department on Wednesday sounded an alert in the state following reports of mpox (formerly known as monkeypox) outbreaks in several countries. The state has gone into high vigilance mode, with surveillance teams in place at all airports to screen passengers arriving from affected nations, as the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared mpox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in view of its prevalence and spread across many parts of Africa. According to state Health Minister Veena George, anyone arriving from



countries where mpox has been reported must undergo screening at

airports. If symptoms are detected, they will be isolated and treated according to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the state government in 2022. "All government and private hospitals must strictly follow the SOP if anyone with mpox symptoms arrives," George said in a statement here. Mpox infections are generally self-limiting, lasting between two and four weeks, and its patients usually recover with supportive medical care and management. It is transmitted through prolonged and close contact with an infected patient. The health department has assured that necessary precautions

Kerala contains Nipah outbreak: 472 people cleared, Restrictions lifted

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Health Department on Wednesday announced that the Nipah outbreak in Malappuram district has been successfully contained. In a statement, it said that the restrictions imposed in the area where the outbreak was reported

have been completely lifted after the completion of the 42-day double incubation period. According to Health Minister Veena George, all 472 people who were placed under observation have been cleared and removed from the contact list. The special control room set up to monitor the situation has been disbanded, she said. illant and report any suspicious symptoms to the health department immediately.

War of words breaks out between K'taka CM & Union Minister

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A war of words has broken out between Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy over the Lokayukta's Special

at Ganigera in Koppal district on Wednesday that he has not said anywhere that Kumaraswamy would be arrested in connection with the case. But the Chief Minister added: "If there is a circum-



Investigation Team (SIT) seeking Governor's sanction to prosecute the latter in an alleged illegal mining lease case. Siddaramaiah told reporters

stance (in connection with the case) to arrest him, we will arrest him without any hesitation. Such a circumstance is not there now.

CISF deploys 150 personnel at Kolkata's RG hospital for security

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around 150 personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) are being deployed at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital following an order of the Supreme Court, official sources said on Wednesday. A day after the apex court's order, the Union home ministry wrote to the West Bengal

chief secretary seeking deployment of the CISF at the state-run hospital. Subsequently, a decision has been taken for the deployment of the CISF, the sources said. Earlier in the morning, a CISF team, led by a DIG-rank officer, surveyed the hospital complex where a 31-year-old trainee doctor was allegedly raped and murdered earlier this month.



The Govt steps back

The Government withdraws lateral entry into bureaucracy amid opposition from its allies

The government has decided to withdraw its initiative on lateral entry into the civil services. This decision comes in the wake of mounting opposition from its political allies, who raised concerns over the potential implications of such a policy shift. However, this withdrawal would put the clock back on the Government's desire to infuse the bureaucracy with fresh talent from the private sector and other domains, aiming to bring specialised skills and perspectives into the administration. Lateral entry, as a concept, was introduced to bridge the gap between the skills required for contemporary governance and the traditional expertise within the civil services. By allowing professionals from various fields—such as finance, technology, and social sciences—to enter the bureaucracy at senior levels, the government aimed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. This initiative was seen as a way to inject new ideas and innovation into a system often criticised for being slow, rigid, and out of



touch with modern realities. But it was not well taken by the Opposition and the BJP allies alike. Critics argued that lateral entry could undermine the foundational principles of the Indian civil services, which have historically emphasised neutrality, continuity, and a deep understanding of the country's socio-political landscape. This policy, they claimed, might lead to a dilution of these values, creating a disconnect between the administration and the people it serves. This is indeed a valid point as the professionals in the private sector do not have the training and mindset to serve the people, they are more focused on achieving targets and making profits. This does not go well with the public office which has to be more sympathetic to people's aspirations even if the cost is high. Another major concern, and that is more pronounced in the Indian context, was that lateral entry could become a tool for political patronage. It was feared that the process could be manipulated to favour individuals with political connections, thus compromising the meritocratic nature of the civil services. Surely, it could lead to the politicisation of the bureaucracy, further eroding public trust in the system. Besides, bypassing the traditional recruitment process could create resentment among career bureaucrats. The decision to withdraw the lateral entry initiative reflects a pragmatic recognition of the political realities at play. While the government may have been convinced of the merits of the policy, the need to maintain a cohesive and supportive alliance outweighed the potential benefits of pushing forward with a contested reform. For now, the Government's retreat on lateral entry is a reminder of the delicate interplay between policy and politics. While the idea of bringing in fresh talent from outside the civil services is laudable, the concerns raised by political allies cannot be ignored. Moving forward, any attempt to reform the bureaucracy will need to address these concerns head-on, ensuring that innovation does not come at the cost of values.

PICTALK



People perform Shivrani Purnima rituals while taking bath in the Ganga river, in Varanasi

Raj Kapoor's deep bond with Delhi: A legacy of cinema

Raj Kapoor's relationship with the capital remains an enduring part of his legacy, etched in the memories of cinema halls and the city's cultural fabric

As fans gear up to celebrate the birth centenary of Bollywood's legendary showman Raj Kapoor on December 14th, it is essential to remember his deep-rooted connection with Delhi—a city that was almost like a second home to him. Kapoor's association with Delhi was profound, and this bond will be celebrated in a grand event in the capital on his birth anniversary. Raj Kapoor's final days were also tied to Delhi, where he passed away on June 2, 1988. Just a month before his death, on May 2nd, 1988, he was honored with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award by then President R. Venkataraman at the Siri Fort auditorium. Unfortunately, his health deteriorated shortly after the ceremony, leading to severe breathing difficulties. He was admitted to AIIMS, where doctors, led by Dr. J.N. Pandey, tried their best to save him, but his condition did not improve, and he passed away due to complications from asthma. Delhi, the city that played such a significant role in his life, also became the place of his final farewell.



Kapoor had a special affinity for Delhi's iconic cinema halls, particularly Regal and Moti, where he preferred his films to be premiered. Regal, one of New Delhi's first cinema halls, held a special place in his heart. It was here that some of his most celebrated films, including "Sangam," "Mera Naam Joker," "Satyam Shivam Sundaram," "Boot Polish," and "Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai," were released. The RK Banner films consistently performed well in the capital, further cementing Kapoor's connection with the city. As Pandit J.P. Sharma "Tripathi," a close family friend, recalls, even Kapoor's father, Prithviraj Kapoor, had acted in plays at Regal, which showcased both English and Hindi productions in its early days. Sadly, Regal closed its doors

in 2017, with Moti following suit shortly after. Shashi Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's younger brother, fondly remembered his visits to Regal with his elder brother. For Shashi, Regal was more than just a cinema hall; it was a place filled with memories of Raj Kapoor. Raj Kapoor's connection with Delhi was not limited to cinema alone. His trust with the city began in 1957 when he produced the film "Ab Dilli Door Nahin." The film also marked one of the early appearances of a young Amjad Khan, who would later become famous as Gabbar Singh. "Ab Dilli Door Nahin" captured various iconic locations in Delhi, including the old iron bridge over the Yamuna, Daryaganj, and Connaught Place. Kapoor's relationship with Delhi deepened further in 1970 when his eldest daughter, Ritu, married Rajan Nanda, son of H.P. Nanda, the founder chairman of the Escorts group. Raj Kapoor would often visit his daughter's home in Jor Bagh whenever he was in town, strengthening his bond with Delhi. The Kapoor family's connection with Delhi extended beyond Raj Kapoor. His younger brother, Shammi Kapoor, had a different association with the city's cinema culture. In the mid-1960s, Shammi Kapoor remains the only member of the Kapoor clan to have held a stake in a cinema hall. Raj Kapoor's fondness for his younger brother Shashi was evident, with the former often treating the latter as a son. Shashi Kapoor's early film "Householder," directed by James Ivory and produced by Ismail Merchant, was primarily shot in a large house near Times House in Daryaganj. "Householder," written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, featured two of Delhi's iconic landmarks, Jantar Mantar and Jama Masjid. The Kapoor family's connection with Delhi is deeply rooted, with their memories continuing to be cherished in the city. *(The writer is a journalist and a columnist; views are personal)*

J&K gears up for historic elections

For the first time since the revocation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, the region is set to hold its Assembly elections



KALYANI SHANKAR

Jammu and Kashmir will have Assembly elections from September 18 to October 1 to elect 90 legislators, the first after the revocation of Article 370 and the state's bifurcation in August 2019. The delay in holding new elections has been a contention for years. However, a recent Supreme Court directive was crucial in setting the timeline. Now that the elections are announced, political parties of all shades welcomed it. Kashmir has been a significant source of conflict for long between India and Pakistan. Both countries claim Kashmir, although they only govern a part of it. Pakistan has even internationalised the issue, which has been brought to the United Nations. In 2019, mixed reactions followed Modi's decision to divide the state. This decision led to Kashmir losing its flag, criminal code, and constitutional protections. Government job opportunities for Kashmiris decreased and are now open to non-residents. Despite challenges, the state has seen both positive and negative changes. The Prime Minister's initiatives have spurred development, and the growing interest of Gulf countries in investing in Jammu and Kashmir signals a promising future, bringing hope to the residents. The Ministry of Home Affairs reports decreased security force casualties from 80 in 2019 to 33 in 2023 and a drop in civilian deaths from 44 in 2019 to 12 in 2023. The last state elections were in 2014. The high voter turnout in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls has led to Assembly polls. In Kashmir, there was a historic 58.46% voter turnout in the recent parliamentary elections, a 30-point increase from the 2019 general election. The government completed a delimitation exercise after the 2019 revocation of Article 370 and the bifurcation. The assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir increased from 87 to 114 after the 2022 delimitation, including 24 seats for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). This increase in seats could potentially shift the balance of power and influence the strategies of political parties in the upcoming elec-



tions. The BJP claimed that the scrapping of Article 370 and their subsequent policies in Kashmir had developed the region for the better. The recently concluded Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir were a significant victory for Indian democracy. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the NC and PDP saw a resurgence. The election allowed them to revitalise their membership and bring long-standing issues to the forefront. Although the Congress did not secure any seats, the NC won two out of three, presenting a strong challenge for the third seat. Despite the region's history of terrorism and allegations of rigged elections, the polls were widely celebrated for the conduct of free and fair polls. The upcoming election will test the central government's efforts to integrate Jammu and Kashmir more fully into the Indian Union after revoking the region's special status under Article 370. It is also a test for the Election Commission to conduct polls without any violent incidents. The political parties have started preparing for the upcoming assembly elections, including campaign strategy, alliances, and candidate selection. The People's Conference, Congress,



THE UPCOMING ELECTION WILL TEST THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE JAMMU AND KASHMIR MORE FULLY INTO THE INDIAN UNION AFTER REVOKING THE REGION'S SPECIAL STATUS UNDER ARTICLE 370

Peoples Democratic Party, and National Conference met to plan for the elections. The political parties have started preparing for the upcoming assembly elections, including campaign strategy, alliances, and candidate selection. The People's Conference, Congress, Peoples Democratic Party, and National Conference have all met at their party level to plan for the elections. If the assembly elections are held as scheduled, the Valley will see a contest between the NC and the PDP. Moreover, the polarisation and separatist narrative that gained traction during the Lok Sabha elections will only intensify and peak during the assembly elections. The PDP leader and daughter of Mehboobha Mufti echoed the others. Other political parties, including the Congress, the BJP, the CPI(M) and the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), welcomed the EC's announcement. In the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir elections, no party won a majority. Governor's Rule was imposed for 49 days until PDP's Mehbooba Mufti was appointed chief minister with BJP's support. 2018, the BJP withdrew from the ruling alliance, leading to the Governor's Rule again. The

assembly was dissolved in November 2018, and President's Rule was imposed in December 2018. Since then, the governor's Rule has been in the state. The government needs to decide whether to intervene in the Kashmir Valley to address soft separatism or consider a reorganisation plan before the elections. During the parliamentary elections, Congress and the NC allied. The NC contested three seats in Kashmir, while Congress contested in Jammu and Udhampur. PDP, part of the INDIA Alliance, was not accommodated and fielded candidates on three seats in Kashmir against the National Conference. For the upcoming Assembly polls, the scene is not explicit. Congress and NC might go together. Omar mentioned that allying with the PDP would be difficult because they ran against each other in the parliament elections. If the regional parties want to improve, they must unite, and the INDIA Bloc must collaborate. The Kashmir elections are crucial, and the entire country will observe a popular government's rise after a decade. *(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR RAPE

Madam — All eyes may be on Supreme Court hearings with respect to the Kolkata case but time shouldn't die down and the government can't be numb further on this issue. The pains undergone by the parents of the victim as well as the fear in the minds of the medics when they enter into a hospital for their work need to be realised by the law making authorities. It's time to burn the culprits and not the candles. The time has come for the government to pass a bill for capital punishment for rapists. When currency can be changed overnight, when special session can be called to increase the salary of politicians, when parliament can remain open all night for trust votes, wondering what is delaying to pass a stringent law against rape. The State of West Bengal must be taught a lesson by enforcing the President's role till the case gets cracked and culprits taken to task. Only drastic change like this will also become a lesson for other states to adhere caution and to protect the women from this society. The female MPs in the parliament must take this up as a cause of their own and today it may be somebody's and tomorrow this can happen at their own house can't be ruled out. *A.P. Thiruvadi | Chennai*

REAL HERO

Madam — Amid the dance of death and destruction in Wayanad, humanity dawned. Darkness gets a relief when the sun softly touches it at dawn. Our pessimism and doubt in goodness in human beings similarly got a relief. It was when we read the report that some people on their own rushed to the danger zone in Wayanad and saved others at the cost of their lives. Sharath saw that the roof of his home had been blown away after landslides hit Chooramala on July 30. Immediately, he took his parents to a safer place. But he did not stop there. He rescued 18

Saga of champai Soren!



Sixty-eight-year-old Champai Soren, who was the Chief Minister of Jharkhand for a few weeks, is in the headlines of newspapers these days. Some are saying that he will join BJP, some are predicting that he will form a new party, some are assessing that he will join JD(U). But three days have passed since this news break but it has not come to fruition yet. He is still silent, yes, his intention has definitely become clear that after four decades, the people of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, with whose help he became famous,

insulted him. He should remember very well what was the fate of Geeta Koda, Congress MP from Singhbhum parliamentary constituency, when she jumped to BJP at the last moment in the last Lok Sabha elections? She was neither here nor there. The mystery of Champai Soren's future is going on for a long time because he played the game of rebellion thinking that all the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha MLAs of Kolhan will come with him. But nothing like that happened. Nor is it going to happen in the future. It is quite possible that he may lose the election from his constituency Saraikela as well. Because in the last assembly elections in the entire Kolhan, BJP was wiped out. Therefore, even though the people here call Champai the "Tiger of Jharkhand", they will never tolerate rebellion against JMM. Therefore, for the time being, it seems that Champai Soren's political life has come to an end. *Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur*

SAFETY AT SCHOOLS

Madam — Schools are noble and honorable places where students learn humility, humanity, compassion, benevolence, respect for others, and how to abandon violence and corruption. They foster unity, peace, and a spirit of togetherness. Unfortunately, today, schools have become places of fear and distress. Instances of student suicides due to teachers' cruelty, conflicts among students, vandalism on campus, and incidents like the recent Udaipur stabbing have left parents frightened and apprehensive about sending their children to school. Why is this happening? Why aren't government schools especially peaceful anymore? We heard a lot about shooting in the US schools and wondered why that happens but now it is happening in our own country. A close look is needed. *Jakir Hussain | Kanpur*

Sujit De | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE DIVINE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Aligning with this divine justice system is essential for realising true justice and harmony in life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Along with the Creation, God has set in place a perfect justice system. This is overseen by the Divine Authority under the superintendence of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.10) The Divine Authority is required to record all our acts by the mind, words and the body 24x7. Obviously, they have access to them. They are required by God to decide awards and punishments according to the guidelines given by Him. God does not interfere in this, and we keep on getting rewards and punishments as deserved life after life according to the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is: "what we sow we reap." Going into details, there are three parts of this.

There is 'prarabdha' (acts done earlier), 'kriyamana' (acts currently being done) and 'svabhava' (nature). What was done earlier including past lives, which has not been acted upon is carried forward till rewarded or punished. This process goes on eternally. The timing of rewards and punishments are decided by the Divine Authority. God knows what is being done, but does not interfere in it.

God gets into the act only if someone, mostly a devotee having God's consciousness, approaches Him for relief/pardon. If the request is found appropriate, God helps those approaching Him in order to deal with their punishments, i.e. makes them tolerable. (18.58) In this connection, it is necessary to point out that nature of all souls are also results of past karmas (deeds), as determined by the Divine Authority. It is very difficult to change one's nature by self-help. For example, if someone is lusty,



he or she will continue to be so during his entire life, unless God intervenes and helps in improving it. Again, we have to pray for it. These are the basics. Now let us see how it turns out practically. Take up a soul as an example. He has past karmas, which are due for rewards and punishments in this life. They manifest at their appointed times.

A man gets into an argument with his brother for his share in the paternal property. He decides to seek legal help. This is stage one of the justice system. Now it is 'Panchayat' at the village level or a court of justice. Such courts deliver justice based on man-made laws. These authorities deliver justice expeditiously, i.e. not taking too much time. But they must do justice, in which 'dharma' (highest religious principles) is the basis, wherever they have some latitude. Failing which, they create their faulty destiny; they just act as mediums. Whatever happens to a person has been decided long ago. That is how astrologers can predict what will happen to us.

At every stage of the legal process, rewards and punishments, as destined only, keep coming. If the person concerned is fated to get relief, it will happen in a higher court. Vice versa is also true. God has no pre-conceived or prejudiced notion towards anyone, except if someone takes His shelter, as mentioned earlier. Like all of us, nations have also destiny. This is a cumulative total of fate of all its residents. Let me take up India for example.

The 21st century is likely to be dominated by India. If it is true and India will become a developed nation by 2047, then, its judicial system has to be functioning smoothly. It must have been streamlined. There will be no delay in the delivery of judgements, i.e. there will be time-bound at every stage. Justice delayed is justice denied will be a thing of the past. There will be adequate judicial infrastructure with sufficient resources. But for this miracle to happen, some people in authority have to become mediums. For this, they will be rewarded personally according to the karmaphala principle. The divine justice system is foolproof. Are people in authority listening? It will be a shame if an opportunity like this is squandered; whatever is destined will surely happen. The question is: who would become mediums and get credit? This has been left to individuals.

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

Streamlining Punjab's administrative web



A S MITTAL

To unlock the State's true potential, there is an urgent need for structural reforms that prioritise smooth operations, accountability and stakeholder engagement

It's time for the complex web of multiple organisations of the Punjab government to take cues from the Indian Army's well-structured organisational hierarchy, which prioritises efficient command, control, and operational efficiency to maintain readiness. From a Havaldar leading a section, the smallest unit comprising ten soldiers, to the Chief of the Army Staff, the Army meticulously ensures cohesive functioning, distinct roles, and responsibilities, enabling the 14.55 lakh personnel to effectively fulfil defence and security roles. In contrast, the Punjab government's organisational structure (4.15 lakh personnel, including contractual and outsourced) requires an overhaul. In total, 50 parent departments and 163 affiliated organisations, each with its administrative head, aim for seamless result-oriented operations, which are below expectations. In the current government, the Chief Minister, who also oversees the industry sector, plays a pivotal role. However, the current structure, with around 20 administrative secretaries heading 17 departments, corporations, boards, and regulatory authorities, is not conducive to growth. By fostering a culture of collaboration, we can overcome these hurdles and drive efficiency and accountability towards a single goal of industrial growth, which has the potential to exceed the current stagnation of around 3% over the past 20 years in Punjab. Unfortunately, the complexity of multiple departments cannot achieve the single target of developing a fresh entrepreneurial class in the state. Rather, numerous channels breed corruption at various levels, and coercion can easily be gauged as the Punjab government scrapped 1498 mandatory compliances for industries three years ago. Therefore, it is high time to further ease the parent department as a single unique point, focusing on the singular target of developing a fresh entrepreneurial class in the state. It's impractical for any chief secretary to closely monitor 50 parent departments and their 163 affiliated organisations, which around 75 administrative secretaries head.

Assigning an Apex officer, preferably an additional chief secretary (ACS) level, is crucial to overseeing and synchronising each key sector. This officer will provide guidance, ensure alignment of goals and strategies, and streamline human resources operations effectively. Industries and other key sectors, such as Education, Health, urban development, Rural Development, and Agriculture, also need help navigating the complex web of 15 parent departments and their 69 affiliated organisations, which hampers good governance in Punjab. However, these challenges also present an opportunity for policymakers to reassess and reform, driving efficient and accountable human resources and paving the way for a vibrant Punjab. Industries: In Punjab industries are overseen by over 20 administrative secretaries who manage 17 departments and affiliated organizations. This large organizational structure, instead of collectively achieving the goal of growth, is currently engaged in assessing around 2000 compliances, posing a significant challenge for entrepreneurs. The need for an efficient and accountable administrative setup is urgent to create a conducive and thriving business environment. Initially, the Department of Punjab Industries and Commerce and its



IT'S IMPRACTICAL FOR ANY CHIEF SECRETARY TO CLOSELY MONITOR 50 PARENT DEPARTMENTS AND THEIR 163 AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS, WHICH AROUND 75 ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARIES HEAD

seven affiliated organisations oversee the industrial sector. However, three additional departments were later established - the Department of Investment Promotion, the Department of Employment Generation and Training, and the Department of Technical Education and Industrial Training - along with their ten organisations to fulfil the same objective. To fetch new investment, "Invest Punjab" was established under the Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion (BPIP) as a single access point to streamline processes. It is claimed that this entity has been empowered to provide over 34 regulatory approvals, clearances, and compliances related to more than 30 organisations. This streamlined approach is crucial for existing industries, as they face challenges in directly dealing with 17 departments - the Punjab Industries & Commerce Department, Pollution Control Board, Chief Electrical Inspector, Labour Commissioner, Department of Factories, Department of Industries, Employment Generation and Training, Skill Development Mission, Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion and Punjab State Industrial Development Corporation etc. This complex web of multiple departments is directionless and unfocused; enormous human resources can be utilised in a single merged service provider entity. In 2012, the idea of merging The Punjab State Industrial Development Corporation (PSIDC) and Punjab Financial Corporation (PFC) into the Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC) was also

proposed but has yet to materialise. Punjab, with 99.7 per cent of MSMEs, is a promising hub for growth. However, the most significant roadblock for these enterprises is dealing with multiple departments and keeping track of their compliance. Despite the implementation of ten policies since the first industrial policy was formulated in 1978, the need for actionable governance reforms is still pressing. It is necessary to explore various measures to significantly improve services and make Punjab an attractive destination. Policymakers must urgently reimagine the state. Agriculture: In Punjab, agriculture is overseen by five distinct departments: the Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries, Department of Horticulture, and Department of Soil & Water Conservation. Eighteen additional organisations support these departments. Despite the involvement of multiple organisations, the state's agricultural growth has consistently declined, resting at around three per cent from 1990 to 2000 and further declining to less than two per cent from 2010 onwards. Education: The government greatly emphasises education and considers it a top priority. There is a critical need to revamp the administrative structure, as there are currently two separate departments, with six organisations and a school education board. The Department of Higher Education and Languages manages organisations in education and languages, while the Department of School Education oversees the six organisations. Despite these efforts,

it is essential to address that Punjab's secondary school dropout rate was 17.2% in 2022, exceeding the national average of 12.6%. The Way Forward: The reforms have the potential to significantly improve the functioning of key sectors in Punjab, creating a more accessible, transparent, efficient, responsive and accountable system to achieve a single goal collectively. Therefore two steps may be taken: First, Empowering Apex Officials: To achieve seamless collaboration among departments, empower at least five to six apex officers who will oversee the overall administration of their respective departments and have to report to the chief secretary. Each apex officer should have the support of five to six officers as direct reports. This approach aims to improve responsiveness, ensure transparency in decision-making processes, and hold apex officials accountable for their actions. Second, Stakeholder Engagement: The active participation of stakeholders is not just important, it's integral to the success of the proposed reforms. Encouraging stakeholder participation through feedback mechanisms and regular interactions to understand their needs and concerns is a key part of inclusive growth.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA). Views expressed are personal)

A bold leap towards 'Viksit Bharat' with historic push for education and skilling

This budget allocation of Rs 1.48 lakh crore for education and skilling along with digital learning will help build a robust, future-ready workforce

Union Minister for Education Dharmendra Pradhan hailed the 2024-25 budget as a pivotal milestone on India's path to becoming a developed nation by 2047. Prioritising education, skilling, employment generation, research and innovation like never before, #Budget for Viksit Bharat paves the way for strengthening Bharat's credentials...." Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan posted on X. He noted that these are comprehensive and concrete measures taken up by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman that will be a win-win for all stakeholders—students, academia, and industry. The budget allocation for Education, employment, and skilling has been increased by



REETU SRIVASTAVA

30% to Rs 1.48 lakh crore. India has the largest educational system with 265 million students in schools, 43 million in higher education and more than 10 million learners enrolled in skilling institutions. The Budget Allocation for 2024-25 of Rs 73,498 crores is the highest ever for the Department of School Education & Literacy. Autonomous bodies such as the Kendriya Vidyalaya

Sangathan and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti have also received their highest-ever allocations. The Flagship Schemes like Samagra Shiksha, POSHAN and PM-SHRI have got Rs 3,250 crores. The budget includes strengthening the skilling and apprenticeship ecosystem, skill development and internship opportunities for one crore youth by India's top companies, and providing employment-linked incentives to first-time employees across the sector. The government has introduced a revamped 'Model Skill Loans Scheme' from 1.5 lakhs to 7.5 lakhs to 25000 students annually and education loans up to 10 lakhs for pursuing education in higher domestic educational institutions to one lakh students every year with an annual interest subvention of 3%. The step will certainly promote enrolment in domestic institutions as well as reduce the financial burden on the students. In addition to this, the finance minister also outlined several initiatives for the Skill Development sector. These include the upgrading of 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in line with the skill requirements of the industry. The internship opportunities for one crore youth in 5 years by the government is a welcoming step, this will provide youths with an engagement and enhance employability and practical skills. In the scheme 'National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)', an allocation of Rs 600 crore has been made. There has been an over-



all increase of Rs. 3525.15 crore (7.99%) in the budget allocation of the Department of Higher Education in this budget. Deemed Universities, IITs NTIs, IISERs, and IISc have got hefty allocations, considerably high in comparison to the previous budget. In higher education, areas like Digital e-learning, Research and Innovation, teacher training, the Centre of

Excellence in Artificial Intelligence and some specific institutions have received higher allocations. Under Digital e-learning, the government is looking forward to tapping the potential of virtual learning and aligning it with the Academic Bank of Credits with the view of increasing portability and flexible study options. In the scheme 'National Mission in Education through ICT', an allocation of ₹480 crore has been made in 2024-25 and this is ₹80 crore more than the allocation in 2023-24. The increased budget for Research and Innovation is to focus on academic and research collaborations in science, engineering and technical education. To improve the quality of education being

imparted at the school level it requires a revamped pedagogical structure, so, the Teacher Training segment has got its due share. The scheme 'Establishment of 3 Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has got an allocation of ₹255 crore in the budget. The Major Schemes For Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) erstwhile known as Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)], the budget has been kept at Rs1814.94 crore An allocation of Rs 1800 crore has been allocated for Institutions of Eminence. In the scheme 'Multi disciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education EAP (MERITE)', an allocation of Rs 200 crore has been made and this is a 100% increase over the

last year's budget. The NEP 2020 says that the aim of the policy must be for India to have an education system by 2040 with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background. Recognising the crucial role of education the government has designed an ambitious package for education for it to be growth-oriented, inclusive and progressive. However, the most important aspect is its implementation. The features of the budget meant for education will play a crucial role in guiding India towards becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 as stated by the Education Minister. (The writer is an educationist and a freelance writer; views expressed are personal)

what's brewing?

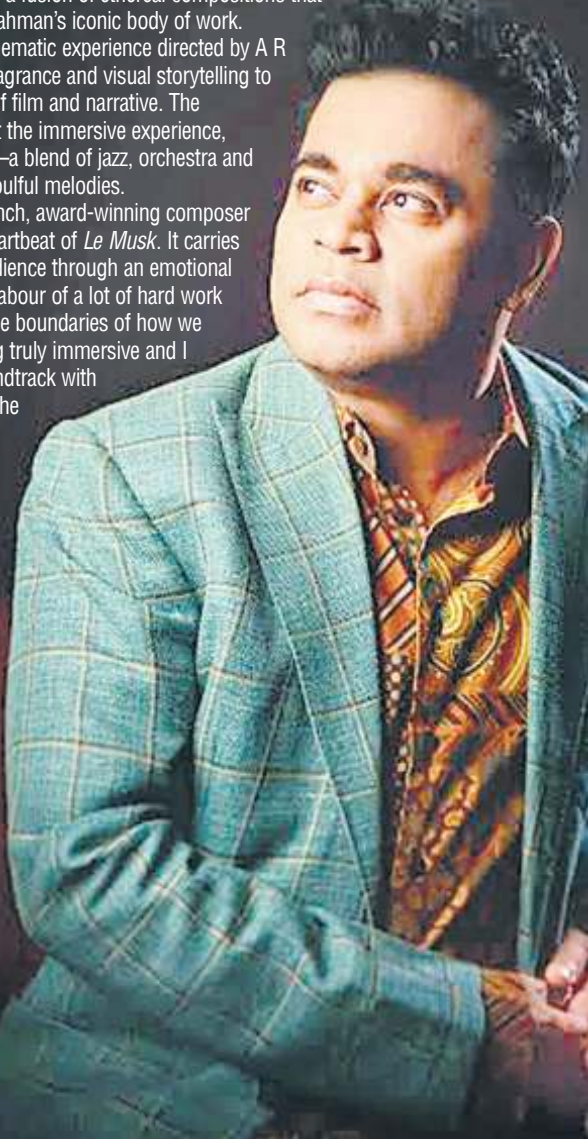
A R Rahman releases *Le Musk*

Renowned composer and Oscar-winning music maestro A.R. Rahman has released the highly anticipated soundtrack of his groundbreaking immersive film, *Le Musk*. The soundtrack with 12 soulful and varied tracks, launched globally yesterday on Believe Music, promises to captivate listeners with a fusion of ethereal compositions that transcend boundaries, much like Rahman's iconic body of work.

Le Musk, an innovative sensory cinematic experience directed by A R Rahman himself, merges music, fragrance and visual storytelling to immerse audiences in a new kind of film and narrative. The soundtrack, created to complement the immersive experience, features Rahman's signature style—a blend of jazz, orchestra and eclectic elements combined with soulful melodies. Speaking about the soundtrack launch, award-winning composer A R Rahman said, "Music is the heartbeat of *Le Musk*. It carries the soul of the film, guiding the audience through an emotional and sensory journey. The film is a labour of a lot of hard work and love, where we tried to push the boundaries of how we use technology to create something truly immersive and I am thrilled to finally share this soundtrack with the world and offer a glimpse into the world we've created."

The *Le Musk* soundtrack takes listeners on an evocative journey, blending jazz, orchestral and world music influences to create an atmospheric soundscape. With tracks that echo the film's story of love, memory and sensory exploration, this album promises to be a one-of-a-kind listening experience for both long-time Rahman fans and newcomers.

Collaborating on the 12 varied tracks with notable names, including Nora Amezeder, Sana Moussa, Linda Lind, Mayssa Karaa, Hiral Viradia, Simona Gilbert, the Firdaus Orchestra and the Budapest Orchestra, the soundtrack of *Le Musk* also marks the association with the award-winning music engineer Greg Penny.



JENNIFER AND BEN OFFICIALLY HEAD FOR SPLITSVILLE!

Singer-actress Jennifer Lopez and actor Ben Affleck are headed for Splitsville and this time it's confirmed. This comes after two years of marriage. JLo filed for divorce on Tuesday, August 20, in Los Angeles County Superior Court. The official separation date is listed as April 26, as per reports. The couple married in Las Vegas in July 2022 after re-sparking their relationship from two decades prior, which was dubbed "Bennifer" by tabloid publications at the time and was a fixation of their coverage in the early 2000s. As per reports, the two tied the knot again in a large ceremony in Georgia on August 20, 2022, exactly two years ago. JLo and Affleck made two films together: Martin Brest's largely reviled romantic caper *Gigli* in 2003 and Kevin Smith's comedy *Jersey Girl* in 2004. By the time the latter feature hit theaters, Lopez and Affleck had called off their engagement and gone their separate ways.

Both got married and divorced in the intervening years, JLo to Marc Anthony and Affleck to Jennifer Garner. Then the two began a public relationship once again, roughly three years ago. JLo provided frequent updates on her engagement and eventual marriage to her fans through her social media presence and newsletter. JLo also explicitly addressed the relationship in her most recent album, *This Is Me... Now*, a sequel to her 2002 album *This Is Me... Then*, which also discussed her then-relationship with Affleck. Affleck appeared in JLo's *This Is Me... Now: A Love Story*, a celebrity cameo-studded film centered on music from the new album. Released to Prime Video in February, the film features Affleck in prosthetic make-up playing a jaded anchorman. In May, Lopez cancelled her summer *This Is Me... Now* tour with a statement that read, "Jennifer is taking time off to be with her children, family and close friends."



Arshad accuses Boney Kapoor of paying less than discussed

Ajay Devgn's sports-themed film *Maidaan* performed poorly at the box office when it was released in April. However, that was not the only unpleasant news that producer Boney Kapoor received this year. Prior to the movie's premiere, the director faced legal issues as a vendor supplying equipment for *Maidaan* filed a lawsuit against Boney for outstanding payments. The seller claimed that Boney held off on paying him 1 crore for a period of two years. At last, the court mandated the filmmaker to hand over 96 lakh to the vendor. Once again, the producer is in the spotlight for the same reasons. This time, actor Arshad Warsi has criticised Boney's production company! Now Arshad has alleged that Boney's production company cheated him. The actor disclosed that he was appointed as a choreographer for the 1993 movie *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja*, starring Sridevi and Anil Kapoor. Arshad informed the creators that it would require 4 days to finish choreographing the song they desired and he was charging 1 lakh for his services at that moment. They asked him to complete the filming within a 3-day time frame. Despite the difficulty, he put in a lot of effort, finished the filming in 3 days and helped them save money. Nevertheless, upon Arshad's arrival to obtain his payment, he was given only 75,000. Arshad asked the production guy why he received less payment than agreed and was informed that 1 lakh was the agreed-upon fee for 4 days. The man working for the production company informed the actor that he had finished the job one day earlier, resulting in him receiving 25,000 less. Arshad provided more information about how the industry has evolved, mentioning that there are now both managers and lawyers present. Hopefully, creating agreements and contracts on paper will prevent people from experiencing unfair treatment like Arshad did.



Shahid reunites with Vishal Bharadwaj for an action thriller

Shahid Kapoor is prepared to star in a suspenseful action film helmed by Vishal Bharadwaj. The actor-director team has collaborated on three films before, and their partnership is highly respected by both the audience and critics. The most recent movie they did together was *Rangoon*, which came out in 2017. The upcoming movie is said to begin production in September of this year.

According to a source as reported, "Vishal Bharadwaj has developed the first action film of his career, and the maker is planning to mount it on a large scale. It's a mission-based action thriller and Sajid Nadiadwala is excited to bring it to the spectacle in the biggest possible way." It was also mentioned that six large action sequences will be built for the movie, and Shahid has agreed to join for his first action-packed entertainer. The source also mentioned that the actor enjoys collaborating with Bharadwaj, as two of his most acclaimed films, *Haider* and *Kaminey*, were helmed by the director.

"Shahid has the utmost respect for Vishal and Sajid and he was on board the film the minute he heard the narration. This would be Shahid's next film to go on the floor. He is looking forward to embarking on a journey with Vishal and Sajid from September to October 2024," quoted the source.



Shekhar Kapur gears up for *Masoom 2* and *Ebony McQueen*

Oscar-nominated and BAFTA-winning filmmaker Shekhar Kapur is set to direct a musical feature film *Ebony McQueen*, starring Sharon D Clarke, Avantika and Thomas Smith in the lead roles. The music of this semi-autobiographical film will be scored by Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman, while songs are being done by Dave Stewart, who is a co-writer as well as a co-producer on this film, which is set to go on floors in 2025. Drawing inspiration from

Stewart's early life, the Shekhar Kapur directorial revolves around the main character, Charlie McGarvey, who dreams of being a pro footballer, but his hopes are shattered after a devastating injury. The story delves into how he discovers the magic of creating music, which leads him on a journey that awakens the ability to fully pursue what he loves, despite the world falling apart around him. Shekhar Kapur is currently



working in India as well as internationally, establishing him as the most in-demand filmmaker across the globe. Apart from *Ebony McQueen*, Shekhar Kapur is preparing for his upcoming release, *Masoom: The Next Generation*, which will mark the debut of his daughter Kaveri Kapur. He was recently appointed as the festival director of the 55th and 56th editions of the *International Film Festival of India Goa (IFFI)*.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



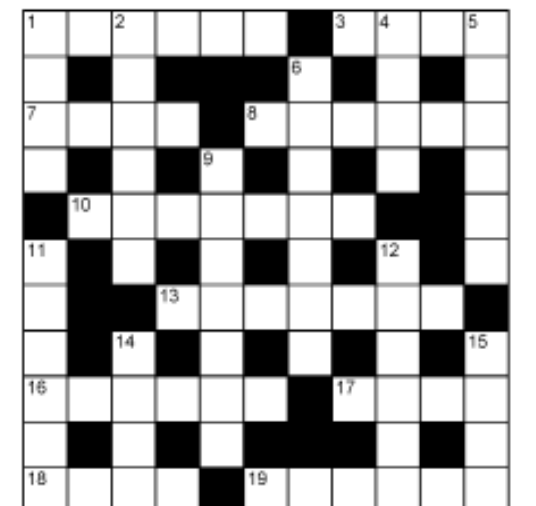
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution



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

- Meat from a sheep
- Talk in a friendly way
- A sewed joint
- Wound someone
- Envious
- A green gemstone
- Cunning
- Moist
- Border
- Jail
- A region's weather conditions
- Save from danger
- Forever
- A long sharp animal tooth
- Twirl around

DOWN

- A face disguise
- Go on a journey
- Drag along
- Three times four
- Ask



The Kolkata doctor's rape and murder case has shook the nation once again. While this was in the news, many cases had happened that people were not aware of. Yogita Bhayana has been working diligently to combat this heinous crime against women, providing assistance to the victims and their families through Pari Foundation and raising awareness about the urgent need for government support



Protesting her way towards protecting women from assaults



TEJAL SINHA

Yogita Bhayana has been actively involved with the Pari Foundation, standing resilient in the face of challenges. She has not only been advocating for justice for the victims but also pushing the nation's judiciary to wake up to prevent losing another daughter. Initially working in the airline industry as a young girl, deep down in her heart, there was a tiny bug that wanted her to do something around social reforms. While over time, she had worked on different causes, it was not until the Nirbhaya case happened that she took on the cause of helping the victims and their families. Though she did receive and attend a few sexual assault cases, Nirbhaya brought out her in-born anti-rape activism!

"Initially, I had attended cases where the girls were raped and helped them," begins Yogita, taking us through the beginnings of her part for a cause

that's much more than just an incident. Recalling the time that had a personal impact on her was the Nirbhaya case. Why? "I was also in the same mall on the same day. I could relate to this much more because I realised that it could have been me too. That feeling came in. I had gone to have dinner while she was there for a movie. When I heard this case the next day, I thought we may have crossed paths, and I must have seen her. Why did she have to suffer this brutality just because she took public transport?" This triggered her even more. Back then, she was assisting government agencies. "We are doing consultation, advocacy and policy intervention, but what is happening on the grounds was something very gruesome, so I decided to protest. Being a part of a body like the National Commission for Women (NCW), I was very active then, so I decided to go for a protest and from the protest, we felt so helpless that water cannons were used on us and lathi charges were done on us. What for? That made me more rebellious about what was happening."

Being just like a drop in the ocean, among the other protestors, while other protestors thought that Nirbhaya and her family had gotten justice after the arrest of the culprits, she fought and stood by the family until the culprits were hanged to death. But on the other hand, she knew that was not the end. It was rather a beginning. She started receiving many more sexual assault

and murder cases, which not many people are even aware of! "The Pari Foundation is not just one initiative. We have gone through so many discussions. We came to the conclusion that there had to be a series of efforts. You can't say that doing this will change the scenario. We do a lot of awareness programs around this, like talking to men as the main focus area and, of course, telling the girls to raise their voice and not suffer. It's sometimes demeaning to tell someone to protect themselves and learn defense. But that's unfortunately what we have to do. At the same time, we are trying to change the mindset of the people, including villages and panchayats. Explaining the girls about their legal rights and how they can approach the police is just one of the other options!"

In fact, she had also begun a campaign called *Nari Ke 2 Dinn*, which sought to create a special session of parliament on women's safety for a minimum of two days. "Safety or empowerment, they are all linked," she says, adding, "You cannot say a woman can be empowered when she is not safe. We want safety first and for that, we need discussions. We have come across so many cases where this heinous crime has happened to women, where they were raped and killed while they were coming from work."

Working for such a cause was no less than a challenge for her and, to date, the challenge goes on. "Basically, our legal

process is very slow, so getting justice to a victim is like the toughest thing in this country. The processes are so overwhelming that they get really exhausting. How much can we even give moral or financial support to a girl or family who lost their daughter? Not enough is good for them. They do not get much support from the government and hardly, the laws were made, the SOPs were made, but in reality, less has been done and more has been talked about."

Apart from this, she shares, "They do not get any kind of counselling or any hand-holding support. 'I have myself handled over 5 cases a while back, where the children have also been killed. They don't make it to the news! Even the local politicians just press it aside.'"

Through their initiatives, she shares they have been taking baby steps to make men understand and there has been an impact, but there is still a long way to go.

Through the foundation, she's also on a quest to make the government serious about the cause, implement policies and strategies, and certainly act on the cases. She signs off by sharing, "Laws are there, but implementation is poor. Even when the Hyderabad case happened, that was not judicial but was taken up by the cops. The process needs to be followed judicially and every criminal needs to know why they are being hanged."



Rasika Dugal on navigating nuances of bygone era in *Shekhar Home*

AARTI SREENATH

At a time where narratives are dominated by high-octane thrillers and sleek modern-day crime dramas, Rasika Dugal's decision to step into the world of the 1990s detective series *Shekhar Home* seems both nostalgic and refreshingly bold. The series, set against the backdrop of pre-cell phone India, offers a stark contrast to the digital age, where information is a click away and mystery often feels like a relic of the past.

For Rasika, however, this project was an exploration of the genres that shaped her love for storytelling, as well as an opportunity to add a new dimension to her already diverse filmography.

"There were a few things that influenced my decision," Rasika begins, reflecting on her first encounter with the script. "One was definitely the genre—a detective drama series was something I hadn't explored before and I've always been intrigued by it. As a child, I watched a lot of it, like Jeremy Brett's *Sherlock* series on Sundays and later, Benedict Cumberbatch's version became one of my favourites. I've also been a fan of the *Feluda* series, especially Satyajit Ray's *Sonar Kella*, which is one of my favourite films. So, the genre was a big draw for me."

Her excitement was further fuelled by the prospect of working alongside some of the finest actors in the industry. "I've been very fortunate to work with actors like Irrfan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Pankaj Tripathi," she notes. "When I heard that Kay Kay Menon was playing *Shekhar Home*, I was very excited to take on the role of Iravati. I hoped to add his name to the illustrious list of co-actors I've worked with."

The 1990s setting of *Shekhar Home* is as much of a character as the people within it. "It was a very intelligent decision to place it in the 90s. How can you make a detective series in today's post-cell phone era? It would be very hard to make it visually compelling because everything would be online and it would be very boring to watch. So, there was no option but to place it in a pre-cell phone era, or at least in an era where cell phones were just beginning to invade our lives."

Rasika's connection to the 90s goes beyond mere nostalgia. Growing up in Jamshedpur, a city close to Bengal, she was deeply influenced by the popular culture of the time. "I always feel very nostalgic about the time I grew up in, with all that was happening in popular culture, which was very much a part of my childhood and my memories. So, I was very happy to revisit that time and to be placed in Bengal because, as we know, with the *Feluda* series and *Byomkesh Bakshi*, it has a rich history of detectives. I grew up very close to Bengal and had always wanted to spend time in Shantiniketan but never had the opportunity. So, I'm very happy that with this series, I got to explore the smaller towns of Bengal and the 90s was an added bonus."

The portrayal of her character, Iravati, required Rasika to strike a delicate balance between maintaining the character's aura of mystery and ensuring that the suspense remained engaging for the audience. She explains, "As actors, we depend a lot on the director and the script, but of course, we have our creative inputs. I felt that Iravati as a character has a lot of mystique, mystery and an aura about

her. There were a couple of scenes in episode four where I felt she was there too much. I spoke to the director and the producer and suggested cutting out some scenes to maintain the mystery and aura that the character is known for. Fortunately, they agreed with me and they actually cut my scenes."

The chemistry between characters in a detective series often plays a crucial role in keeping the audience hooked. Rasika's rapport with her co-stars, particularly Kay Kay Menon and Ranvir Shorey, was instrumental in creating the essential on-screen dynamic. "I've worked with Ranvir before and we've known each other for many years, so we already had a rapport. With Kay Kay Menon, he's very easy to work with. Any good actor will always be present for you and Kay Kay, with so many years of experience, was phenomenally present as a co-actor. We didn't really have to work towards that chemistry—it was easily achieved. I liked the chemistry between Iravati and Shekhar; there's an understanding from Shekhar's side that she's the only one who can match his wits in this world and she knows that and plays accordingly."

Having traversed various genres in her career, The *Mirzapur* fame reflects on how her preparation differs when working on a contemporary drama like *Mirzapur* versus a period piece like *Shekhar Home*.

"With periods you're unfamiliar with, you need to do a lot of work to study things from that time to get a sense of what life was like. But with an era like the 90s, I was familiar with it because I grew up in that time, so it was easy breezy for this one. I've previously worked on a lot of projects set in India in the 1940s and 1950s. At one point, I felt like I lived in that era because I did 3-4 projects then. I started enjoying what I knew of that period so much that I felt like I was born in the wrong era."

As someone who has portrayed strong and often complicated women, she has gained insights into how women are represented in Indian cinema

and web series. "We can't say that there has been one representation—there have been good representations and cardboard cut-out ones as well. But I do think the intention is very right and there's much more to achieve than we already have. I feel that we are moving in the right direction with different roles for women that are not just checking a box for a 'women-centric film,' but are trying to explore the inner lives of women in our country."

With *Shekhar Home*, she not just found a project that resonates with her love for the detective genre but also allows her to bring a nuanced, layered character to life.



Actress Rasika Dugal, has been keen on getting an opportunity to explore the detective genre with *Shekhar Home*. She speaks to *The Pioneer* about her love for the genre, working on the project and more!

Combating fading vision with diabetic eye care

Diabetes is becoming increasingly common around the world, and India is no exception. With around 101 million diabetic patients currently and the number expected to increase to 124 million by 2045, India holds the title "Diabetes capital of the world" due to its staggering economic and medical burden. The prevalence of diabetes in India has been steadily rising, driven by factors such as urbanisation, sedentary lifestyles, dietary changes and genetic predisposition. Diabetes affects various systems and organs in the human body, causing both immediate and long-term complications.



Unseen threats

In India, while keen attention is given to the major health issues, diabetic eye care is significantly neglected. Diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of blindness in diabetic patients, often goes undiagnosed and untreated. The reasons being, a pervasive lack of awareness among both the general population and healthcare providers about the importance of regular eye examinations for diabetic patients and a lack of access to specialized eye care services.

Eye health and diabetes

Diabetes is caused because of inadequate insulin production and secretion in the body, causing excess glucose in the bloodstream. This can damage blood vessels and nerves, including those in the eyes, resulting in a variety of eye problems and in severe cases, leads to loss of eyesight. To avoid this, it's best to recognise different presentations and effects of diabetes on the eyes

Long-standing, uncontrolled diabetes affects the eye in several ways

• Diabetic retinopathy

In India, diabetic retinopathy (DR) is one of the most commonly occurring microvascular ocular complications. It occurs when high blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. Early stages of DR, patients do not have any symptoms and are detected only while routine fundus examinations are performed. However, in the late stages of the disease, it can cause blurred vision, floaters, double visions and eventually lead to vision loss if left untreated.

• Glaucoma

Glaucoma accounts for 5.5% of blindness in India and is characterised by damage to the optic nerves secondary to raised intraocular pressure which is either due to impaired drainage of aqueous humor, the fluid in the eye, or due to a blocked trabecular meshwork. Majority of cases do not show any symptoms until vision loss occurs, yet some symptoms include throbbing eye pain, redness, headache, blurry vision, halos around lights. Diabetic patients are at higher risk of developing glaucoma.

• Diabetic Macular Edema (DME)

Diabetic macular edema is identified by the swelling in the central part of the retina, called

the macula, which is responsible for the sharp, central vision. This is due to leakage from the abnormal blood vessels, that develop secondary to the damaged retina. It is marked by symptoms like blurry vision or double vision, difficulty in seeing when there is bright light and difficulty in color perception, noticing dark spots, floaters and seeing straight lines as bent or curved.

• Cataract

Cataract is one of the leading causes of blindness in India and is responsible for over 65% of treatable blindness. Cataracts are a common eye complication in diabetic patients. They tend to occur at a much earlier age and progress faster compared to non-diabetic individuals. The lens of the eye, which is normally clear, becomes cloudy due to the buildup of proteins caused by high blood sugar levels and protein breakdown. It is known to manifest through symptoms like cloudy, or blurry vision, faded colors, glare around lights, having double vision and experiencing difficulty seeing at night.

Treatment for diabetic eye disease ranges from prescribing eye drops to lasers, anti-VEGF eye injections, laser therapy, and in advanced stages, vitrectomy surgery

It is best to have preventive measures in place to overcome the risks of sight loss

- Get regular eye exams for early detection of these conditions.
- Manage diabetes effectively through medication, diet, and lifestyle changes.
- Ensure to keep blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure in control and take proper medication.
- Maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly and avoiding smoking and alcohol consumption can also help reduce the risk factors associated with these conditions

CONCLUSION

As diabetes numbers rise in India, it can pose significant risks to eye health, but with proactive management and regular eye care, you can protect your vision and reduce the likelihood of complications. Individuals can greatly reduce the impact of such conditions by adopting a healthy lifestyle.

(The author, Dr. M. L. Sujatha, is a Consultant - Cataract and cornea Refractive Surgeon at SPARSH Hospital.)

BORDER GAVASKAR TROPHY ON PAR WITH ASHES FOR AUSTRALIA: STARC

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc believes that with the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India becoming a five-Test affair for the first time in over three decades, it would be "right on par" with the esteemed Ashes series for his team. The marquee series between India and Australia, set to begin in November, was extended by a match this year for the first time since the 1991-92 season. "Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series," Starc told World of Sports. Since 2014-15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with India winning four consecutive series including the historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21. Starc is not only intent on reversing this trend but also harbours aspirations of a clean sweep, particularly as the series forms a crucial part of the World Test Championship. "We always want to win every



game at home and we know India are a very strong team," he said. Currently, India leads the World Test Championships table with Australia in second place. "As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... So a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players.

"Hopefully when we're sitting there on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores." The 34-year-old is just 11 matches shy of reaching a milestone 100 Tests and has no plans to quit red-ball cricket. The left-earner said he is scaling back his white-ball commitments to prolong his

Test career for as long as possible. "...Every time I get to wear the baggy green cap it feels very special. Hopefully it's five times through the summer with five wins and we can sing that song five times, then we move on from there. "If it does come to a point where I'm lucky enough to get

past that 100 number then it's obviously going to be pretty special as well," he said. Starc is scheduled to fly to England next month for a white-ball series following which the left-armers intend to play domestic cricket for New South Wales ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "The Tests will always be taking precedence for me," he said. "We've got seven Tests on the bounce with five against India and then two in Sri Lanka, so they sit top of the tree with what's coming up." Alongside, Test and ODI skipper Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Starc will shoulder the pace duties across three formats. "Pat is resting for this UK tour... We love playing all three formats but that could look different at different times over 12 months." "There is certainly no end date on (our bowling careers). That will be an ongoing one. We'll see where (our) bodies are and the want to keep going, but at this stage it's all guns blazing for five Tests against India."

Arya leads South Delhi Superstarz to six-wicket win over Central Delhi Kings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Priyansh Arya's scintillating 82 off 51 balls powered South Delhi Superstarz to a six-wicket win over Central Delhi Kings in the Delhi Premier League here. Fifties from Dhruv Kaushik (56) and Yash Dhull (52) guided Central Delhi Kings to 176/7 after they were asked to bat on Tuesday. However, South Delhi Superstarz chased down the target with five balls to spare, courtesy a solid 101-run partnership between Arya and Ayush Badoni (42). After the early loss of Sarthak Ray (0 off 1) in the first over, Badoni and Arya approached the run chase with composed batting. By the end of the powerplay, they took the score to 45/1 and went on to consistently score more than 10 runs per over. Arya brought up his fifty in 32 balls, while Badoni contributed a vital 42 off 36 balls before being caught at mid-wicket, thus missing out on his half-century. By the strategic timeout, SDS were firmly in control, thanks to the free-flowing stroke play of Arya and Tejaswi Dahiya.

Arya, who smashed seven sixes and three fours, was dismissed in the 17th over. Tejaswi followed in the next over, contributing 22 off 14. Despite these quick wickets, the South Delhi Superstarz were still in a commanding position, needing just 17 runs from 16 balls. Vision Panchal and Dhruv Singh then sealed the victory with two sixes and a four in the 19th over, securing the South Delhi Superstarz' second consecutive win of the tournament. Earlier in the contest, Hiten Dalal (10 off 9) fell cheaply to

Divij Mehra in the third over. However, skipper Yash Dhull led from the front, keeping the scoreboard ticking alongside Dhruv Kaushik as they stitched together a solid 91-run partnership off 65 balls. Kaushik was then dismissed in the following over after scoring 56 off 33 balls. Brief Scores: **Central Delhi Kings:** 176/7 in 20 overs (Dhruv Kaushik 56 off 34, Yash Dhull 52 off 44, Kuldeep Yadav 2/37) **South Delhi Superstarz:** 177/4 in 19.1 overs (Priyansh Arya 82 off 51, Ayush Badoni 42 off 36, Money Grewal 2/22).

Conor joins Atletico Madrid from Chelsea as Joao moves in opposite direction

AP ■ MADRID

England midfielder Conor Gallagher finally completed his move to Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, ending a weeks-long saga that required a move by Joao Felix in the opposite direction to facilitate the deal. Gallagher joined Atletico for a reported 36 million pounds (\$47 million) on a five-year deal. Hours later, Chelsea announced the signing of Felix, the Portugal forward, for a reported 45 million pounds (\$59 million). Chelsea wanted to sell Gallagher, an academy product and the team's vice-captain last season, to help the club meet the Premier League's financial requirements that are being more strictly applied in recent seasons. Chelsea and Atletico reached an agreement on his transfer but it was in jeopardy last week, reportedly because of



the collapse of a deal that would have seen Atletico striker Samu Omorodion move in the opposite direction. That meant Gallagher had to return to Chelsea and train alone but a solution was reached, with Felix instead making the switch from Atletico to Chelsea. Felix spent the second half of the 2022-23 season on loan at Chelsea, having previously become the third most expensive player of all time when Atletico triggered the 126 million euro (around \$140 million) buyout clause in

his contract in 2019 to sign him from Benfica. "I'm really happy to be back at Chelsea and I can't wait to get started," he said. "I can see some familiar faces from the last time I was here, which is always nice. "I loved my time here before and I told my friends and family that I'd love to return to the Premier League one day. To do that with Chelsea is a great feeling and I'm excited to be back." Felix was on loan at Barcelona last season. Gallagher played for England at the recent European Championship and was one of Chelsea's best players last season. He has played 95 times for a club he joined as a 6-year-old, scoring 10 goals in total. It continues a frenzied summer of transfer activity for Chelsea, which continues to overhaul its squad under its American owners.

Unlucky to lose to Germany; back-to-back bronze a huge achievement: Harmanpreet

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

India hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh on Wednesday said that his side was unlucky to lose to Germany in the Paris Olympics semifinal despite creating several chances before calling the back-to-back bronze winning performance a "huge achievement". India repeated their 2021 Tokyo Games performance in Paris, defeating Spain to win consecutive bronze medals

for the first time in 52 years. The keenly-contested semifinal earlier saw India going down to reigning world champions Germany 2-3 to set up a bronze-medal match with Spain. "It (semifinal vs Germany) was a very close match. I think we created a lot of chances but you can say we were not lucky that day and some chances were off target," Harmanpreet told PTI. Videos during a felicitation ceremony organised by the Odisha

government. "But I think the bronze medal was very important. It was the last match of the tournament and feeling very happy after winning the match. Our effort was that we should fulfil our dream (of winning gold) but somehow we were unlucky. "But, still, we had the bronze medal to play for. So, went into the match with that mindset that we will win. We've won back-to-back medals in hockey; it's a very big thing for us," he added.

Harmanpreet was left speechless with the reception given to the players, saying the team gets the same affection every time it comes to Odisha. "And, this time, we are getting all the more affection. Whenever the team comes here, be it to play in a tournament or after winning a medal, it always feels nice... We get a lot of respect," added Harmanpreet. Harmanpreet also thanked the state government for sponsoring hockey.

Can see growth, especially in women's table tennis in India: Manika on UTT



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian table tennis is headed in the right direction thanks to the advent of the UTT tournament which attracts top players from across the world, feels Manika Batra, who is the most prominent face of the women's game in the country. Manika and Sreeja Akula recently made history by becoming the first Indian table tennis players to reach the Olympics singles pre-quarterfinals in Paris. Next, the 29-year-old Manika will represent Bengaluru Smashers in the eight-team Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) competition, which gets underway here on Thursday. "Personally, it has helped me because the girls come for UTT from different countries, and we play against them, we play with them," Manika told reporters here on Wednesday. "It's really fun, and we enjoy this. I can see the growth that's happening, especially in women's table tennis in India, how we all are performing internationally. We have improved a lot from UTT!" Manika lost to Miu Hirano of Japan 0-3 in the women's singles pre-quarterfinals

in Paris. In the team event, India, who were represented by Manika, Sreeja and Archana Kamath, lost to Germany 1-3 in the quarterfinals. In the UTT, one of Manika's most anticipated contests will be against world No. 13, Bernadette Szocs of Romania, who will play for Ahmedabad SG Pipers. The two players also clashed during the pre-quarterfinals of the team event in Paris Olympics, with India winning the tie 3-2. Bernadette said, "I love to play here; I love all the fans who are very big supporters of table tennis. And, of course, always when I come here, everything is perfect with good organisation." Veteran Sharath Kamal, who will lead Chennai Lions in UTT, feels the performance graph of Indian players is going up gradually. "This is the first time both Indian teams, men and women, qualified for the Olympic Games in the team event. The girls went further; they went on to play in the quarterfinals in the team event, and especially Manika and Sreeja got into the last 16 in the individual event," Sharath pointed out. "So, performances like this have been constantly coming up, and India has

been constantly growing in the international arena, and we look forward to more growth." Nigerian legend Quadri Aruna returns to the tournament, and his clash against Sharath is expected to be one of the highlights of the tournament. "With huge spending on the sport of table tennis in India, we have seen huge growth. Indian players are already title contenders in most of the tournaments in the world. So, I think table tennis has improved a lot in India," expressed Aruna, who will be representing U Mumbai TT.

UTT 2024 SQUADS: **Ahmedabad SG Pipers:** Manush Shah, Bernadette Szocs (Romania), Lilian Bardet (France), Reeth Tension, Pritha Vartikar, Jash Modi. **Chennai Lions:** Achanta Sharath Kamal, Sakura Mori (Japan), Jules Rolland (France), Poymantee Baisya, Mouma Das, Abhinandh PB. **Dabang Delhi TTC:** Sathiyam G, Orawan Paranang (Thailand), Diya Chitale, Andreas Levenko (Austria), Yashansh Malik, Lakshita Narang. **Athlead Goa Challengers:** Harmeet Desai, Yangzi Liu (Australia), Yashaswini Ghorpade, Sudhanshu Grover, Sayali Wani, Mihai Bobocica (Italy). **Jaipur Patriots:** Cho Seungmin (South Korea), Suthasini Sawettabut (Thailand), Snehit SFR, Ronit Bhanja, Moumita Dutta, Nithyashree Mani. **PBG Bengaluru Smashers:** Manika Batra, Alvaro Robles (Spain), Lily Zhang (USA), Jeet Chandra, Taneesha Kotecha, Amalraj Anthony. **Puneri Palan Table Tennis:** Ayhika Mukherjee, Natalia Bajor (Poland), Joao Monteiro (Portugal), Ankur Bhattacharjee, Anirban Ghosh, Yashini Sivashankar. **U Mumbai TT:** Manav Thakkar, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Aruna Quadri (Nigeria), Akash Pal, Kavyasree Baskar, Maria Xiao (Spain).

After silver at Olympics, Chopra takes field in Lausanne in bid for Diamond League title

PTI ■ LAUSANNE

Two weeks after winning his historic silver medal at the Paris Olympics, star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will resume action at the Lausanne Diamond League meeting on Thursday, seeking to reclaim the DL trophy at the season-ending finale next month. Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra claimed a silver in the Paris Olympics on August 8 with a 89.45m throw, having won a historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago. The 26-year-old double Olympic medallist Indian on Saturday confirmed his participation at the Diamond League meeting in Lausanne, leaving a decision on a possible surgery after the end of the season. Chopra was the Diamond League champion in 2022 and finished second behind Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic in the winner-takes-all DL final in Eugene, USA, last year. This season's DL finals will be held in Brussels on September 14. He needs to finish in the top-six of the Diamond League meetings series standings to qualify for the season



finale. There is another DL meeting — in Zurich on September 5 — which has men's javelin throw event in its roster. He is currently at fourth spot with seven points he has garnered after finishing second behind Vadlejch in the Doha Diamond League on May 10. After a busy couple of days post the Olympic final on August 8, Chopra started training in Switzerland and is determined to finish the season on a high despite being restricted by the injury. "I came to Switzerland for training ahead of the Diamond League. Luckily, I did not aggravate my injury as I took extra care of that. "I thought of continuing my season like most other athletes. There is one month to go until the season ends. I will go to the doctors in my free time," he had said last week. Chopra will be up against a top-class field in Lausanne with five of the top-six finishers in Paris Olympics final competing. Only Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who stunned the athletics world by winning the gold with an Olympic record throw of 92.97m, is missing. Nadeem had finished fourth in the Paris Diamond League on July 7

with a throw of 84.21m. That was the only DL meeting — as well as the lone event apart from the Olympics — he had taken part this season. He is currently at sixth spot in the standings with five points. Having pushed to the fourth spot with a throw of 88.50m in Paris after winning a silver in Tokyo, Vadlejch would be looking to maintain his form in his bid to defend the DL title. Two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada, who took the bronze in the Paris Olympics with 88.54m, has been on the ascendancy after a poor last season, and he is capable of pulling off big throws, having already gone past the 90m mark in his career. Chopra has been the most consistent javelin thrower in the last couple of seasons, before Nadeem pulled off the heist in Paris, and the Indian will start as favourite in Lausanne on Thursday. He has been managing his groin injury since winning the gold in the Budapest World Championships last year. "The final treatment will be after the season ends. I will try to take care of it as much as possible and consult the doctors later," he said.

I have learned a lot from SJ Suryah: Nani

Nani is confident that his upcoming film *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* is going to be a blockbuster. The actor, in an interaction with the media here, spoke about the film and his future endeavours.

In this film, he shared that his character has some anger issues, which he says is just a part of it. "We have shown only the ingredients of the film and you can see the entire recipe on August 29," says Nani. In *Naa Peru Surya Naa Illu India*, its lead actor Allu Arjun also has the same anger issues, just as his character in this upcoming film. On the similarities, Nani replies that both of them are different. "My film is completely different and I am sure once my film is released, one can understand that it is another

subject," says Nani. He has been promoting this film like never before, even in other languages like Tamil Nadu and Kerala. "I promoted in those states to share some of the details about my film. It is not releasing in a big way in those states, as it gets a minimal release in Malayalam and Hindi! So, I just went there and said hello to all the people who are eagerly waiting to see my film," he says. Nani also clarified about a film with *Balagam* fame director Venu. While many reports claimed that the film has been shelved, other reports claimed that Nani has rejected the film. Dismissing the talks, he says, the film is definitely there, but it may start after some time. "I like the film *Balagam* a lot and I have told it in many events. When I met producer Dil Raju Garu, I told him about the film and also appreciated director Venu. He is an extraordinary director. I told Raju Garu that I would like to work with him. I don't know how the news came out, but it disseminated. After that, Venu met me and we had a casual chat. I would like to work with him and definitely my film with Venu is there," Nani clarifies.

When asked about when he would start *Hit 3* with director Sailesh Kolanu, he says that he is busy with the promotions of this *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* till the release of this film. He further went on to reveal that after one week, he will announce his next film. Meanwhile, in *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram*, Priyanka Mohan stars alongside Nani, to which he shares, "She is playing a constable and her role is very important for the story." The film further has Tamil actor SJ Suryah playing the antagonist. "He is a very good actor and I have learned a lot from him. For every film I am doing I will learn something from co-actors and others," says Nani.

He was further praised by the music director Jakes Bijoy for his excellent songs and background score. "I still feel the haunt of those songs in my mind and after the release of this film, I will talk more about Bijoy and his music. People should definitely look out for him once the film releases," said Nani. The pre-release event of this film will be held on August 24.

GAME CHANGER PRODUCER CONFIRMS ITS RELEASE FOR CHRISTMAS

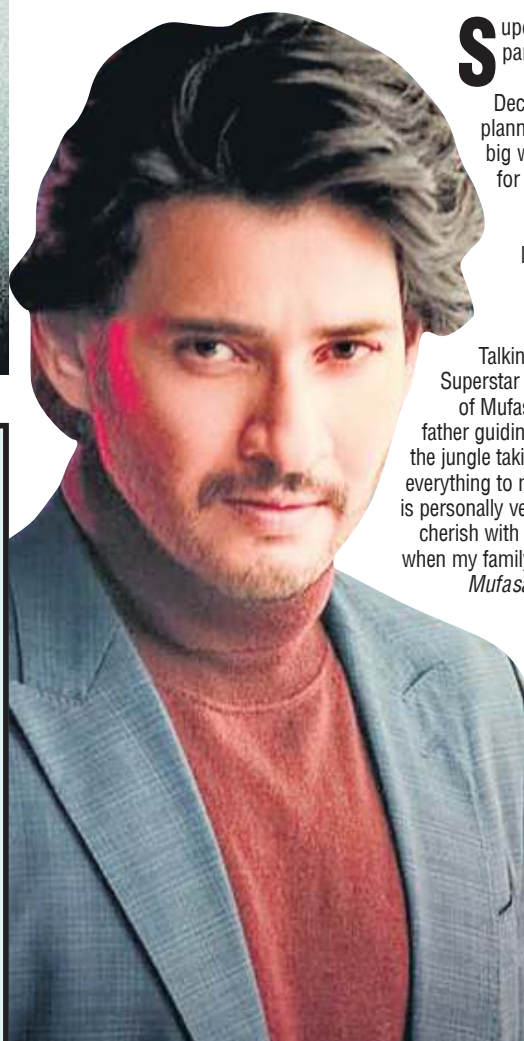
Here comes a major update regarding director Shankar and Ram Charan's film *Game Changer*. The film had kickstarted long-back and has also completed its shooting. Now, the film is in its post-production phase. The film is produced by Dil Raju, who has revealed a major update about the film. For all the people anticipating the release of the film, the producer has now confirmed it. "We are planning to release it for Christmas," says Dil Raju, the producer. With this, the Mega fans can celebrate that their actor's film is definitely releasing this year! There are quite a few big films releasing this year that includes Jr NTR starrer *Devara* and Allu Arjun starrer

Pushpa 2. With Dil Raju announcing that his film is coming up on Christmas holidays, it seems the year is going to end on a big note. Shankar was supposed to complete this film long ago. However, he had to finish Kamal Haasan's *Indian* film first, hence the Telugu film was delayed.

Kiara Advani and Anjali are playing female leads and Ram Charan will be seen playing two different roles. One is in a flashback episode, which is a periodic look and the other one is the current look. He is playing an electoral officer in it. Srikanth, SJ Surya, Sunil, Samuthirakani, Prakash Raj and many other actors are playing key roles in the film.



Mahesh to lend his voice for 'Mufasa' in The Lion King Telugu



Superstar Mahesh Babu is going to be a part of the much-awaited film *Mufasa*.

The *Lion King* which is releasing on December 20, this year. The makers are planning to release the film in Telugu in a big way and have roped in Mahesh Babu for the film. This announcement comes as good news for the Telugu audiences. The Telugu trailer will be launched on August 26 at 11:07 am, which will also have the voice of stalwarts like Brahmanandam as 'Pumba' and Ali as 'Timon'.

Talking about the phenomenal association, Superstar Mahesh Babu shares, "The character of Mufasa appeals to me not only as a loving father guiding his son but as the supreme king of the jungle taking care of his clan. My family means everything to me and this collaboration with Disney is personally very special as it is an experience I will cherish with my children! I am looking forward to when my family as well as my fans will be watching *Mufasa: The Lion King* in Telugu on the big screen on December 20!"

"Our aim always is to bring a deeper, more personal touch to storytelling and engage with audiences all over the country and for them to enjoy the cinematic experience with their families in a language of their choice. The iconic character of Mufasa has inspired generations, and we are thrilled to have Mahesh Babu Garu bring the voice of Mufasa to life in the Telugu version of *Mufasa: The Lion King!*" said Bikram Duggal, Head of Studios, Disney Star. The film is directed by Barry Jenkins.

OG glimpse on Pawan Kalyan's birthday

Coming September 2, Pawan Kalyan fans have a reason to celebrate. The actor turned politician will be celebrating his birthday for the first time after becoming the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh! While it's definitely a big reason for his fans to celebrate, here comes another major update on his film front. DVV Danayya, the producer of his next film *OG* brings in a latest update. When asked if he is planning



something on September 2, on the occasion of Pawan Kalyan's birthday, he says, "Yes, we are planning to release a teaser or a glimpse from the film." Pawan Kalyan is playing the lead actor in this action film directed by Sujith. Priyanka Mohan is the female lead and the film shooting is almost complete except for a few scenes. "We are also planning to shoot the film soon and we want to complete it as soon as possible," says producer Danayya.

Thaman is the music director of this film and he is very excited to see this film's release. He is giving updates about this film and also talking about the upcoming glimpse of the film, saying that it is going to be a blast video. He says in his social media 'twaralo kaluddam' (we will meet soon).



Allu Arjun congratulates Aay lead pair

Bunny Vas is the producer of the recently released film *Aay*. Jr. NTR's brother-in-law, Narne Nithin plays the lead character in it, while Nayan Srika is the female lead. The film is presented by none other than Allu Arvind. The story set against the backdrop of the Godavari region, the film did remarkably well at the box office. It collected good money and the producer gets profits after the fourth day onwards. Anji K. Maniputhra made his directorial debut with this film, which was released on August 15th.

After its release, Jr. NTR called the *Aay* team and appreciated everyone who worked for the film. He praises his brother-in-law, Narne

Nithin for making another success with this film as an actor. Another big actor, Allu Arjun, called the team yesterday and congratulated everyone. He met with the *Aay* team to celebrate the film's success. Narne Nithin, producers Bunny Vas and Vidya Koppineedi, director Anji K. Maniputhra, lead actress Nayan Sarika, Ankith Koyya, Rajkumar Kasireddy and others were personally met with Allu Arjun.

The film's shows and screens are increasing consecutively due to strong word-of-mouth. Audiences are leaving theaters feeling satisfied with the film. The film unit is pleased with the support and positive response and movie collections are rising daily.

'Aho! Vikramarka' highlights bravery of Maharashtra Police

Dev Gill, known for his diverse roles and charismatic performances in several South Indian films, including the blockbuster *Magadheera*, stars in the pan-India film *Aho! Vikramarka*. The movie, produced by Dev Gill Productions, will be released on August 30 in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. The film's trailer was unveiled on Wednesday. The trailer reveals that the villain, named Asura, controls an area where people must obey him or face death. The police lack the courage to confront him. However, a powerful police officer arrives to challenge this menace. On this occasion, Dev Gill said, "With *Aho! Vikramarka*, we aim to highlight the bravery and dedication of the Maharashtra Police in a compelling manner. The film will be released pan-India on August 30. The audience, who have previously seen only one facet of my acting, will experience a new side of me on the silver screen."

Going ahead, director Peta Trikotli added, "Through *Aho! Vikramarka*, we strive to capture the essence of language, culture, heroism and sacrifice. We have meticulously crafted the film to showcase the power of the police and audiences will see a new side of Dev Gill."



SREELEELA LAUNCHES ORI MAYALODA

Young and talented actor Tejus Kancharla, known for his diverse role in *Husharu*, is now featured in *Uruku Patela*. With the tagline "Get Urukified," the film is directed by Vivek Reddy and produced by Kancharla Bala Bhanu. The previously released teaser and the song *Patnam Pilla* have already received a great response from audiences. The newly released lyrical song *Ori Mayaloda* was launched by star heroine Sreeleela! This song depicts the heroine's heartfelt expression of love for the hero. Praveen Lakkaraju composed the music and the song is sung by Srinivasa Mouli. The song will surely rule everyone's playlist. *Uruku Patela* is produced by Kancharla Bala Bhanu under the banner of Lead Edge Pictures.

Kantara Chapter 1 fourth schedule shooting to begin

Hombale Films *Kantara Chapter 1* is undoubtedly one of the most anticipated films that everyone is eagerly anticipating. After the release of its amazing first-look teaser featuring Rishabh Shetty in an extremely thrilling and intense never-before-seen look, the excitement has reached its peak. Amid the rising anticipation, we have learned that the 4th schedule of the film is about to commence in the upcoming week.

According to an independent industry source, "The 4th shooting schedule for *Kantara Chapter 1* is set to begin next week. This schedule will feature a massive action sequence shot on a grand scale, promising to elevate the film's visual and cinematic experience."

Remarkably, *Kantara* left a mark at 70th National Film Award for the year 2022 by winning the Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

Moreover, get ready to enjoy a divine experience like never before with the highly anticipated *Kantara Chapter 1*.



Demonte Colony 3 is on the cards!

The audience had garnered tremendous love for the Tamil movie *Demonte Colony 2*. The movie, which came out on August 15, is a sequel of the 2015 film *Demonte Colony*. The movie, helmed by R. Ajay Gnanamuthu, starred actors Arulnithi and Priya Bhavani Shankar in the main roles. During a media interaction prior

to the premiere, actor Arulnithi stated that this horror film gained a lot of interest from viewers and was very successful. In order to maintain the tradition of the initial section, the subsequent section was created.

After seeing the first and second parts succeed, the director announced plans to begin working

on the third part.

Director R. Ajay Gnanamuthu said, "After completion of my next film, I will start working on the third part of *Demonte Colony*." It should be noted that presently, the director is busy with a television series starring actress Pooja Hegde. The title of the series is yet to be announced by the makers.