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India ready to extend all possible help for peace

NOT AGAINST E-COMMERCE FIRMS, WANT THEM TO BE FAIR AND HONEST: GOYAL

Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam: Rao Ramesh steals the show; credit goes to director for a clean ENTERTAINER

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Rahul Gandhi has no faith in the SEBI, Adani, Supreme Court and democracy. But he believes the Hindenburg report. Rahul thinks that news reports written by foreign journalists are true. He wants to continue attacking the country's systems after getting a death blow in the LS elections. Why is Rahul not responding to the news published by the Blitz of Bangladesh?

- M. Raghunandan Rao, BJP's Medak MP



P3

DON'T MISS...

Reactor explosion highlights safety...

The devastating reactor explosion at a pharmaceutical plant within the Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Anakapalli, claiming 17 lives and causing severe injuries, has once again raised serious concerns about safety protocols in one of India's largest industrial zones. The incident, which follows a series of tragic accidents in recent months, has exposed the urgent need for improved oversight and stringent safety measures. The SEZ, known for its vast pharmaceutical manufacturing base, has been plagued by safety...

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Kerala HC to state govt: Submit...

The Kerala High Court on Thursday asked the state government to submit to it in a sealed cover the Hema Committee report on atrocities against women in the Malayalam film industry. A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice A Muhammed Mustaque and Justice S Manu, while considering a PIL filed by Thiruvananthapuram resident Navas, said the report contains serious allegations. The high court admitted the writ petition and directed the government to file its counter affidavit...

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Adopt more supportive...

Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Swaminathan J has asked financial institutions to adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards MSMEs, and deploy supportive measures like restructuring options for loans, to support the sector which plays a key role in the economy. In a speech at the Annual Day of the Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDA) here, the deputy governor said MSMEs face challenges like access to affordable finance, delayed payments, infrastructure...

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Lord's to host its first-ever...

The 'home of cricket' Lord's will host its first-ever women's Test to be played between India and England in 2026, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Thursday. The ECB said on its website that after a three-match ODI series between India and England in July 2025, the former will return in 2026 for a one-off Test. "I'm also delighted we can confirm that India Women will return in 2026 to take on England Women in the first-ever women's Test match at Lord's. It will be a truly special..."

-SPORTS

CM visits SEZ blast victims

Announces Rs 1 cr compensation for families of the deceased and ex gratia for injured



Solvent leak triggered blast at SEZ: Probe report

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A preliminary investigation into the recent industrial accident at a pharmaceutical company in Atchutapuram has identified a solvent leak as the main cause of the explosion that shook the facility.

The Factories Department's report, submitted to the government, reveals that the incident happened during the transfer of methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE) from a reactor to a storage tank. The leaked chemical vaporised

and reacted with the surroundings, leading to a catastrophic explosion.

"The investigation has found that a leak in the pipelines connecting the reactor to the day tank was the source of the solvent," said Chandrasekhara Varma, Director of the Factories Department. "The leaked substance came into contact with electrical equipment, which ignited a fire."

The confined space within the industrial building made the explosion even more severe.

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Naidu firm on internal safety audit, SOPs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Following his visit to the pharma company responsible for the tragedy in Atchutapuram SEZ, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu emphasised that while industrial development is crucial for the State, safety must be paramount. He asserted that the fire incident, which claimed 17 lives, could have been avoided had the proper Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) been followed.

The CM highlighted that over the past five years, 119 incidents have resulted in 120 fatalities. The Atchutapuram SEZ, spanning 1,949 acres, has 95 plots—66 of which are allotted, 36 occupied, and 26 operational. Despite the presence of two pharma companies in the area, complete adherence to security standards is lacking.

In detailing the recent incidents, the CM noted that there were four in 2020, three in 2021, four in 2022, five in 2023, and one in April 2024, culminating in the current tragedy. The CM pointed out that, unlike the LG Polymers incident involving poisonous chemicals, this incident involved explosive chemicals. He described the scene as alarming, with the explosion causing severe damage and throwing people outside the factory.

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● Naidu emphasises need for strict safety measures. ● Media urged to support the victims and their families.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday visited the victims of the Atchutapuram SEZ fire accident. During his visit, the Chief Minister also met the injured at Medicover Hospital in Visakhapatnam, where he was briefed on the details of the accident at Escientia Advanced Sciences Private Limited, a pharmaceutical company.

Expressing his deep condolences, CM Chandrababu reassured the victims and their families.

Jagan to visit Anakapalli today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will visit the workers who were injured in the reactor explosion at a pharma company in Atchutapuram SEZ and are currently receiving treatment at a hospital in Anakapalli on Friday.

"Yesterday's unfortunate incident at the pharmaceutical facility is deeply condemned. It has left me profoundly affected, and it is indeed a painful

situation," he stated. "This government is taking all necessary precautions. Unfortunately, such an incident has occurred as we are working to rectify the systems that the previous administration neglected."

The tragic accident claimed the lives of seventeen people and left thirty-six others injured, ten of whom sustained severe injuries. CM Chandrababu assured comprehensive government support. "I have been updated on the condition of the injured by the doctors and have personally spoken to them. I urged them to remain strong and assured them that the government will provide all necessary assistance, no matter how long it takes," he said.

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Jagan's lavish spending of public money exposed

C PRADEEP KUMAR cpk007@gmail.com ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a startling revelation, the extravagant spending of public funds by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, former chief minister and president of YSRCP, has been brought to light, raising eyebrows across the State. Over the past five years, Jagan Mohan Reddy has authorised significant allocations for personal and residential upgrades, which has led to scrutiny amid severe fiscal strain.

Documents obtained indicate that Jagan sanctioned substantial amounts for various personal and residential improvements. For instance, Rs 12.50 lakh was spent on installing CCTV cameras at his residence in Hyderabad, known as Lotus Pond House, and an additional Rs 12 lakh was allocated for luxury bathroom fittings under GO Number 160. GO 279 sanctioned Rs 3.25 crore for a "View Cutter" around Tadepalli Palace, and Rs 8.50 lakh was used for 24/7 electrician services at the same location as per GO 139.

Significant sums were also directed towards the enhancement of "Tadepalli Palace". GO 146 saw Rs 97 lakh spent on a new transformer installation, while Rs 1.25 crore was allocated for CCTV and solar fencing.

Air conditioning installations cost Rs 80 lakh, with an additional



The extravagant expenses were not limited to Jagan Mohan Reddy's personal and official needs. GO 1609 allocated Rs 1 lakh for the rent of an apartment in Vijayawada for the former CM's friend Srikanth Reddy, along with additional expenses. Similar allowances were made for other associates, including Budi Mutyala Naidu, Daissetty Raja, and Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy.

Rs 39 lakh dedicated to a 320 KVA DG Set and lighting. Other expenditures included Rs 75 lakhs for iron grill frames, Rs 43.50 lakhs for stables, and Rs 31 lakhs for permanent security infrastructure. GO 330 covered Rs 73 lakhs for window installations, and GO 329 allocated Rs 22.50 lakhs for coolers.

Continued on Page 2

13,326 'gram sabhas' to be held in State from today: Dy CM

Says 87 types of work will be taken up with Rs 4,500 cr

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan stated that the coalition government will provide transparent and accountable governance to the people across the State and is progressing according to the plan with the long-term aim of strengthening the panchayats.

The Deputy Chief Minister mentioned that for the first time in the country, 'gram sabhas' will be held in 13,326 gram panchayats from August 23 across the State and informed that the people of the respective gram panchayats will pass resolutions on the development works to be undertaken through the employment guarantee scheme in the villages.

He explained that as part of the



- The gram sabhas will pass resolutions on various works to be undertaken under MGNREGS
- A survey on the water conditions in panchayats has been conducted in 22 lakh houses
- The Deputy CM reiterates the government's commitment to making panchayats self-reliant
- Pawan says govt will promote Anandapuram's flowers, Araku coffee, and Mangalagiri sarees

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), 87 types of work will be undertaken in villages with funds of Rs 4,500 crore.

Addressing the media here on

Thursday, the Deputy CM said that by implementing this scheme, 54 lakh families will gain employment for 9 crore working days.

2

'Action plan to be prepared for industrial safety'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Thursday announced that an action plan for industrial safety in the State would be prepared in the next three months. The DyCM expressed grief over the reactor blast at a pharma company at Atchutapuram SEZ that claimed 17 lives and left many others injured.

He told the media persons that negligence by the company management appears to have led to the disaster.

2

Naidu, Nitish to oppose Waqf Bill, claims AIMPLB chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All India Muslim Personal Law Board president Khalid Saifullah Rahmani on Thursday claimed that TDP's Chandrababu Naidu and JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar have assured the Muslim bodies that their parties would oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

His remarks came at a joint press conference of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamiat



Ulema-e-Hindi and other Muslim organisations where they asserted that they will launch a nationwide movement if the proposed legislation is not withdrawn and exhaust

all measures within the ambit of law. "We have met various opposition parties. We also met Chandrababu Naidu, who assured us that 'we will oppose this bill'."

Continued on Page 2

Cong says govt must act to avoid such incidents in future



P2



Rahul, Sonia should clarify stance on Article 370: Kishan

PNS ■ JAMMU

Union minister G Kishan Reddy on Thursday asked the Congress to clarify its position on Article 370 and the resolution by its alliance partner the National Conference to revoke it. Reddy, who chaired an organisational meeting to review the saffron party's preparations for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, also questioned the Congress on the National Conference's manifesto and said the Farooq Abdullah-led party sought to reverse the rights granted to various sections of people in the Union

Territory. Restoration of Article 370 and Jammu and Kashmir's statehood as well as implementation of the autonomy resolution passed by the erstwhile assembly in 2000 are among the National Conference's 12 guarantees announced in its manifesto.

In June 2000, the National Conference government under Abdullah passed a resolution in the assembly, seeking to restore the pre-1953 constitutional position in the state. It was, however, rejected by the Union Cabinet headed by then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

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KOLKATA RAPE AND KILLING

Justice and medicine cannot be stopped: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A tough talking Supreme Court on Thursday termed "extremely disturbing" the Kolkata Police's delay in registering the unnatural death of the woman doctor raped and killed at the RG Kar Hospital, and also asked protesting doctors to get back to work. Justice and medicine cannot be stopped, the court said while hearing a suo-motu case on the Kolkata doctor's horrific end and directed the Centre and the states to take urgent steps to institutionalise the safety of medics across the country.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud issued a slew of directions on the safety of doctors, norms for protests, rights of protesters as well as the West Bengal gov-

Directs Centre, states to take urgent steps for safety of doctors



ernment. It said the National Task Force (NTF) formed by the apex court will take note of the suggestions of all the stakeholders while formulating a national protocol for the safety of healthcare professionals, including the associations representing resident doctors. "We direct the secre-

tary of the Union Ministry of Health to engage with the chief secretaries of the states and directors general of police to ensure the safety of healthcare professionals," the bench said, while ordering that the exercise be completed in a week.

Appearing in the court on behalf of the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI), Solicitor General Tushar Mehta alleged that senior doctors at the Kolkata hospital as well as the victim's colleagues had asked for videograph, which means even they felt that there was a cover-up.

"The (victim's) father insists on the registration of an FIR. The hospital does not register the FIR. The father insisted and got the FIR registered. The FIR is lodged after the cremation. This is an attempt to cover up. We entered the probe on day five, everything was altered by then," Mehta said.

He said the first FIR in the incident was filed only after the victim's

cremation at 11:45 pm. "Initially, the authorities told the parents that it was suicide but later, it was classified as death," he added. As the hearing commenced after lunch, the court asked what was the reason for a 14-hour delay in lodging the FIR in connection with the incident.

"Who was in touch with the principal of the RG Kar Medical College? Why did he delay the FIR? What was the purpose?" the bench asked.

Questioning the sequence and timing of the legal formalities conducted by police, the court said it is very surprising that the post-mortem was conducted between 6:10 pm and 7:10 pm on August 9, even before the case of unnatural death was registered.

Continued on Page 2

Jagan opposes Wakf Bill

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy held a meeting with Muslim minorities and pledged his continued support for the community's welfare and vowed to oppose the Wakf Bill, which has raised concerns about land encroachment issues.



Speaking on the occasion here on Thursday, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the YSRCP has always focused on addressing the issues of Muslim minorities. He emphasized that the party has consistently worked for their welfare and development and will continue to support them. He assured that the concerns raised about the Wakf Bill would be strongly represented by the party's MPs in Parliament. He also mentioned that MP Vijayasai Reddy, a

member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, would take the lead in presenting their objections in Parliament. Representatives of Muslim organisations expressed their concerns, stating that over 70% of Wakf lands are currently encroached upon. They stated that the new provisions in the proposed Wakf Bill aim to prevent these lands from being

reclaimed by the rightful beneficiaries. The representatives further mentioned that the new Wakf Bill is designed in a way that could weaken the entire system. They appreciated the YSR Congress Party's opposition to the Bill and noted that it was only due to the party's stance that the Bill was referred to the JPC by the Central Government.

Former MLA from Kurnool, Hafeez Khan highlighted the steps taken by the YS Jagan-led government for the protection of Wakf lands. He explained that making the Wakf Board stronger and putting all the land details online is a big development. He also mentioned that GO No. 60 was issued for the first time in the country to stop Wakf land encroachment.

'Action plan to be prepared for...

Continued from Page 1

He mentioned that while pollution control comes under his portfolio, industrial safety comes under another department. He recalled that on many occasions, he called for safety audits in industries. He announced that he would hold a special meeting on industrial safety in Visakhapatnam next month. He said that some or other accidents are happening every week, expressing condolences and paying compensation is not the solution and stressed the need to put in place measures for industrial safety.

DyCM Pawan Kalyan spoke to officials about who is responsible for the reactor blast at Escientia Advanced Sciences at Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone. It was noted that the directors of factories, labour and fire departments, and the Central Government's Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation look after safety in such plants.

Aria Global to Invest Rs 300 cr in Andhra

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister of State for Roads and Buildings, Investments and Infrastructure, BC Janardhan Reddy, has announced that Aria Global, a company based in Singapore and Spain, plans to invest in Andhra Pradesh. The investment will focus on setting up manufacturing units for bio-synthetic wood and hydrofoil boats in the State. Sampath Kumar, the Executive Director of ARIA GLOBAL, met with the Minister at the Secretariat on Thursday.

Sampath Kumar explained that their bio-synthetic wood, produced from plastic waste, has been successful in various locations. He highlighted that this material is environmentally friendly, helps conserve forests, and reduces management costs across multiple

sectors. Additionally, Kumar discussed the company's advanced hydrofoil boats, which are currently under negotiation for supply to the Indian Navy. The boats are reported to be faster and safer than traditional models, making them suitable for coastal patrolling. ARIA GLOBAL is prepared to establish a manufacturing facility in Andhra

Pradesh if the government provides the necessary support.

In response, Minister Janardhan Reddy assured that the proposal would be presented to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. He committed to offering full support to facilitate the establishment of these manufacturing units, pending further discussions with senior officials.

CM holds discussion with Godrej Industries Chairman

■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu convened a meeting with Nadir Godrej, Chairman of Godrej Industries, at his residence in Undavalli on Thursday.



Following the meeting, the Chief Minister shared an update on social media, stating, "I had a productive discussion with a delegation from Godrej Industries, led by Chairman & Managing Director, Mr Nadir Godrej, today. We explored various issues and potential investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh. Key topics included the adoption of the National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), support for shrimp feed Basic Customs

Duty (BCD), and Oil Palm cultivation. Additionally, we discussed potential investments in Amaravati and Visakhapatnam, including an INR 2,800 crore project for

pesticide manufacturing. We also considered opportunities in agriculture, aquaculture, and real estate to strengthen Andhra Pradesh's economy."

Some municipal commissioners transferred in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an important administrative shake-up, the Andhra Pradesh government has announced the transfer and posting of several Municipal Commissioners, effective immediately. The decision, made after a thorough review by the Director of Municipal Administration, aims to enhance administrative efficiency.

P. Balaji Prasad, currently serving as Municipal Commissioner in Nellore, will be reassigned to Amadalavalasa, while P. Nallanayya, the Secretary of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, is set to take over as Commissioner of Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation.

His predecessor, M. Mallayya Naidu, is to report to the Director of Municipal

Administration for further instructions.

In another notable change, J. Surendra, a Superintendent with the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, will assume the role of Municipal Commissioner in Narsimhapeta. He replaces P. Ravi Babu, who is also to report to the Director for future posting.

A. Srividya, Assistant Commissioner at Bhimavaram Municipality, will now serve as the Municipal Commissioner in Samalkot, taking over from J. Rama Rao. Rama Rao is being repatriated to his previous position as Sanitary Inspector in Guntur Municipal Corporation.

K. V. V. R. Raju, a Grade-I Municipal Commissioner at the Office of the Director of Municipal Administration, will move to Amalapuram. He

replaces Sri S. Manohar, who is to report for further posting.

T. L. P. S. Krishnaveni, Assistant Director and current Municipal Commissioner in Vinukonda, will now take charge of Nidadavole. T. Rambhupal Reddy, the Municipal Commissioner in Nidadavole, is instructed to report to the Director of Municipal Administration.

K. Ramachandra Reddy, presently the Municipal Commissioner in Adoni, will be transferred to Bhimavaram. M. Syamala, currently on deputation in Bhimavaram, will return to her parent department, PRARD.

A. Bhanu Pratap, who has been waiting for a posting, will now assume the role of Municipal Commissioner in Eluru Municipal Corporation.

In additional changes, E. V. Ramana Babu will transition from Manager at Macherla to

Municipal Commissioner in Nandigama. L. Chandrasekhar Reddy will take over the full additional charge at Buchireddipalem, and M. Ramesh Babu will be reassigned from Srikalahasthi to Ponnuru.

K. Chennaiah will temporarily oversee the Municipal Commissioner role in Gurazala, while M. V. Appa Rao will take charge in Dacheppalli. P. Sridhar will assume the role in Piduguralla, and M. Subhaschandra Bose will replace T. L. P. S. Krishnaveni in Vinukonda.

Finally, D. Venkata Das will move from Macherla to Giddaluru, and K. Anusha will be transferred from Tenali Municipality to Kandukur.

These changes are anticipated to streamline municipal administration across the state, enhancing service delivery and governance.

Rahul, Sonia...

Continued from Page 1

"Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi should inform the country about the National Conference's resolution. Tarun Chugh has already questioned them. They should also clarify the Congress' stand on Article 370," Reddy -- the BJP's election in-charge for Jammu and Kashmir -- told reporters at the BJP headquarters.

He also asked if the Congress and the National Conference wanted to "snatch the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir again, rights that were granted to them based on BR Ambedkar's Constitution".

"They want to take away the rights of West Pakistani refugees, women, Valmiki Samaj, tribals, and others. The Congress should clarify its stance," Reddy said.

2 youths go missing after boat capsizes

■ VIJAYAWADA

Two youths went missing after a fishing boat capsized in the Subbanna tank at Pathapadu in Vijayawada Rural mandal of NTR district on Thursday. The missing persons have been identified as Pilla Siva Raju, 23, a resident of FRR Pet, and Ravi Kumar, 21, a resident of Ranigiri Thota.

According to the police, six people, including the watchman of the Subbanna tank, embarked on a boat ride after consuming liquor. Unfortunately, the boat capsized, causing all six persons to fall into the tank. While four of them -- Perugu Ramesh, Naresh, Phani, and Shaik Lal Pasha -- managed to reach the shore safely, Pilla Siva Raju and Ravi Kumar remain missing.

Upon receiving the information, Nuna Rural Police Station Inspector Krishna Mohan quickly arrived at the scene and initiated a search operation for the missing youths. Inspector Mohan explained that the Subbanna tank, managed by the Pathapadu Gram Panchayat, was recently auctioned for fishing. The auctioneer appointed Shaik Lal Pasha as the watchman to oversee the tank and feed the fish.

ANDHRA FIRE TRAGEDY

Cong says govt must act to avoid such incidents in future

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday condoled the loss of lives in the fire tragedy in a pharmaceutical factory in Andhra Pradesh's Anakapalle district and urged the government to take steps to avoid such incidents in the future.

A major fire and explosion ripped through a pharma unit in Anakapalle on Wednesday, leaving 17 people dead and 33 injured. The damage could have been worse but fewer workers were in the plant when the accident occurred due to it being lunchtime.

Harrowing scenes unfolded with the injured workers -- their skin ripped and peeling off, bodies soaked in blood -- being shifted to hospital in ambulances after the incident occurred at 2:15 pm at Escientia Advanced Science



"I wish for the speedy recovery of the injured. My appeal to the state government is to make arrangements for the treatment of the injured and adequate compensation for the families of the victims."

Private Limited. "Deeply anguished by the terrible fire tragedy in a pharmaceutical factory in Anakapalle district of Andhra Pradesh where several people have lost their lives," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

"Our heartfelt condolences to the grieving families. The government must provide them with immediate and ade-

quate compensation. Our thoughts and prayers are with the injured and we wish them a speedy recovery," he said. "We need to take more preventive measures to avoid such incidents in the future and ensure justice to the victims, therefore the government must act with alacrity on the high-level probe," the Congress president added. Congress general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "The news of the death of a large number of workers in the reactor blast in a pharma company in Andhra Pradesh is extremely saddening. May God grant peace to the departed souls. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families."

"I wish for the speedy recovery of the injured. My appeal to the state government is to make arrangements for the treatment of the injured and adequate compensation for the families of the victims," she said in a post in Hindi on X.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has ordered a high-level inquiry into the incident, promising stringent action against the management if its negligence was found to have caused the incident.

Justice and...

Continued from Page 1

"How was it that the post-mortem was conducted at 6:10 pm on August 9 and yet the unnatural death information is sent to the Tala police station at 11:30 pm on August 9? This is extremely disturbing," the bench, also comprising Justices J B Paridwala and Manoj Misra, said.

It directed the Kolkata Police officer, who registered the first entry about the incident that has shocked the country, to appear in the next hearing and disclose the time of the entry.

Mehta told the court that the most shocking fact is that the FIR was registered at 11:45 pm, after the post-graduate medic was cremated. "The state police told the parents it was suicide. Then they said it was murder. Victim's friends suspected a cover up and insisted on videography," Mehta told the bench.

13,326 'gram sabhas' to be...

Continued from Page 1

He further explained that on the 23rd of this month, the Gram Sabhas in all 13,326 Gram Panchayats will convene to discuss the work to be undertaken in the villages under the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, with the joint support of the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Departments.

The Deputy CM stated that Andhra Pradesh is the second state in the country to have established the Panchayat system more than three decades ago. We are surveying 16 items on the water condition in the panchayats. The survey has been completed in 22 lakh houses. Once this is completed across the state, there will be clarity on the water sources in all panchayats. We will then proceed to address the water problem according to a plan.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi that the roots and life of India lie in the countryside, Pawan said that

with the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, everyone should take responsibility for making the state's panchayats self-reliant. Allying that panchayats were weakened under the previous government, he said that NREGA funds of Rs 40,579 crores were received during the previous administration from 2019 to 2023, but these funds were used indiscriminately. He stated that until 2014-19, the income of panchayats across the state was Rs 240 crores, but in the years 2019-23, that income decreased significantly to only Rs 170 crores.

Saying that we will recognise the uniqueness of panchayats and generate revenue, Pawan Kalyan noted that our villages are renowned for their arts, food preparation, cloth making, and other crafts. He said, "Flowers are famous in Anandapuram in Visakhapatnam district. Araku coffee is unique.

CM visits SEZ blast...

Continued from Page 1

In the wake of the disaster, the Chief Minister announced substantial financial support for the victims. The families of those who lost their lives will each receive Rs 1 crore in compensation. Those with severe injuries will be given an ex gratia payment of Rs 50 lakh, while those with minor injuries will receive Rs 25 lakh. Highlighting the gravity of the situation, CM Chandrababu described some of the injuries, noting that one individual suffered 57 per cent burns, while others had 24 per cent, 12 per cent, and 10 per cent burns. "One person is in shock but is recovering. We have instructed the doctors to ensure there is no compromise on medical treatment under any circumstances, and we are closely monitoring the situation," he added.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed his commitment to enforcing all necessary safety measures and expressed hope that such incidents would not recur. "Visakhapatnam is a city close to my heart. Everyone witnessed our efforts during the Hudhud disaster. For such a city, we must ensure that all safety measures are in place. I hope this will be the last such incident. The courage of the victims gives me hope for their swift recovery," CM Chandrababu concluded.

He also called on the media to support and encourage the victims and their families during these challenging times and assured that any irregularities in the management of the incident would be addressed appropriately.

Solvent leak...

Continued from Page 1

Vapours from the leaked solvent were drawn into the air handling system, causing duct bursts and the collapse of the false ceiling. The resulting structural damage led to injuries among workers caught in the explosion's aftermath.

Experts have pointed out that the intensity of the fire was due to the chemical's low vaporisation point. "Chemicals with low vaporisation points are highly combustible," explained a safety expert. "In an enclosed environment, like the one at this facility, the potential for an intense explosion and significant damage is greatly increased."

In response to the incident, the government has launched a comprehensive investigation to determine the exact sequence of events that led to the explosion and to identify preventive measures. The goal is to improve safety protocols and prevent similar accidents in the future. The investigation is ongoing, and more details are expected as authorities continue to analyse the incident and its implications for industrial safety standards.

Naidu firm...

Continued from Page 1

The CM criticised the lack of effective follow-up actions despite previous directives. A high-power committee was established after the LG Polymers incident, and GO 156 was issued. However, subsequent actions, including GO 79 following a Kakinada incident, were inadequately enforced. The CM urged industries in the red category to adopt all necessary safety measures, stressing that while industrial growth is important for job creation and wealth generation, the safety of people must not be compromised.

In a bid to enhance safety, the CM called on industrialists to conduct immediate internal audits of their safety procedures. He noted that all relevant enforcement agencies, including the Pollution Board, Pollution Control Board, Labour Department, Boilers, Factories, and Legal Metrology, have been consolidated to address safety concerns for red-category industries. The CM emphasised that accidents occur approximately every three months, and it is the responsibility of all industries to rigorously follow SOPs. He urged a regular review of procedures and stressed that they have to prevent any recurrence of such incidents.

Jagan's lavish...

Continued from Page 1

Jagan Mohan Reddy's spending also extended to personal travel and infrastructure improvements. GO 1737 covered Rs 22.52 lakh for a personal trip to Jerusalem with his family, while GO 254 accounted for Rs 22.50 lakh in temporary works at Tadepalli Palace. GO 132 funded the construction of a 1 km road leading to Jagan's residence with Rs 5 crore. GO 308 financed the purchase of furniture for the residence with Rs 39 lakh, and GO 133 provided Rs 40 lakh for fencing along the road to the helipad.

The extravagant expenses were not limited to Jagan Mohan Reddy's personal and official needs. GO 1609 allocated Rs 1 lakh for the rent of an apartment in Vijayawada for the former CM's friend Srikanth Reddy, along with additional expenses. Similar allowances were made for other associates, including Budi Mutyala

Naidu, Nitish...

Continued from Page 1

We met Nitish Kumar yesterday and he also assured us that 'we will oppose this bill'. Tejashwi Yadav has also assured us that his party would oppose the bill. Uddhav Thackeray has made a statement that he would not allow anyone to lay a hand on the Waqf and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has also said he would oppose," Rahmani said.

Specifically asked about the details of the meeting with Naidu and Kumar, Rahmani did not give a direct answer and said the Muslim organisations want all secular parties, including the BJP allies, to support their stand in view of justice and secularism.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH PANCHAYATI RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
No. 2-3/DB/AE/2024-25 Date: 22-08-2024
Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for 2 Buildings works with an estimate cost of Rs. 65.00 Lakhs various grants in NTR District. Bid download starting date: 27.08.2024 onwards. Further details can be seen at e-market place @ www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in. Ph.: 9346424442. Sd/- Executive Engineer, PRI Division, Vijayawada.
R.O. No: 12923/CLAD/11/2021-22, Dt: 22.08.2024

PMAY 2.0 to begin in March next

State govt will conduct grama sabhas to identify beneficiaries: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing, Information & Public Relations (I&PR) Kolu Parthasarathy has announced that the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) 2.0 is set to commence in March next year. The State government is set to conduct Grama Sabhas to identify the eligible beneficiaries soon, he said. As per estimation, around 11 lakh people in the State have no houses, he added.

Minister Parthasarathy visited various housing layouts in Mylavaram Assembly constituency along with MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad on Thursday. Firstly, the Minister inspected the Gajulapeta layout and later proceeded to Elaprolu under the Kondapalli municipality, Pooragattu of Mylavaram mandal and G Konuduru layout. During the visits to these layouts, Minister Sarathy and MLA Prasad interacted with the beneficiaries and spoke to them regarding infrastructure facilities.

Speaking on the occasion, Parthasarathy said that the TDP-led NDA government will act generously with the housing beneficiaries. "However, the previous YSRCP government has shown its vendetta politics against the



Housing Minister Kolu Parthasarathy, along with Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad and Special CS Ajay Jain, interacting with housing beneficiaries at the Gajulapeta layout near Ibrahimpatnam on Thursday

beneficiaries who benefited from the TDP government between 2014 and 2019. During the TDP regime, the then government credited the amount into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries. However, the previous government (YSRCP) did not sanction the remaining bills to them," he

commented. Further, he promised that his government will sanction houses and house sites for all eligible people and release pending bills. The government will provide infrastructure facilities such as internal roads and drinking water tap connections. For that, funds from the

Amrith scheme will be used in urban areas, while funds from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGA) will be used for the rural areas.

They will give drinking water tap connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), he explained.

YSRCP govt diverted Rs.4,500 cr Central funds

Meanwhile, Parthasarathy alleged that the previous YSRCP government diverted Rs.4,500 crore which was sanctioned by the Union government for housing construction. He claimed that this diversion of funds caused delays and stalled the progress of housing activities over the past five years in the State. He added that the NDA government is trying to overcome the previous government's failures and assured that they will construct 1.25 lakh houses for the poor people and fulfil the dream of their own homes.

He asked the beneficiaries who availed of financial assistance of Rs.1.80 lakh to complete their houses by the end of March next year. He made it clear that if they could not complete their houses before March, they will not get houses in future. He instructed the officials of the Housing Department to take the necessary steps to expedite construction works. As per the suggestions of MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad, the Minister advised the beneficiaries to use fly ash in place of earth for levelling the sites, he said.

Housing Department Special Chief Secretary Ajay Jain and dignitaries were present.

Stringent steps in place for easy sand supply: Collector

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has announced a series of measures to tackle concerns regarding sand availability and illegal practices in the district. The announcement comes in response to a recent article published by The Pioneer Newspaper on August 22.

"We are committed to making sure that our residents don't face any difficulties in getting sand," Prasad declared at a press conference held on Thursday evening. He emphasised the strict enforcement of the government's free sand policy, ensuring that only authorised transportation and processing charges are collected.

The press conference, also attended by Police Commissioner Sankhabrata Bagchi, addressed the district's approach to the free sand policy and concerns about limited reserves. "Currently, sand is being supplied solely from the Aganampudi depot," Prasad clarified. "We have 61,000 metric tonnes available there, with roughly 100 vehicles collecting sand daily. This policy has been in place since July 8,



and we're working tirelessly to meet the public's needs."

Acknowledging the potential for exploitation, Prasad issued a strong warning. "Anyone violating the rules or taking advantage of the public will face strict action," he asserted. He elaborated that vehicles not adhering to government-mandated transport charges would be blacklisted. To streamline the process and prevent overcrowding, new measures have been implemented. "Residents can now register or book sand at the Pinamadaka Secretariat in Gajuwaka Mandal," Prasad explained. "Once they receive a slip, sand will be provided at the Aganampudi depot within the specified time frame."

Recognizing the district's growing sand demand, Prasad

announced plans to source additional reserves. "Starting September 11, a new policy will come into effect, making access to sand even easier," he added. The administration has also established a mechanism for residents to report any irregularities. "A toll-free number, 1800 599 4599, and an email address have been established for reporting concerns," Prasad advised. "Joint teams will investigate and take necessary action if any irregularities are found."

The press conference emphasised the administration's commitment to transparency. "We will monitor sand booking and loading statuses daily," Prasad stated. "Public complaints will be reviewed at both the district and State-levels, and appropriate actions will be taken to address them."



Rs 1 cr donated to SV Anna Prasadam Trust

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Prasanna Kota of Virupa Power Projects Pvt Ltd., Kakinada, has donated Rs 1,00,01,116 towards SV Anna

Prasadam Trust. The donor, along with his family, handed over the cheque for the same to TTD Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdhary at the latter's chamber in Tirumala.

Mohammed Khan Jewellers' new showroom inaugurated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mohammad Khan Diamond & Jewellers inaugurated its new showroom opposite Raghavayya Park, MG Road in the city on Thursday. On this occasion, Irfan Khan, Managing Partner of Mohammad Khan Diamond and Jewellers, said that they have launched an inaugural offer to the customers.

He said that on gold jewellery they are offering a discount of Rs 300 per gram and on dia-

mond jewellery up to Rs 15,000 per carot. It has been revealed that they are providing gold and diamond jewellery to customers with the highest quality standards. Gold jewellery has been specially made in lightweight and made available to the customers. A variety of sophisticated designs are available for the buyers. He said that a variety of silver jewellery is also available.

Partners Fazalullah Rahman Khan, KN Muniruddin, Manager BL Narasimha Rao and others were present.



Water tap connection survey to be speeded up: VMC Commissioner

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra has said that as part of providing drinking water tap connections to every household, as of now, 1,89,987 assessment surveys have been completed out of 2,33,131.

So far, 82 per cent of the survey has been completed so far and he instructed the officials concerned to complete the survey 100 per cent and submit the report as early as possible.

In a press release here on Thursday, Dhyanaachandra said that the drinking water tap connection survey will be expedited. He directed the



Sachivalayam Secretary to go to every house and conduct the survey.

Also, he instructed the Zonal Commissioners to take the necessary steps to complete the survey within the stipulated period. He suggested that the officials work Revenue and Engineering department officials.

If CM's brothers can do biz, why can't SEBI chief buy shares in Adani firm: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy whether his stance is that the CM's brothers can invest, but the SEBI chairperson should not buy shares of the Adani company.

He said the BJP is condemning the allegations made by the Leader of Opposition (LOP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, and Revanth regarding the Hindenburg report which was intended to mislead investors and the public.

Speaking to the media on Thursday at the State BJP office, Raghunandan asked why the Congress is objecting to the SEBI chairperson buying shares. The Supreme Court

"Rahul must respect the verdict given by the SC in the Adani-Hindenburg case. I am going to New Delhi on Friday to give the news about Rahul published by the Blitz of Bangladesh," he said.



rejected Hindenburg's allegations saying that there is no truth in its report.

"Rahul has no faith in the SEBI, Adani, Supreme Court and Indian democracy. But he believes the news published by Hindenburg. He wants to continue attacking the country's systems after getting a death blow in the LS elections. Why is Rahul not responding to the news published by the Blitz magazine of Bangladesh," he

said. "Rahul must respect the verdict given by the SC in the Adani-Hindenburg case. I am going to New Delhi on Friday to give the news about Rahul published by the Blitz of Bangladesh," he said.

"People like George Sores write fake news to make money. SEBI issued notices to Hindenburg. Why didn't they reply? People like Rahul don't trust the SEBI, they don't trust

the Adani Group. But Congress Chief Ministers do business with Adani. Rahul wants to create a controversy by saying that SEBI Chairperson Madhavi Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch have shares in an Adani company" he said.

"Subramanyam Swamy filed a petition in court along with details saying that Rahul is a British citizen. He submitted details showing that Rahul is a British citizen. Rahul is trying to avoid losing his Indian citizenship. The Blitz said that Rahul has a wife and children.

Rahul should respond to what the Blitz said. Rahul is using the Hindenburg report to divert attention. Does Rahul have the guts to ask for an inquiry into the Blitz report?" he said.

Rear Admiral Menon takes command of Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Rear Admiral Menon, a distinguished gunnery and missile specialist with a remarkable 32-year career in the Indian Navy, has officially assumed command of the Eastern Fleet. The transition was marked by a formal ceremony attended by senior naval officers and personnel from the Fleet.

Rear Admiral Menon, an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1992. His career has been distinguished by numerous prestigious Command and Staff



roles. Before taking over as the Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet (FOCEF), he served as the Flag Officer Sea Training, where he made signif-

icant contributions to naval training and operational readiness.

In his new role, Rear Admiral Menon will oversee the operations of the Eastern Fleet, a key component of the Indian Navy responsible for maintaining maritime security and enhancing combat capabilities. "I am deeply honoured to take on the role of Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet. The Eastern Fleet has always been at the forefront of safeguarding our maritime interests, and I look forward to working with the dedicated personnel to further strengthen our capabilities and ensure

national security," he said.

The change of command ceremony also saw Rear Admiral Dhankhar, the outgoing FOCEF, being formally honoured and bid farewell by Fleet personnel. Rear Admiral Dhankhar's leadership was recognised for his contributions to the Fleet's operational success during his tenure. Rear Admiral Dhankhar reflected on his time in command: "It has been a privilege to lead the Eastern Fleet. I am confident that under Rear Admiral Menon's command, the Fleet will continue to excel and uphold its critical role in our national defense."



Four sand booking points from today

Collector says there will be no booking for sand at the stock points

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has stated that as per the instructions from the State government, they set up four new sand booking centres in the district and they will be coming into force from August 23. There will be no facility to book sand at the stock points, she said. This initiative step has been taken to implement the free sand policy effectively and added that the new Sand Policy would come soon.

Addressing the media at the Collectorate, on Thursday, Srijana said that the district administration has set up four sand booking centres. For the Keesara stock point, people could book sand at Kanchikacherla - 3 Sachivalayam, she said. Also, for the Moguluru stock point - Chevitikallu Sachivalayam, Anumanchipalli stock point - Share Mohammedpet Panchayat Office and the Polampalli stock point people are advised to book sand at the Polampalli Grama Sachivalayam, she added.

Further, she said that people could book for sand from morning 6 to evening 4. Earlier 8 sand stock points were available to provide free sand to the people, however after conducting a detailed review with Revenue, Mines and Police departments, sand booking points were reduced to four, she said. Later, she made clear that sand booking is available to those vehicles registered on the AP Mines.gov.in website.

Meanwhile, she stated that 20 metric tonnes of sand would be supplied to each consumer per day. To monitor the sand booking effectively, and implement the Free Sand Policy in the district, Joint Collector Nidhi Meena has been appointed as Nodal Officer, she said. If any complaints, people can contact toll-free numbers 1800-5994599 (State) and 18004256029 (district) and lodge complaints at dmgonrandscomplaints@yahoo.com, she explained.

Joint Collector Nidhi Meena, NTR district DCP KM Maheswara Raoju and ACP Dr Ravikiran were present.

Reactor explosion highlights safety concerns

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The devastating reactor explosion at a pharmaceutical plant within the Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Anakapalli, claiming 17 lives and causing severe injuries, has once again raised serious concerns about safety protocols in one of India's largest industrial zones. The incident, which follows a series of tragic accidents in recent months, has exposed the urgent need for improved oversight and stringent safety measures.

The SEZ, known for its vast pharmaceutical manufacturing base, has been plagued by safety lapses. Industry experts and workers' unions have accused authorities of failing to conduct proper safety audits and enforce regulations. "Safety audits in these factories are a farce,"

alleged Gani Shetty Satyanarayana, honorary president of the Pharma City Staff and Workers Union. "Officials often issue audit reports without even visiting the factories."

Experts have emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring and robust safety protocols to prevent such disasters. Dr Y Rajendra Prasad, Senior Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Andhra University, stressed the need for minute-by-minute monitoring of reactors. "Explosions in reactors are often caused by overpressure or electrical short circuits," Prasad explained. "Therefore, reactors need to be monitored on a minute-by-minute basis."

To address the recurring safety issues, experts are calling for the establishment of a dedicated, independent safety panel



to oversee the SEZ. Such a panel, composed of specialists from various fields, would be essential for ensuring compliance with safety standards. "The government must appoint

a high-level safety committee with experts from pharmacy, chemistry, civil and electrical engineering, and fire services," urged a leading industry expert. "This committee should be an

independent third-party agency with statutory powers."

The Atchutapuram SEZ disaster is part of a broader pattern of industrial accidents in Visakhapatnam. Over the past few years, more than 50 lives have been lost due to similar incidents, highlighting severe deficiencies in preparedness and safety standards. Investigations into past accidents, such as the May 2020 styrene vapor leak at LG Polymers, have revealed inadequate response and preventive measures.

Prof VSRK Prasad, former director of the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy, emphasized the importance of rigorous maintenance and regular training. "Constant monitoring is essential to assess the impact of varying air conditions, higher temperatures, and

increased pressure on chemical flow," Prasad said. "Regular training programs should focus on safety management, advanced systems, and industry-specific techniques."

Despite the introduction of new safety guidelines by the state government, concerns remain about compliance and the lack of qualified safety inspectors. The absence of relevant academic programs in Andhra Pradesh further exacerbates the issue. The Atchutapuram SEZ disaster serves as a stark reminder of the critical need for stringent safety measures to protect both workers and surrounding communities from future tragedies. As the community mourns the tragic loss of 17 lives, the demand for swift action and comprehensive safety reforms has never been more urgent.

Collector assures stringent implementation of sand policy

PNS ■ ELURU

Collector of Eluru district, K Vetrivelvi, has assured that the district administration will strictly implement the sand policy. She urged the public to utilise the government's newly introduced free sand scheme, designed to provide sand at lower costs.

At a press conference held at the Eluru Collector's office on Thursday, Vetrivelvi, along with District SP K Pratap Shivkumar, provided detailed information. They announced the availability of three stock points for sand distribution in the district. These include sand points (stockyards) in Ibrahimpatnam, Vinjam, and Chebrolu regions. The Ibrahimpatnam stockyard has 70,000 metric tonnes of sand, the Vinjam stockyard has 1,000 metric tonnes, and the Chebrolu stockyard holds 451 metric tonnes.

Booking counters for sand have been set up at nearby secretariats. During the booking process, buyers are required to present their Aadhaar card. Additionally, the time for vehicle entry into the stockyards



At a press conference held at the Eluru Collector's office on Thursday, Vetrivelvi, along with District SP K Pratap Shivkumar, provided detailed information. They announced the availability of three stock points for sand distribution in the district. These include sand points (stockyards) in Ibrahimpatnam, Vinjam, and Chebrolu regions

will be determined at the time of booking. Although sand is provided free of charge, transportation costs will be calculated per kilometre. For instance,

transportation charges for a distance of 0-10 km will be Rs 800, 10-20 km will be Rs 1,200, 20-30 km will be Rs 1,800, and any distance beyond 30 km will

be charged at Rs 35 per kilometre. For vehicles with six tyres, the charges will be Rs 1,540 for 0-10 km, Rs 2,420 for 10-20 km, Rs 3,300 for 20-30 km, and Rs 80 per kilometre beyond 30 km. For vehicles with ten tyres, the charges will be Rs 2,000 for 0-10 km, Rs 3,000 for 10-20 km, Rs 4,300 for 20-30 km, and Rs 120 per kilometre beyond 30 km.

Collector Vetrivelvi clarified that vehicles operating without a permit would be seized. She

also advised the public to report any illegal activities related to sand transportation by calling the State Toll-Free number 18005994599 or the Eluru Collectorate office at 08812-234014. Efforts are underway to set up additional stockyards in the Gootala-1 and Pattiseema regions, which will be operational as soon as environmental permits are received.

District SP K. Pratap Shivkumar highlighted that stringent measures have been taken in accordance with government directives to provide quality sand at lower prices. Check posts have been established at interstate borders with surveillance via CCTV cameras.

He assured that if any issues arise during transportation, buyers should inform the relevant toll-free numbers to avoid inconvenience. The SP warned that strict actions, including vehicle seizures, will be taken against those involved in illegal sand transportation or storage. The new law will lead to imprisonment for those found guilty of illegal sand transport.



'Honour your mothers by planting saplings as token of love & respect'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G. Srijana highlighted the significance of fostering a pollution-free environment through plant conservation, championing the slogan "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam," which signifies love and respect for mothers. She underscored the importance of planting saplings for environmental protection and humanity's survival.

As part of the Central Government's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" initiative, the "Plant 4 Mother Campaign" was held at ZP High School in Guntupalli, Ibrahimpatnam mandal, on Thursday. Collector Srijana, accompanied by students and their parents, planted saplings on the school's grounds.

Collector Srijana noted the challenges posed by environmental changes, such as natur-

al disasters like cyclones and floods. She emphasised that planting trees is crucial for maintaining climate balance and safeguarding the environment.

She further mentioned that the Central Government has introduced the "Plant for Mother" programme, aiming to plant approximately 140 crore saplings nationwide by March 2025, as directed by the Prime Minister.

She encouraged everyone to honour their mothers by planting a sapling as a token of love and respect.

Additionally, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), efforts are underway to plant saplings in government offices, schools, pond banks, canal banks, and other vacant areas across the district. The "Plant for Mother"

programme is actively involving students and their mothers in this initiative.

District Water and Management Agency (DWAMA) Project Director J. Sunitha elaborated on how MGNREGS is facilitating sapling planting throughout the district. She explained that the "Plant for Mother" programme engages government school students in environmental conservation by planting fruit-bearing trees such as coconut, mango, guava, lemon, sapota, oranges, and flowering plants like jasmine, rose, and hibiscus.

The event was attended by Ibrahimpatnam MPDO Ramakrishna Naik, Guntupalli Sarpanch B. Kavitha, Headmistress M. Sudharani, DWAMA Plant Manager K. Usha, APO M. Pramila, and other officials.

Srikakulam man held for international cyber fraud

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam City Cyber Crime Police have arrested a man from Srikakulam for his involvement in an international cyber fraud scheme. The accused, Arugula Rishiraj, was part of a syndicate that targeted Indian citizens through social media platforms. "Cyber crimes are on the rise, and despite increasing awareness, many individuals continue to fall victim to these scams," said a spokesperson from the Visakhapatnam City Cyber Crime Police.

The department, under the leadership of Commissioner of Police Visakhapatnam, Dr Shankhabrata Bagchi, and Joint Commissioner of Police Dr K Phakkirappa, has been actively working to combat such fraudulent schemes. Rishiraj, who travelled to Cambodia through an agent, was involved in managing data entry operations for a Chinese scam company. He used deceptive scripts provided by the company to target Indians on social media platforms like Facebook.

"The accused was part of a well-organized syndicate operating from various countries," said Dr. Shankhabrata Bagchi, Commissioner of Police Visakhapatnam. "He was lured to Cambodia with promises of high-paying jobs, but was instead forced to



participate in these fraudulent activities." Following recent arrests of Cambodian agents by Visakhapatnam Cyber Crime, Rishiraj attempted to evade capture by travelling to Vietnam. However, he was apprehended by Delhi Airport Immigration staff on August 15, 2024, based on an alert issued by the Visakhapatnam Cyber Crime Police. "The arrest of Rishiraj is a significant step in our ongoing efforts to dismantle these criminal networks," said Dr. K Phakkirappa, Joint Commissioner of Police Visakhapatnam. "We are committed to protecting the public from such scams and bringing the perpetrators to justice." A comprehensive investigation is currently underway to identify and apprehend the other members of the syndicate. Special police teams have been assigned to assist in this ongoing effort.



3 YSRC corporators in VMC join TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three YSR Congress Party (YSRC) corporators from Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) joined the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Vijayawada on Thursday. The corporators, Sk Harshad, Mylavaru Ratnakumari, and Madhuri Lavanya, representing the 45th, 44th, and 54th divisions of the Vijayawada West Assembly Constituency, were welcomed into the TDP by Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath, alias Chinni.

In addition to the MP, Vijayawada Central TDP MLA Bonda Umamaheswara Rao, former MLA Jalil Khan, and

other TDP leaders extended their greetings to the new members.

MP Sivanath stated his intention to make Vijayawada a stronghold of the TDP by considering the suggestions and advice of senior leaders. He emphasised that the leadership is committed to working together with a strategy to eliminate opposition parties in the city. He noted that not only YSRC workers but also leaders are eager to join the TDP. However, he clarified that only those genuinely interested in the city's development and who come voluntarily are invited to join the party. He further assured that only leaders with

a strong reputation among the public would be welcomed into the TDP. He congratulated the three corporators on their decision to leave YSRC and join the TDP, expressing hope for the city's advancement.

MLA Bonda Uma added that more leaders from both the west and central constituencies are expected to join the TDP soon. He mentioned that leaders committed to the development of the people and the city are ready to join the TDP. He also remarked that if all YSRC members were welcomed into the TDP, YSRC would become virtually non-existent in Vijayawada city.

New guidelines for general transfers of unions' office-bearers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has issued new guidelines concerning the general transfers of office-bearers from recognised service associations at various levels within the state. This move follows revelations that some service associations have been issuing fraudulent certificates to employees, claiming them as office bearers to secure exemptions from general transfers.

According to Circular Memo N o . G A D 0 1 - S W O S E R A / 1 3 / 2 0 2 4 - S W , dated 22 August 2024, all Heads of Departments, Collectors, and District Magistrates are instructed to ensure the authenticity of certificates provided by recognised service associations. This measure aims to curb the misuse of transfer exemptions and maintain the integrity of the process.

Key documents that must be verified include:

Bye-laws of the recognised service association submitting the exemption request.

Voter lists to confirm the employee's inclusion as a voter in their association.

Confirmation that the office bearer post is covered in the association's bye-laws. Proceedings related to the appointment of the respective Election Officer. Election Notification for the office bearer position.

Election Results declared by the Election Officer. General Body resolution if the office bearer was co-opted. The circular emphasises the need for verification to prevent any deviations or violations. Any discrepancies should be reported to the government, which will take necessary actions under the ROSA provisions, including legal measures if required.



3.5 tonnes of PDS rice seized

PNS ■ ELURU

Assistant Supply Officer Y. Pratap Reddy and CSDTA Madhava Rao seized three-and-a-half tonnes of ration rice being transported illegally on Thursday.

The rice was being transported from the surrounding areas of Jangareddigudem in Eluru district when the vehicle, which was carrying the rice, crashed into a divider near Devara Cheruvu in the V. Gorum Mandal of Denduluru. As a result, the rice was left at the accident site, and the damaged vehicle was abandoned on the national highway.

Authorities took steps to transfer the rice to another vehicle and identified and seized it. Officials confirmed that the rice was intended for Rajanagararam in East Godavari district. A case has been filed against a person named S Babu, who was involved in the transportation. The authorities have seized two vehicles related to the case and handed them over to the Denduluru police.

'Most orphanages, homes have no proper infrastructure'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In accordance with the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015, which was amended in 2022, the government and NGOs establishing rehabilitation centres for Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCs) are required to adhere to specific guidelines and secure a licence from district authorities to operate as a Child Care Institute (CCI). Regrettably, numerous child orphanages and homes run by NGOs, religious organisations, and trusts are operating without meeting minimum infrastructure, living conditions, hygienic food, or safety standards.

The failure of relevant government officials to address these unauthorised child homes has led to instances of physical and sexual abuse, trafficking, and deaths among CNCs. In Andhra Pradesh, cases of sexual abuse in unauthorised homes have been reported in the Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts. Recently, the death of four children in an unauthorised home in Anakapalle district drew the Chief Minister's attention. However, instead of targeting



The failure of relevant government officials to address these unauthorised child homes has led to instances of physical and sexual abuse, trafficking, and deaths among CNCs. In Andhra Pradesh, cases of sexual abuse in unauthorised homes have been reported in the Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts

these unauthorised homes, the Women and Child Development (WCD) and Juvenile Welfare departments are inspecting the infrastructure and verifying the licences of already approved CCIs.

The government must hold local grassroots departments—such as ICDS, Grama or Ward Sachivaalays, and Gram

Panchayats—accountable for failing to report unauthorised child homes, child marriages, child labour, harassment, school dropouts, and violations of local rights. Strengthening these local bodies and enhancing their capacities through District Child Protection Units (DCPU) is crucial for raising awareness about child rights and protection.

BVS Kumar, former chairman of the Child Welfare Committee of Krishna district, highlighted a significant issue in Andhra Pradesh, where child protection responsibilities are divided between the Women and Child Welfare and Juvenile Welfare departments, leading to a lack of proper coordination. This has resulted in many licensed CCIs operating without renewed licences for years. According to the JJ Act, any licence not renewed within the stipulated time is deemed cancelled. The Government must act promptly to shut down all unauthorised child homes and strictly prohibit the acceptance of leftover cooked food from outsiders to prevent food poisoning. Proactive measures are preferable to compensatory actions after tragic incidents.

Teeth of 'sorcerer' extracted by kin

PNS ■ ELURU

In a horrific incident at Matthevarigudem in Dwaraka Tirumala mandal of the district on Thursday, relatives accused an elderly woman of practising sorcery and extracted her teeth. Recently, the children of sick relatives suspected that their illnesses were due to sorcery and, on this pretext, extracted the teeth of the elderly woman, Madhurali Madharavamma. The injured woman has been moved to a hospital.

Sub-Inspector Sudheer stated that as soon as the police received the information, they apprehended three individuals and registered a case against them.



Jagan flays 'deteriorating' law and order

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy held a meeting with YSR Congress Party's (YSRCP) legal cell representatives and strongly condemned the unethical governance of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu.

Speaking on the occasion at the party central office here on Thursday, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed deep concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the state, attributing the ongoing attacks to the encouragement of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. He further stated that deliberate efforts are being made to create fear and confusion among the public.

He reminded them that when YSRCP was in power, they never encouraged such events and reminded them that the primary focus of their governance was fairness and integrity, with no place for corruption or bias.

He mentioned the disturbing trend of declining law and order in the state referring to how those in power are using "red books" to create chaos and target specific individuals, with a focus on destruction and framing false cases. This practice is now trickling down to all levels, with individuals at con-



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stituency, mandal, and village levels opening their own "red books" to carry out such destructive activities, he said. He stated that former minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy was being targeted by the government with false cases, using unrelated incidents such as fire accidents in

offices. He mentioned that in the present era of digitalisation, it made no sense to accuse someone of burning papers, as all data is stored electronically in servers and hard drives. He highlighted that this was part of a broader strategy by those in power to deflect blame onto others, using false charges

as a means to target opponents. He also raised concerns about the ongoing lawlessness, where attacks on political workers are seemingly encouraged, with authorities protecting the wrongdoers.

He mentioned instances where opposition members faced violence, while the government turned a blind eye and media outlets carried out misleading stories to deceive the public. He mentioned the importance of the legal community's proactive involvement. He urged lawyers to take the initiative in bringing these issues to the attention of the courts, as without such efforts, justice would not be served.

ACROSS THE STATES



It is govt's duty to trace missing children, women: HC

The Bombay High Court on Thursday said it was the government's duty to trace missing children and women. Hearing a public interest litigation (PIL), a division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar directed the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (MSCW) to trace more than one lakh women who went missing in Maharashtra between 2019 and 2021. The petition expressed concern over 'inaction' by the state authorities in cases of missing women and children. The petitioner's advocate Manjiri Parasnis on Thursday told the court that Jagtap's own daughter had gone missing.



Porsche crash: no bail for teen driver's parents

A court here on Thursday rejected the bail applications of six persons including the teen driver's parents in connection with alleged blood-swapping in the Kalyani Nagar Porsche car crash case. Additional Sessions Judge U M Mudholkar refused bail to the 17-year-old's parents Vishal and Shivani Agarwal; Dr Ajay Taware and Dr Shreehari Halnor of Sassoon General Hospital, and alleged middlemen Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad. It is alleged that after the teen driver crashed his car into a motorbike and killed two IT professionals in the wee hours of May 19, his parents and others conspired to replace his blood samples so as to establish that he was not drunk at the time. The prosecution argued that if given bail, the accused might pressurise the witnesses and tamper with the evidence.

India ready to extend all possible help for peace

PM NARENDRA MODI SAYS AHEAD OF UKRAINE TRIP

PNS ■ WARSAW

A day ahead of his much-anticipated visit to conflict-torn Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India firmly believes that no problem can be solved on the battlefield and it is ready to extend all possible cooperation for the restoration of peace and stability in the region. Modi made the remarks after holding wide-ranging talks with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk that saw the elevation of India-Poland ties to the level of strategic partnership and firming up of a social security pact to promote the mobility of skilled workers. The two sides also resolved to expand cooperation in key sectors of defence, trade, renewable energy, pharma-



ceuticals, urban infrastructure, food processing, artificial intelligence and space. In his media statement, Modi, besides highlighting key outcomes of his talks Tusk, also referred to ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia and described them as matters of deep concern. "The ongoing conflicts in

Ukraine and West Asia are a matter of deep concern for all of us. India firmly believes that no problem can be solved on the battlefield," he said. "The loss of innocent lives in any crisis has become the biggest challenge for the entire humanity. We support dialogue and diplomacy for early restoration of peace and sta-

bility," Modi said with Tusk by his side. "For this, India is ready to provide all possible support along with its friendly countries." Modi arrived in Warsaw on Wednesday, in the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Poland in nearly half a century. In the second leg of his two-nation trip, Modi will be in Kyiv for around seven hours on Friday.

The Indian prime minister will leave for the Ukrainian capital onboard a train this evening and the journey will take around 10 hours. Polish Prime Minister Tusk said that he and Prime Minister Modi clarified their positions on issues that concern the whole world today. "I am very pleased that the Prime Minister confirmed the readiness of his personal commitment to a peaceful.



Oppn members question provisions of Waqf bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill held its marathon first meeting Thursday amid objections by opposition MPs over a host of provisions as the Union minority affairs ministry made a presentation in the proposed law. Sources said BJP members in the meeting lauded the proposed amendments, including the provisions which seek to empower women. There were occasional heated exchanges during the meeting but members from various parties sat for several hours, recording their views on the provisions of the Bill, offering suggestions and seeking clarifications. In his brief comments to reporters, Committee Chairperson Jagdambika Pal described the meeting, which went on for over six hours with a lunch break, as "fruitful".

It was one of the longest meetings held by a parliamentary panel in recent times, a member claimed. The next meeting will be held on August 30, and the panel is likely to hear views of various state Waqf bodies, sources said. There was a view among the members across various parties, some of them said, that the minority affairs ministry was not "adequately prepared" to address the queries raised in the meeting, and the presentation made was not up to scratch. BJP ally Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) said the Muslim community's concerns should be addressed and called for wider consultations, they said, adding that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) also pitched for holding broad deliberations. The members who attended the meeting included the BJP's Sanjay Jaiswal, Aparajita Sarangi, Tejasvi Surya, Dilip Saikia and Gulam Ali; Congress party's Gourav Gogoi and Naseer Hussain; TMC's Kalyan Banerjee, YSR Congress' V Vijaysai Reddy, AAP's Sanjay Singh, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, A Raja of the DMK, BJP's Arun Bharti and TDP's Lavu Srikrishna Devarayalu. Several opposition members questioned various clauses of the bill and their rationale, including the move to empower district collectors in deciding on the ownership of a disputed property, and to have non-Muslim members on Waqf boards. Later in a post on X, Reddy said he opposed the bill due to concerns expressed by various stakeholders. The bill is not acceptable in its current form, he said.

Restoring statehood to J-K is Cong, INDIA bloc's priority: Rahul

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said it is the priority of the Congress and the INDIA Bloc to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. The former Congress president also said it is his party's aim that people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh get their democratic rights back. "It is our priority and also of the INDIA bloc to restore statehood in J-K as soon as possible. We had expected this could be done prior to elections, but it is okay, elections have been declared. It is a step forward and we are hoping that statehood will be restored as soon as possible and the democratic rights of the people of J-K will be restored," Gandhi said at a press conference after an interaction with party workers here. The Congress leader said he has "a very deep rela-



tion" with the people of J-K and it is always a pleasure for him to visit here. He assured the people that the Congress is always there to help them in whatever it can. My message to the people of J-K is that whatever way we can help you, the Congress party is always there. "We understand that you are going through a very difficult period, a tough period.

PM has no vision to tackle unprecedented unemployment crisis: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday claimed the country is grappling with an "unprecedented unemployment crisis" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi "has no vision" to tackle this situation and provide employment to the youth. Congress general secretary in-charge



Jairam Ramesh shared a news article on X that cited a report

released by the Bank of Baroda claiming that the growth in employment in the corporate sector slowed to 1.5 per cent in the financial year 2023-24 (FY24) from 5.7 per cent in FY23. "This is another report showing the failure of this government on the economic front. A total of 2.43 lakh jobs have been lost in the country in 2022-23.



SC modifies condition imposed on Teesta Setalvad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday modified the condition of furnishing solvent surety of Rs 10 lakh which was imposed on activist Teesta Setalvad while permitting her to travel to Malaysia from August 31 to September 10 for a conference. The apex court had on August 20 permitted Setalvad to travel to Selangor, Malaysia for 11 days. It had said she shall file an undertaking before the top court stating that she will return to India as scheduled and face the trial and shall also furnish solvent surety in the sum of Rs 10 lakh to the satisfaction of the sessions court in Ahmedabad. On Thursday, Setalvad's counsel mentioned the matter before a bench headed by Justice B R Gavi. The counsel requested the bench, also comprising

Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan, for modification of the condition of providing solvent surety saying it would take long time. The bench noted that Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, appearing for Gujarat government, has not objected to the modification sought by Setalvad's counsel. It noted the law officer has submitted that sufficient condition to ensure her presence be imposed. "We, therefore, modify the condition mentioned in paragraph no.6 of the said order (of August 20) and the same be replaced as under: The applicant (Setalvad) shall furnish solvent surety or cash surety or surety in the nature of fixed deposit receipt in the sum of Rs 10,00,000 to the satisfaction of the sessions court, Bhadra, Ahmedabad," the bench said in its order.

Stay vigilant to counter fake narratives: EC to J-K, Haryana poll observers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday advised its over 400 observers being deployed for assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana to stay vigilant to false narratives trying to derail the election process and to ensure a quick counter. Reminding the observers of their crucial role, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar emphasised that they, as representatives of the Commission, are expected to conduct themselves professionally and be accessible to all stakeholders including candidates and public at large. He also advised them to overcome language barriers and ensure that there are no gaps in communication. He reminded the observers that they would be under the watchful gaze of parties, candidates, voters and EC alike.



He also advised them to overcome language barriers and ensure that there are no gaps in communication. He reminded the observers that they would be under the watchful gaze of parties, candidates, voters and EC alike.

Election Commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu noted that accessibility, visibility and responsiveness are essential to develop a virtuous spiral enhancing the conduct of the elections. According to the poll authority, observers were strictly directed to remain accessible to all parties, candidates and voters for timely redressal of their grievances. Any complaints in this regard will be viewed seriously by the Commission. As the eyes and ears of the Commission on the ground, the observers were asked to exercise constant vigilance with utmost sincerity.

AAP launches 'Kejriwal Aayenge' campaign

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP on Thursday rolled out its 'Kejriwal Aayenge' campaign in the run up to the assembly polls in Delhi next year as it seeks to form the government in the national capital for a third consecutive term. Hoardings bearing the 'Kejriwal Aayenge' slogan have also been put up across Delhi. Kejriwal is lodged in Tihar jail in connection with a corruption case linked to the alleged excise policy scam being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). There is a lot of sentiment among the people of Delhi and the country about Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, said AAP national general secretary (organisation) and Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak. "The people of Delhi are



eagerly waiting for Arvind Kejriwal to come out of jail. Ever since Arvind Kejriwal has gone, many works in Delhi have stopped. The public is confident that all the stalled works in Delhi will be completed and many problems resolved quickly after his release," he added. Pathak said people understood that the BJP government at the Centre put Kejriwal in jail in a "false case" only to stop the work in Delhi and "upset

the people". By launching the 'Kejriwal Aayenge' campaign, AAP wants to convey the message that the upcoming assembly elections will be fought with Kejriwal at the centre and, under his leadership, once again the people of Delhi will form an AAP government by giving a huge majority, he said. "The people of Delhi love Arvind Kejriwal and have full faith in his staunch honesty," he added.

Different group of employees not eligible for same benefits: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Different groups of employees, who may be working in aid but are governed by separate sets of rules, are not eligible for the same benefits upon obtaining similar qualifications, the Supreme Court held on Thursday. A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and Rajesh Binal set aside July 21, 2010 order of the Delhi High Court and a 2003 order of the Central Administrative Tribunal asking the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to extend benefit of 1999 scheme to its technical staffs at par with the scientists upon acquiring a Ph.D degree. Under the February 27, 1999 scheme introduced by the ICAR, a scientist was eligible for two advance increments upon acquiring a Ph.D. degree during his service.

Kerala HC to state govt: Submit Hema panel report

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Thursday asked the state government to submit to it in a sealed cover the Hema Committee report on atrocities against women in the Malayalam film industry. A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice A Muhamed Mustaque and Justice S Manu, while considering a PIL filed by Thiruvananthapuram resident Navas, said the report contains serious allegations. The high court admitted the writ petition and directed the government to file its counter affidavit. The court asked the government its next course of



A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice A Muhamed Mustaque and Justice S Manu, while considering a PIL filed by Thiruvananthapuram resident Navas, said the report contains serious allegations.

action based on the report submitted by the Hema Committee. The government lawyer submitted that it is not possible to register a case unless

someone files a complaint. The state government said it has all the names mentioned in the uncensored original report which was a confidential doc-

ument. It said the committee was entrusted to study and report the situation of women in the movie industry but the government has limitations in

registering cases as the statements were recorded by the committee upon ensuring confidentiality. It is not possible to register a case against that confidentiality statement, the government said, adding that cases will be registered if someone comes forward and files a complaint. The high court on Thursday on its own implemented the State Women's Commission in the matter. The PIL sought to publish the original report and asked the high court to direct the state government to initiate criminal proceedings in connection with the alleged sexual offences mentioned in the report. The Justice K Hema

Committee was formed after the 2017 actress assault case involving actor Dileep, to study issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality in Malayalam cinema. Even though the report was filed in 2019, the government did not release the details as it was suspected to contain sensitive information. Earlier, the publication of the censored report, which was to be released on July 24, was put on hold by the Kerala High Court on a plea moved by a Malayalam film producer. Subsequently, the HC dismissed the plea on August 13 and directed the government to make the report public within a week from then.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Witaj Poland!

PM Narendra Modi arrives in Poland for the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 Years

In a significant diplomatic milestone, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Poland on August 21, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in 45 years. This historic visit underscores the growing importance of India-Poland relations, which have evolved considerably since their establishment over 70 years ago. India and Poland share a rich history of diplomatic engagement that dates back to the early 1950s, soon after India gained independence and Poland emerged from the devastations of World War II. The two nations established formal diplomatic relations in 1954, laying the foundation for a partnership based on mutual respect, shared values, and common interests. During the Cold War era, India and Poland maintained cordial relations, bolstered by their shared membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. This period saw steady growth in bilateral trade, cultural exchanges, and political dialogue. However, the relationship experienced a slowdown in the post-Cold War era as both countries



focused on domestic reforms and economic transitions. Despite this, the underlying warmth between the two nations remained intact. In recent years, the India-Poland relationship has witnessed a resurgence, driven by mutual economic interests, shared concerns about global security, and a commitment to multilateralism. Poland, as a member of the European Union and a key player in Central Europe, has become an important partner for India in its engagement with the region. Meanwhile, India's rapid economic growth and its strategic position in Asia have made it an attractive partner for Poland.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Poland is a significant step in revitalising and deepening bilateral ties. It is particularly noteworthy as it marks the first time an Indian Prime Minister has visited Poland since 1979. The visit is expected to enhance cooperation in several key areas, including trade and investment, defence, technology, and cultural exchanges. Trade between India and Poland has been steadily increasing, with bilateral trade reaching approximately \$3 billion in recent years. Polish companies have shown keen interest in the Indian market, particularly in sectors such as defence, energy, and infrastructure. Likewise, Indian businesses are exploring opportunities in Poland, particularly in the fields of information technology, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. Defence cooperation is another area of mutual interest. India, with its growing defence industry, can be a valuable partner for Poland in this endeavour. Cultural ties between the two nations are also set to receive a boost during PM Modi's visit. Poland has a vibrant Indian diaspora, and cultural exchanges between the two countries have been on the rise. Indian films, cuisine, and festivals are increasingly popular in Poland, reflecting the deepening people-to-people connections. As India and Poland work together to address common challenges, from global security to climate change, this visit could mark the beginning of a more dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership.

PICTALK



Visitors at the Taj Mahal in Agra

The shadow games of Pakistan's ISI



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Often accused of overstepping its professional bounds, ISI has become a player in domestic politics, international intrigue, and personal vendettas

Spy novelist John Le Carre describes spies as complicated and lonely beings, living double lives. Such seclusion makes deception, intrigue and unrequited ambition, their default mode. The fact that they know the deep and dark secrets but are still expected to comply by restrains occasionally leads them to flex their 'privilege' (read, confidential information) towards reckless ends. Because they are dangerously privy to so much dirt, they fear their ambition.

Like the proverbial Caesar's wife, must always be above suspicion – but often aren't. Pakistan's notorious spy agency Inter-Services-Intelligence (ISI) is infamous for going beyond its professional remit and dabbling in domestic politics, commercial interests or even partaking in cross-border dalliances, beyond their approved mandate. If the Pakistani Army Chief is the real power (pretence of civil politicians, notwithstanding), arguably the second most powerful person is the DG-ISI. Supposed loyalty to the Army Chief or to the PM (in times when the Army takes a backseat and politicians have an upper hand) is implicit, though, in the Pakistani narrative, backstabbing is common.

Ironically for such a powerful 'number two' post, there have been 29 DG-ISIs so far, and only one has ascended to the post of Army Chief i.e., the current Army Chief, General Asim Munir. It is reflective of the slippery slope that the post entails which invariably ends up making some power centres in Pakistan unhappy about their conduct e.g., Clergy, Politicians, Americans/Chinese or even their alma mater, the Pakistani 'establishment'. Even the current Army Chief, General Asim Munir was abruptly moved out as the DG-ISI as the then PM Imran Khan felt uncomfortable with his conduct (karma later evened out the equation as Imran finds himself languishing in the jail today). Seemingly the profile is for a loyal, unquestioning and low-key DG-ISI who does the job is satisfied with obscurity (shouldn't be overambitious) and effectively rides into



the sunset after retirement, without much fuss. Given the opportunity, lure and access, many do try to take their chances.

There is a curious case of one DG-ISI who did get appointed as the Army Chief, but his tenure was only for a few hours and the same does not go in official records as having become the Pakistani Army Chief. Lt Gen Ziauddin Butt was a typical DG-ISI who went across the Afghan border to meet the dreaded leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, and negotiate – he was in the thick of the dark corridors and machinations of the Pakistani State.

Ziauddin had direct access to the other competing power centre i.e., PM Nawaz Sharif, and was a willing accomplice in Sharif's attempt to remove Pervez Musharraf as the Army Chief. Before the coup (or counter-coup as Musharraf calls it), 'General' Ziauddin was hastily appointed the Army Chief and then immediately dumped by the Pakistani Army which refused to back their DG-ISI's ambition. Spymaster's gambit failed. Ziauddin was not the first or the last of DG-ISIs to harbour personal ambition beyond what was warranted constitutionally. The shadowy likes of Lt Gen Akhtar Rahman,



WHEREAS THE UNHINGED POLITICIANS LIKE IMRAN KHAN WHO ARE DESPERATELY TRYING TO SAVE THEIR SKINS AND INGRATIATE THEMSELVES TO THE PAKISTANI 'ESTABLISHMENT' HAVE DISOWNED AND THROWN LT GEN FAIZ HAMEED UNDER THE PROVERBIAL BUS!

Hamid Gul, Shamsur Kallu, Zaheerul Islam etc., operated with questionable interests. Yet another one who is in the news for harbouring extraconstitutional ambitions and paying the price for the same is the former DG-ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. Forced into premature retirement over his dubious role amid the recent turf war between the Pakistani 'establishment' (led by previous and current Army Chiefs i.e. Qamar Bajwa and Asim Munir, respectively) against the Imran Khan dispensation – he has been brought back to public news for having misused his then powerful position and arm-twisting people in some really deal.

While he was earlier afforded a relatively face-saving 'early retirement' (though everyone knew better), he could be embarrassingly court-martialed to score fresh brownie points against the deposed Imran Khan dispensation (which Lt Gen Faiz Hameed is popularly believed to be identified with). Many acts of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed did suggest a rather megalomaniac, cavalier and overreaching conduct that did not behave the role of spymasters, but perhaps the personal ambition had got the better of him. As the roll of the dice played out, the narrative changed and with it, he too

was ousted. Only he is back for a possible second round of infamy and disrepute if the current dispensation has its ways. Whereas the unheeded politicians like Imran Khan who are desperately trying to save their skins and ingratiate themselves to the Pakistani 'establishment' (after realising that they are not going anywhere) have disowned and thrown Lt Gen Faiz Hameed under the proverbial bus! Instead of backing their henchman who did their bidding, Imran said, "if Faiz Hameed was involved, it should be investigated" and he welcomed the enquiry!

The whole saga says a lot about the unprofessionalism and complete absence of loyalty in overall governance, as exemplified by Lt Gen Faiz Hameed or by Imran Khan – the former was disloyal to his institution, and the latter to his word. As Israeli Michael Bar-Zohar notes in Mosaic: The Greatest Missions of the Israeli Secret Service, "Dirtiest actions should be carried out by the most honest men", perhaps former DG-ISI Faiz Hameed wasn't one and will pay the price, again.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DARKNESS BEHIND THE SILVER SCREEN

Madam — The long-awaited Justice Hema Committee report, commissioned by the Kerala government to investigate the challenges faced by women in the Malayalam film industry, has sent shockwaves through the community. The report, which was released to the media under the RTI Act five years after its submission, uncovers disturbing accounts of sexual exploitation, harassment, and mistreatment endured by women in the industry. Revealing the dark underbelly of the film world, the report underscores the truth behind what were once dismissed as mere rumors — casting couch practices, "adjustments," and compromises that are now exposed as grim realities. It's especially jarring to learn that even some of the most "popular" and "reputed" actors are implicated in these unethical practices, likely leading to the downfall of stars once idolized on the silver screen, now unmasked as villains behind the scenes. Additionally, the report highlights the dire working conditions faced by junior artists and other industry workers.

This report serves as both a wake-up call and a rallying cry, urging those within the film industry, along with the concerned ministry and stakeholders across the country, to take immediate and serious action to ensure the safety and well-being of female professionals in the industry.

M Pradyu | Kannur

A BELLWEATHER ACT

Madam — This happened in a temple in a remote village, somewhere in a remote district of MP. A temple priest wanted his temple to be a serene place, free from the constant jangle of temple bells that were hung from several places in and around the temple. He wished to be left in silence while offering his prayers and doing his daily "pooja" before the temple deity. At the same time, he did not wish to do

Ensuring safety of health workers



It's good to learn that the apex court has taken up the issue of Kolkata doctor's rape and murder case Suo Motu and formed a National Task force to examine the broader issue of doctors' safety at work places. The

failure of the hospital authorities and state as well even after the gory incident is glaringly evident, forcing the court to go to the underlying deep malaise. The hospitals and other public healthcare services are working under unsafe circumstances. The security angle of health care providers is not addressed effectively.

The junior doctors are being forced to undertake backbreaking schedules with inadequate facilities, thanks to the poor doctor patient ratio. India is not spending even two percent of its GDP. Where six percent is needed on health causing more pressure on limited resources. Apart from a stringent law against attacks on health personnel, the working conditions should be improved. Though the health and law and order are state subjects, there seems to be a need for a strong central act.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

away with the bells. They had always been a part and parcel of the temple. He struck upon an idea. He installed a call bell (sans the electrical connection) with a huge and prominent sign "Ring this bell only. Only this bell is connected to God."

People pressed it again and again to their heart's content, ignoring all the other bells of the temple. This smart gadget brought the much desired peace and calm, delighting in its wake, the priest as well as the deities. I hope that someday all our temples — noisy and crowded as they usually are — will realise the home truth that noise, even if it emanates from a temple bell or a loudspeaker, ought to be eliminated. If our gods and goddesses reside in temple idols, don't they deserve an environment that is free from noise pollution?

Avinash Godbole | Devwas

SC TURNS DOWN HC VERDICT

Madam — Calcutta HC's act in advising an adolescent girl to restrain from sexual urge and not to give in, as right-

ly observed by the SC is not only an act unbecoming of an HC judge but also a trespass into the modesty of an adolescent. On top of preaching to the victim the acquittal of the delinquent is an act of a Kangaroo court and not a High Court of the country.

Judges should understand and realise that they are guardians of constitutional morality and the way deal in the matters in their court and their verdicts should reflect this. The SC's reprimand of the Calcutta HC highlights the need for judges to uphold constitutional morality.

The HC's inappropriate advice and the acquittal of the delinquent were unjust, reflecting a failure to protect the victim's dignity. The SC's intervention rightly restored justice and reaffirmed judicial integrity.

Kudos to SC in rapping the Calcutta HC and preserving justice in the matter!!

Gopalaswamy | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The catalyst for corporate success

Ambition is an incredibly powerful force. When properly harnessed, it has the potential to unlock remarkable outcomes

In the realm of corporate success, there is a fundamental truth: the sky is not your limit, but merely the starting point. With a powerful drive and unwavering determination, ambition propels you to surpass all perceived boundaries. Just like a high-performance engine, achieving your dreams requires proper focus and direction.

Today, we all have unique goals and dreams, both in our personal lives and careers. Nevertheless, the journey from having a vision to making it a reality can be challenging and draining. It calls for unwavering dedication, relentless effort, and occasionally, the need to ignore those who doubt you. In our business environment, having a strong drive and unwavering determination is not just a cliché, but a crucial factor in setting ambitious goals and relentlessly striving for excellence. We must connect these grand aspirations to careful planning, unwavering commitment, and consistent hard work.

Only then will the aspiration reveal its magic. Many times, the biggest obstacles we face



are a result of the actions of others. There will always be those who view our dreams as unattainable or doubt our abilities. It's crucial to remember that our potentials are not defined by external voices. Throughout history, countless individuals have faced ridicule and scepticism, only to ultimately prove their doubters wrong.

The proper environment can truly make a difference in our pursuit of success. It is an environment that fosters growth by providing opportunities to use our skills and allowing for energetic and unwelcome ambition, which drives change and advancement. Surround yourself with

mentors and peers who share your vision and are there to support you on your journey. Embrace growth opportunities and always value the feedback of others to refine your approach. Equally crucial is the art of expressing our goals.

Make sure to communicate your goals and progress with both supervisors and colleagues. It's important to keep everyone in the loop and stay motivated. When you openly express your aspirations and the steps you're taking to achieve them, not only do you attract valuable encouragement, but you also establish a sense of personal responsibility. However, the

true basis of ambition stems from the constant trust within oneself.

It is important to have a strong belief in your abilities and to acknowledge the unique qualities that you bring to the table. Recognising and celebrating the small victories along your journey to greater success is crucial. Embrace challenges as chances to grow and learn. Stay resilient in the face of setbacks.

Ambition is an incredibly powerful force. When properly harnessed, it has the potential to unlock remarkable outcomes. Despite facing obstacles and encountering negativity, you will always choose to embrace a positive mindset. And getting encouragement from prominent individuals will help you hugely achieve your goals. After all, everyone deserves a chance to shine. So set the bar high, work, and let the ambition catapult you to new heights. The sky is not the limit in the corporate world; it is just the beginning of your journey toward success.

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



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



FIRST COLUMN

THAW IN INDO-MALDIVES TIES

The Maldives after a break is now trying to mend fences with India



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India's recent outreach to Maldives, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visiting the island nation, a couple of weeks back signifies a reset in the currently stressed bilateral relationship between the neighbours. After new President Mohammed Muizzu took charge, there has been a spate of anti-India voices, which has derailed decades of carefully curated strategic defence partnerships. Mr Muizzu's PNC-PPM coalition came to power last year, largely driven by India's campaign. Soon after Indian defence forces manning some critical equipment for the Maldives, were given marching orders and it seemed relations with India's nearest maritime neighbour were on a downward spiral without any checks. However, things began to change somewhere towards the beginning of this year and President Muizzu was invited to PM Modi's third swearing-in ceremony in June.

In his speech at the inauguration of the India-assisted projects to hand over water and sewerage projects across 28 islands of the Maldives President was all praise for the Indian PM. He said "The Government and people of Maldives extend our deep gratitude to Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Narendra Modi, the Government, and the friendly people of India for their generous and continued assistance to the Maldives and discuss strengthening our bilateral relations."

The speech highlighted a rethink regarding India relations and perhaps a silent acknowledgement that the Maldives needs India, to come out of financial stress. Maldives needs nearly millions of dollars in budgetary support for which the President has already reached out to China, Türkiye



and some Middle Eastern nations. However, any bailout by the lending countries has stiff collaterals attached, which could have risky consequences in future. Meanwhile India despite getting a bloodied nose, has been committed to rolling over nearly \$100 million in payments due from the Maldives, to ease off its financial burden. Maldives has also realised that beyond the India Out rhetoric, a recalibration of the bilateral in terms of economic and security ties would be a great midway for a stronger partnership with India. It was no coincidence that several critical India-assisted infrastructure projects inaugurated pre-President Muizzu's tenure were an important peg during S Jaishankar's visit to Male.

The press release issued by the ministry highlighted "EAM visited the India-assisted Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) site and jointly reviewed the progress of this flagship development project that will connect Male with the adjoining islands of Villingili, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi...EAM also visited Addu city on 11 August 2024, during which he, along with Foreign Minister and Minister of Construction and Infrastructure, jointly inaugurated the Addu Reclamation and Shore Protection Project and Addu Detour Link Bridge Project. The visit highlights the importance of Maldives, India's maritime neighbour, as a key partner in the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and India's Vision 'SAGAR' i.e. Security and Growth for All in the Region.

Maldives remains an important partner of India in maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region. "India and Maldives are dependent on each other for their respective economic, security and climate change-related issues. However, the resentment in the Maldives relationship is also a greater message to the new government in Bangladesh, which in the past has not been a great sympathiser with India's concerns. While the interim government in Bangladesh has so far maintained a moderate line of continuity on India bilateral, the political parties in power may not be too kind in future. Like many of India's neighbours, Bangladesh too is under severe economic crisis, and sooner or later the realisation would dawn that the best bet for the country is to have a good neighbour.

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

Monsoon mayhem: Tackling urban flooding



B K SINGH

There is urgent need for comprehensive disaster management and infrastructure reforms to protect lives and property from future monsoon fury



In the warming world Sea surface temperature is rising followed by excessive evaporation and deposition of moisture laden vapours in the form of clouds. When conditions are favourable, incessant rainfall occurs. Many times, half the annual rainfall occurs in 24 to 48 hours. Urban infrastructures are unable to take the challenge; flooding on roads, public places, ground floors and the basement of buildings is quite common leading to disruption of rail, road and air traffic as well as businesses. Rural areas face the brunt of the mayhem; loss of crops, landslides, and landslips in hilly terrain can claim lives and livelihoods and can throw the economy out of gear.

It can put additional stress on the budget as the public fund (taxpayers' money) has to be diverted for the reconstruction of damaged infrastructures and also for compensating the losses for the private properties. The disaster that hit Wayanad on 30th July claimed more than 400 human lives and injured an equal number has been one of the worst of its kind in living memory.

Big boulders and stones from an 8.26 ha (82600 sq meter) area on the top of the hill located at 1550 meters above the mean Sea level have rolled for 7 km on a downward slope and smashed buildings, damaged roads and bridges etc in three-four villages at 650 meters above the mean Sea level. One ton boulder has attained the energy of 9 mega Joule, which is enough to destabilize and knock down an RCC building in a rural area. Monsoon mayhem has caused damage in many other places in Western Ghats as well as in the Himalayas. Landslides and damage to roads and bridges have posed a challenge to people and tourists in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

In this column let me confine to the issues faced by metropolitan cities and make some suggestions to deal with it. The death of three civil service aspirants in the basement flooding of Rau's coaching centre in Rajendranagar Delhi last month and also another aspirant dying



MANY TIMES, HALF THE ANNUAL RAINFALL OCCURS IN 24 TO 48 HOURS. URBAN INFRASTRUCTURES ARE UNABLE TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE; FLOODING ON ROADS, PUBLIC PLACES, GROUND FLOORS AND THE BASEMENT OF BUILDINGS IS QUITE COMMON LEADING TO DISRUPTION OF RAIL, ROAD AND AIR TRAFFIC AS WELL AS BUSINESSES

of electrocution are chilling reminders of the apathy of the civic body. We must know the precautions that must be undertaken by the agencies and the building occupants to make sure that such incidents are not repeated. Civic Body of Mumbai had earlier designed stormwater drains and related infrastructure to take care of 25 mm of rain in an hour.

Severe flooding repeatedly occurring during the past several years has forced them to remodel their drainage system to take care of more intense rains up to 50 mm per hour. However, in places like Mumbai, Ratnagiri, Satara, Mahabaleshwar and many other locations 80 to 100 mm of rain per hour has been recorded. Similarly, places in some other regions of the country are also experiencing frequent cloud bursts resulting in 80 to 100 mm of rainfall per hour for three to four hours. Wayanad tragedy was the result of 570 mm of rain in 48 hours.

All Civic authorities in cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Gurugram etc should remodel the drainage system to take care of at least 100 mm of rain per hour. The encroachments on storm water drains as well as on lake beds should be removed.

Further, the drains should be regularly de-silted and cleaned up so that plastics, polythene bags silts etc are removed and disposed of at far-off places. The lakes in the cities are balancing reservoirs where the water level should be regulated by opening the sluice gates. De-weeding and de-siltation of lakes are also required to be done periodically to ensure that the water reservoirs are kept clean up to maximum flood level. All the inlets of the lakes are

monitored to ensure that none carry untreated sewage into them. There is the possibility that lake water may enter people's houses at the time of flash floods; it must be ensured that sewage water does not enter houses. Stormwater drains in metropolitan cities are often found partly encroached and occupied for living by erecting small huts. Such occupants must be rehabilitated elsewhere and drains must be fully opened for flow of water. Let us not forget that the existing stormwater drain is insufficient to take the load of more than 25 mm of rainfall per hour.

Beds of many urban lakes have also been encroached. Lake beds up to high flood levels are meant for storage of water. The reduction in volume for storage indicates that the water flows in the basement and ground floor of the buildings, causing undue hardship for the people. Incessant rains in November 2015 (approximately 483 mm in 24 hours) led to one of the biggest catastrophes in Chennai. 500 people were killed and nearly 10 lakh houses were submerged resulting in the displacement of 1.8 million people. Two reasons were attributed to the disaster.

One was the encroachments on lake beds in Chennai and the other was the delay in regulating the water level in the Chembaram Bakkam reservoir. The situation came under control only when 1.5 lakh cusecs water from this reservoir was released into the Adiyar river.

Many wetlands in Chennai have been occupied by communities. Pallikarnai wetland used to have an extent of over 5000 ha has shrunk to 10% and only 500 ha is remaining as wetland at present. Unless the encroachments are cleared, we are likely to face

a similar tragedy in future. Civic bodies while working on drainage systems for stormwater as well as sewer lines must take enough precautions and keep the drains and man-hole covered, so that no person accidentally falls into them and perishes.

When the road is flooded and becomes a flowing river, uncovered drains and sewer lines cannot be identified by people wading through. People in Mumbai, Delhi, Gurugram and many other metropolitan cities find flood water trapped in the basements of their houses. Often they resort to pumping it out, which requires time and energy. It is advisable to construct a sump underneath so that the rainwater can be effectively harvested and later used for various purposes.

If the basement is kept clean, then flood water collected would be of drinkable quality. Several Civic Bodies mandate water harvesting structures along with new constructions while approving Plans. At the implementation stage, however, such structures generally take care of harvesting water from the rooftop and ignore basements, prone to flooding during cloud bursts.

Water harvesting for basements should be made compulsory and must be seriously implemented. Building by-laws if necessary be amended by respective civic agencies to make sure that the basement of the buildings is used for parking vehicles, storing unserviceable items and water harvesting/ storage only. In no circumstances should people be permitted to use it for housing, hotels and businesses.

(The writer is retired principal chief conservator of forests, Head of forest force, Karnataka; views are personal)

Prime Minister Modi's Ukraine visit: A strategic balancing act

PM's visit underscores India's evolving role on the world stage, where it seeks to navigate complex alliances and assert its national interests

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kyiv marks a significant moment in international diplomacy, reflecting India's strategic balancing act between Russia and the West amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. As the first leader from a nation that maintains strong relations with both Russia and Western countries, Modi's visit sends a nuanced message to global powers, particularly Russia.



AKHILESH SUMAN

comes at a critical time, coinciding with Ukraine's recent military successes against Russian forces, adding weight to the message Modi intends to deliver.

India's historical relationship with Ukraine has been far from warm, yet the scale of suffering in Ukraine has stirred sympathy within India. This sentiment is reflected in Modi's earlier statements, emphasizing that this is not an era of war

and advocating for peaceful resolutions. Despite this, India has refrained from condemning Russia's actions, continuing to purchase oil from Moscow, which has been crucial for Russia during the conflict.

However, Russia's increasingly close ties with China have become a point of concern for India, particularly regarding China's aggressive behavior along the Indian border. The 2020 Galwan Valley clash and subsequent military tensions have strained India-China relations, making Russia's perceived indifference to India's security concerns troubling. The frequent meetings between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping have heightened these concerns,

prompting India to reassess its foreign policy strategy.

Modi's visit to Ukraine can be seen as a diplomatic effort to subtly pressure Russia into reconsidering its relationship with China. By engaging with Ukraine, India signals to Moscow that its close ties with Beijing cannot be taken for granted without potential consequences. Historically, India has enjoyed a strong relationship with Russia, especially in defense, but the evolving geopolitical landscape requires India to prioritize its national interests.

Modi's visit also underscores India's independent foreign policy, a principle that has guided the country since the Cold War era. India has long prided itself on its non-aligned stance, making decisions based



on strategic interests rather than aligning with any particular bloc. This approach remains relevant in the 21st century, as India navigates the complexities of global politics. India's refusal to outright condemn Russia at the United Nations has caused friction with Western capitals. However, Modi's visit to Ukraine demonstrates that India's neutrality does not imply inaction or tacit approval of Russian aggression.

Instead, it reflects a nuanced approach, balancing relationships and interests while encouraging Russia to reconsider its military strategy.

As India seeks to strengthen its ties with Western nations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region where China's assertiveness is a growing concern, Modi's visit to Ukraine reaffirms India's commitment to a multipolar world. India values its strategic autonomy, making decisions based on its national interests—a stance that has occasionally drawn criticism from its allies.

Another important aspect of Modi's visit is India's interest in contributing to Ukraine's reconstruction efforts. The war has left Ukraine in ruins, and India sees an opportunity to play a role in its rebuild-

ing process. This involvement would not only be a humanitarian gesture but also a strategic investment that could benefit the Indian economy. India has already provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and Modi's visit could pave the way for more substantial support, including infrastructure projects and logistical assistance, which would also benefit related Indian industries.

Furthermore, India's involvement in Ukraine's reconstruction could serve as a counter-balance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By offering an alternative model of development cooperation that respects the sovereignty of partner countries, India positions itself as a more favorable partner for nations in need. This approach aligns with

India's broader goal of positioning itself as a global leader and a moral force in international diplomacy.

As the world closely watches Modi's visit to Ukraine, the potential outcomes could have far-reaching implications for global power dynamics. Should Modi's diplomacy contribute to a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, India could emerge as a significant peacemaker and problem solver on the world stage. This would enhance India's reputation as a nation capable of navigating complex geopolitical landscapes while maintaining its principles and strategic autonomy.

(The writer is a senior journalist who has been covering foreign affairs for many years; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Govt announces simplified norms for seaplane operations

The civil aviation ministry on Thursday announced simplified regulations for seaplane operations, including allowing non-scheduled entities to operate such services and putting in place a simplified certificate process. The relaxed norms are aimed at encouraging seaplane operations under the regional air connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik). Generally, seaplanes are amphibian aircraft that can take off and land on the sea. Under the relaxed norms of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), there will be no need for a waterborne license and compliance requirements have also been reduced. Waterdromes are for landing and take off of seaplanes. The revised regulations have been carefully planned and prepared after extensive consultations, said Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu.



Wipro Hydraulics opens Rs 250 cr facility in Jaipur

Wipro Hydraulics on Thursday inaugurated its sixth manufacturing facility in Jaipur, Rajasthan, built with an investment of about Rs 250 crore. The plant was inaugurated by Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, Wipro Enterprises chairman Azim Premji and Pratik Kumar -- Wipro Infrastructure Engineering CEO and Wipro Enterprises MD. "The company has invested approximately Rs 250 crore to set up this facility, which is projected to generate about 400 jobs. We currently have a manufacturing capacity of 1,000 hydraulic cylinders per day, and we are fully capable of doubling it if and when the demand rises," Kumar told reporters here. This is Wipro's sixth facility in India, after two units in Chennai and Hindupur each and one unit in Bengaluru, he said, adding it will cater to domestic and international demand.



Gold remains flat at Rs 74,150/10g for 2nd day

Gold traded flat at Rs 74,150 per 10 grams for the second day in a row in the national capital on Thursday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. However, silver prices firmed up Rs 200 to Rs 87,200 per kg against Rs 87,000 per kg in the previous close on Wednesday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also remained flat at Rs 73,800 per 10 grams for the second day. Internationally, Comex gold traded at USD 2,537.80 per ounce, down by USD 9.70 while silver quoted marginally down at USD 29.94 per ounce in the global markets. Bullion market traders seem cautious ahead of US Federal Reserve Jerome Powell's speech at the Jackson Hole symposium, experts said. Even Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting minutes released on Wednesday have influenced the purchasing pattern among traders. The FOMC meeting minutes said that the recent progress on inflation and surge in unemployment is providing room for 25 basis point rate cuts in the next policy meeting.

Not against e-commerce firms, want them to be fair and honest: Goyal

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that India is not against e-commerce companies but wants them to be fair and honest. In remarks that came a day after he flagged concerns about e-commerce firms, Goyal said online businesses need to ensure a "fair chance" of competing.

Goyal on Wednesday voiced concerns about predatory pricing by e-commerce firms and feared about the impact their operations have on small retailers in the country. He also went public with his fears, warning of the "huge social disruption" with the massive growth of the e-commerce sector. "We are very clear that we

want to invite FDI (foreign direct investment), we want to invite technology, we want to have the best of the world, and we are not against online at all," Goyal said at an event here.

"What the country always desires is fair play, is honesty" for the customer, honesty to the supplier of goods and services and to ensure that other people also have a fair chance to compete against such online business," the Union minister, a member of Parliament from the Mumbai North constituency, said.

He said the e-commerce sector possesses "tremendous benefits" like speed and convenience, and made it clear that the government wants such companies to serve the people of the country.



India set to achieve 6.5-7% growth, says Finmin report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic momentum remains intact despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, and real GDP growth of 6.5-7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey seems appropriate, a finance ministry report said on Thursday.

According to the Monthly Economic Review for July, the Indian economy has sustained its momentum in the first four months of FY25.

Goods and Services Tax collections in the first four months of FY25 underwent a level shift pushed up by the widening of the tax base and heightened economic activity, the report released by the finance ministry said.

"The resilience of domestic activity is also reflected in the strong performance of the manufacturing and services sector purchasing managers' indices. The manufacturing growth has been driven by expansion in demand conditions, a rise in new export orders and growth in output prices," it said.

On the fiscal front, it said,



The resilience of domestic activity is also reflected in the strong performance of the manufacturing and services sector purchasing managers' indices

the Union Budget FY25 has laid out a glide path of fiscal consolidation. Supported by strong revenue collection, discipline in revenue expenditure, and robust economic performance, the fiscal deficit is projected to decline.

At the same time, it said, capital expenditure is maintained at high levels, supporting the fledgling private investment cycle.

Retail inflation decreased to 3.5 per cent in July 2024, the lowest since September 2019,

driven by moderation in food inflation, it said, adding that steady progress in the southwest monsoon has supported kharif sowing.

Replenishing water levels in the reservoir bodies well for the current kharif and upcoming rabi crop production and this will further aid in reducing food inflation in the coming months, it said.

"On balance, India's economic momentum remains intact. Despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, reservoirs

have been replenished. Manufacturing and services sectors are expanding, according to the Purchasing Managers' indices," it said.

Tax collections, especially indirect taxes, which reflect transactions, are growing healthily, and so is bank credit, it said.

"Inflation is moderating, and exports of both goods and services are doing better than they did last year. Stock markets are holding on to their levels.

BSE, NSE impose Rs 10.73 lakh fine on Hindustan Zinc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) on Thursday said BSE and NSE have imposed a fine of Rs 5.37 lakh each on the company for non-compliance with Sebi regulation relating to number of independent directors on board.

The company said it is making constant efforts and follow-ups are being made with the mines ministry to meet the compliance requirements.

"The company has received a notice issued by BSE and NSE dated August 21, 2024, levying fine for non-compliance with Regulation 17(1) of the SEBI Listing Regulations, w.r.t the Composition of Board of Directors relating to number of independent directors," it said in a filing.

Further, the requirement of the woman independent director on the company's board has already been ful-

Sensex gains 147pts, Nifty ends above 24,800

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 147 points to settle above 81,000 level while Nifty closed above 24,800 following buying in commodity, telecom and consumer stocks amid a firm trend in global markets.

Rising for the third straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 147.89 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 81,053.19, registering gains for the third day in a row. During the day, it climbed 331.15 points to hit an intra-day high of 81,236.45.

Extending gains to a sixth session in a row, the NSE Nifty went up by 41.30 points or 0.17 per cent to end at a two-week high of 24,811.50.

Bharti Airtel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 1.63 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Titan, Asian Paints and Ultratech Cements.



On the other hand, M&M, NTPC, Tata Motors, TCS and PowerGrid were the major losers.

"The domestic market witnessed modest gains owing to the positive global sentiments. Particularly, the recent signs of weakness in the US non-farm payroll data have strengthened the case for potential interest rate cuts in September," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial

Services said. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.47 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.67 per cent. "Markets are closely monitoring global indices for direction, and the recent pause in US markets ahead of the Jackson Hole Symposium is leading to some caution locally also," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

Centre urges states to adopt new tech initiatives for better farm data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi on Thursday urged states to swiftly adopt and implement new technology-driven initiatives to improve farm production estimates and enhance data accuracy.

Addressing a national conference here, Chaturvedi emphasised the need for continuous collaboration between the central and state governments to enhance the quality of agricultural statistics, an official statement said.

The new initiatives include the Digital Crop Survey, Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES), and the revamped FASAL (Forecasting Agricultural Output using Space, Agro-meteorology, and Land-based Observations) programme.

The Digital Crop Survey is designed to provide plot-level data with geotagged areas of crops, serving as a single source of truth for accurate crop area estimation.

DGCES aims to calculate yield based on scientifically designed Crop Cutting Experiments for all major crops across the country.

The revamped FASAL programme leverages remote sensing technology to generate accurate crop maps and area estimation for 10 major crops.

The conference also highlighted the UPAG Portal, which allows for cross-verification of data from multiple sources, ensuring robust agricultural statistics.

The agriculture ministry said these initiatives are expected to provide near real-time and reliable data directly from the field, enabling more precise estimations of crop production.

The agriculture department is collaborating with various institutions, including the Space Application Centre and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, to develop yield forecast models.

Additionally, the department is working with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation to increase the supervision of crop-cutting experiments by the National Sample Survey Office.

The conference concluded with a consensus on the importance of these reforms and a commitment from all states to strengthen the agricultural statistical framework.



We need to develop our own infrastructure: Joshi

PNS ■ BENGALURU

India is blessed with talent, manpower and potential, so we need to go forward and make more in India, Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

Joshi was in Bengaluru to lay the foundation stone for an Electric Vehicle (EV) testing facility at the National Test House (NTH) here.

"Technology upgrade is a must. We need to develop our own systems, our own infrastructure. Towards this goal, the first EV battery testing facility will be opened in my home state," Joshi said, speaking at the launch event.

According to him, every



decision made by the Narendra Modi government is interconnected and is a step towards 'atma nirbharta' (self reliance).

"For instance, we plan to have 30 per cent EV vehicles on Indian roads by 2030. But we also want the power used for electric vehicles to be renewable, so we are promot-

ing solar power in a big way. We are pushing for installing 1 crore households with free solar setup, so that we have access to renewable power," Joshi said.

He also urged the NTH to diversify its testing capacity by training more people and putting in place more facilities like the EV testing one.

NTH, which has been at the forefront of testing and quality assurance in various fields, operates under the Department of Consumer Affairs.

"The government will provide all the support it needs to achieve this goal. Already NTH has bagged some of the prestigious projects in India, like Central Vista and Metro Rail.

GoM on GST discusses reducing taxes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ministerial panel on GST rate rationalisation on Thursday broadly converged towards retaining a 4-tier slab structure and asked the committee of tax officers to analyse the implication of tinkering rates on some items and present it before the GST council. The issue of GST on health and life insurance was also raised by some states in the meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation and referred to the fitment committee, comprising central and state tax officers, for further data analysis.

The suggestions of the GoM will be taken up on

RBI BY GUVSWAMINATHAN TO LENDERS

Adopt more supportive approach towards MSMEs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Swaminathan J has asked financial institutions to adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards MSMEs, and deploy supportive measures like restructuring options for loans, to support the sector which plays a key role in the economy.

In a speech at the Annual Day of the Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDAI) here, the deputy governor said MSMEs face challenges like access to affordable finance, delayed payments, infrastructure bottlenecks, and requirements of compliance, among others.

The journey of India's economic transformation cannot be complete without the robust development of the MSME sector.

"MSMEs are not just the backbone of our economy, they are the engines of growth, innovation, and employment," he said at the event held on Wednesday.

However, for these enterprises to truly thrive and scale up, the financial sector must step up with innovative solutions, sensitivity, and a forward-looking approach, Swaminathan said.

"This is not just about providing credit; it's about enabling these enterprises compete globally, drive exports,



and contribute to the nation's goal of becoming a developed economy by

2047. While financial instruments and support mechanisms are crucial, the way we engage with the MSME sector, our sensitivity to their challenges and our commitment to their success, will ultimately determine the strength and sustainability of this partnership," he said.

The deputy governor also emphasised that considering the key role that MSMEs play in the economy, the financial sector should adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards them.

"While financial discipline is crucial, the unique challenges faced by MSMEs, such as low capital base, lack of scale, cash flow constraints from

delayed payments, fluctuating market conditions, and external economic pressures, necessitate a more nuanced approach to assessment as well as follow-up," he said.

While timely repayment of dues is crucial to maintain the health of the financial system, financial institutions should focus on deploying supportive measures such as restructuring options, grace periods, and tailored repayment plans that give MSMEs the breathing space they need to recover and get back on track while encountering difficult situations, the senior official said at the event attended by representatives of financial sector, among others.



Sumukhi turns dialogue writer for CTRL

Talent knows no boundaries! Ace stand-up comedian and actor Sumukhi Suresh is all set to embark on a new chapter in her illustrious career. The multi-talented star has officially joined the writing team for Vikramaditya Motwani's next directorial venture as a dialogue writer for the upcoming feature film titled *CTRL*, a thrilling sci-fi film starring Ananya Pandey and Vihaan Samat. After making waves in India and abroad with her comedy, Sumukhi Suresh is now all set to make waves as a writer.

CTRL is a cutting-edge thriller on our rising dependency on technology and explores the complex relationship between a popular influencer couple, Nella Awasthi (Ananya Pandey) and Joe Mascarenhas (Vihaan Samat).

Sumukhi Suresh, a writer, actor, comedian and entrepreneur, had a gut feeling that she would be working with the visionary director Vikramaditya Motwane within five years. Little did she know that her prediction would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. "It was a moment of sheer audacity," Sumukhi recalls with a laugh. "I approached Vikramaditya at the iReal Awards in 2018, introduced myself and confidently declared that we would work together in the next five years. To my surprise, he simply replied, 'Cool,' in his classic style. Fast-forward to 2022; I got a call from him to write dialogue for his next film written by him and Avinash Sampath and the rest is history!"

"CTRL is nothing like the other work I have done. It's a thriller... a sci-fi. So, as a writer, I was very excited to try my hand at it. It will be one of my first works that my brothers will finally watch! I am really excited about this project," says Sumukhi. As the project unfolds, fans eagerly await the release of more details about the film. The movie is all set to release on the OTT platform Netflix on October 4.



RANI MUKHERJI'S MARDANI UP FOR THIRD CHAPTER!

As *Mardaani* turned a decade old in Hindi cinema on Thursday, the makers of the film teased the next chapter of the Rani Mukherji-starrer while celebrating the milestone.

The Yash Raj Films banner took to YouTube, where they dropped a teaser of sorts, which begins with the first installment, which was first released in 2014. The teaser shows moments from the first film and then switches to *Mardaani 2*, which hits the big screen in 2019. It showcased highlights from the second installment and some iconic dialogue.

The production company captioned it: "10 years of #Mardaani and the next chapter awaits... Celebrating the feisty, daredevil cop #ShivaniShivajiRoy and the spirit of #Mardaani today. Thank you for a decade of love and appreciation for our beloved franchise. We are inspired... again... thanks to you. #RaniMukherji #10YearsOfMardaani."

According to sources close to the development, Rani Mukherji is all set to start shooting for *Mardaani 3* from the first quarter of 2025. The franchise is dear to both Rani and Aditya Chopra." Rani was last seen in the film *Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway*. Directed by Ashima Chibber, the legal drama also starred Anirban Bhattacharya, Neena Gupta and Jim Sarbh. *Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway* was inspired by the real-life story of an Indian couple, Anurup Bhattacharya and Sagarika Chakraborty, whose children were taken away by Norwegian authorities in 2011. Rani was seen portraying the role of Sagarika, who fought with authorities and society to bring her children back to India.



Lionsgate apologises for wrongly quoting movie critics in Megalopolis trailer

Lionsgate is pulling back its latest trailer for Francis Ford Coppola's *Grand Megalopolis*, which featured numerous made-up reviews from well-known movie critics. The producers apologised for incorrectly crediting quotes to film critics in the trailer, as per reports. "Lionsgate is immediately recalling our trailer for *Megalopolis*," a Lionsgate spokesperson said in a statement. The spokesperson was quoted saying, "We offer our sincere apologies to the critics involved and to Francis Ford Coppola and American Zoetrope for this inexcusable error in our vetting process. We screwed up. We are sorry." The trailer, unveiled Wednesday morning, sought to present Coppola's newest film as a timeless masterpiece, much like his previous works, *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*. The video included several criticisms from reviewers of Coppola's past projects, but quotations from individuals like Roger Ebert and Pauline Kael could not be found in their reviews. Variety's Owen Gleiberman was incorrectly stated to have described the 1992 film Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as "a glorious disaster" and placed emphasis on its "absurdity" in his review for Entertainment Weekly, where he was employed at the time of the movie's premiere.

Vihaan stars as Ananya Pandey's hubby in Call Me Bae

Actor Vihaan Samat is quite a popular name in the OTT space. While his impressive performance in *Mismatched* got him great acclaim, his upcoming role in *Call Me Bae* is sure to put him in a different league. At the trailer launch, Vihaan left the media impressed with his mature outlook towards his craft.

When asked about his take on typecasting on OTT and standing out in multi-starrer shows, he said, "On typecasting, I think it's my effort to always play things that challenge me a little bit and maybe even scare me a little bit. As I said, this is something I've not done before. I've never played a character who's so confident, self-assured, brash and sometimes even a bit narcissistic. So that excited me."

Commenting on standing out in the show, he said, "In terms of standing out in a huge cast, that was never really my main focus. I think my thing was that I'm an actor. I want to go on and do my job as best I can. The reality and the truth will come through. It will connect with people if I'm doing my job well. And if I haven't stood out, then maybe I need to do my job better and just connect more deeply with the character." Vihaan Samat will be seen playing Ananya Pandey's husband in *Call Me Bae*, which will stream on Amazon Prime on September 6.



Jennifer and John Split after Ben Affleck's influence

It has been four months since Jennifer Garner and her boyfriend, John Miller, were last seen together. According to reports, the couple is on a break because their six-year relationship is being affected by Ben Affleck.

As per a source, Jennifer, aged 52, and John, aged 46, "have taken some time apart." The insider suggests that the timing of their deteriorating six-year relationship coinciding with Jen's ex-husband leaning on her more during his breakup with Jennifer Lopez was not a coincidence.

J Lo officially submitted divorce papers on Wednesday, August 20, citing their separation date as April 26th from Ben.

Unlike the *Marry Me* actor, who was mostly on the East Coast over the summer, Ben has been in Los Angeles, where he was seen spending time with his ex-wife, with whom he shares three children.

"Jen's had so much going on with Ben; it just took a toll," the source said, adding that "she and John ended up going their separate ways. It wasn't her choice."

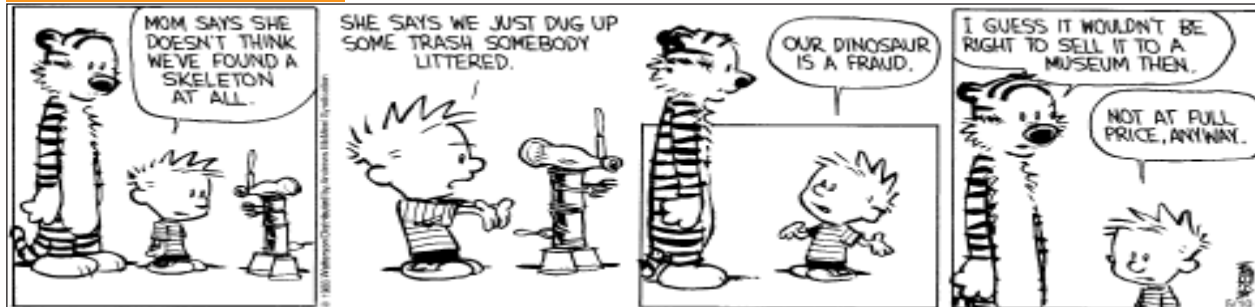


FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



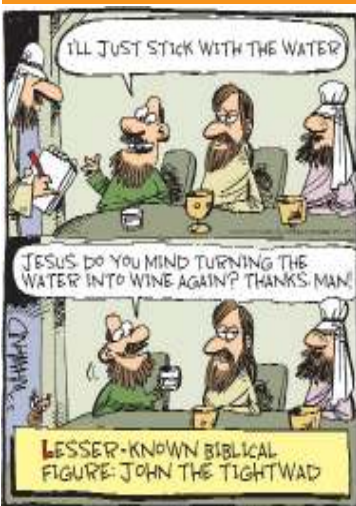
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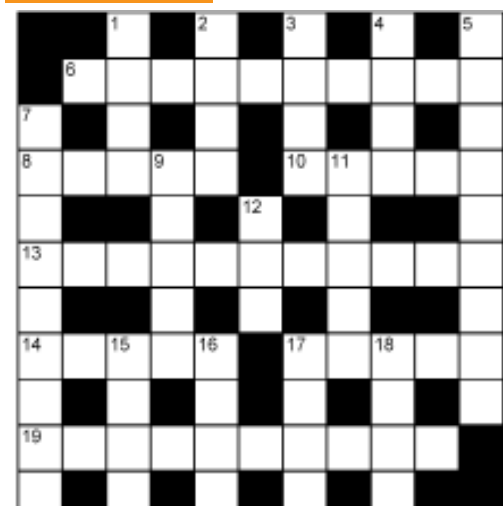
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



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Yesterday's solution

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

ACROSS

- 6 A flying machine
- 8 Light a fire with this
- 10 Our planet
- 13 In a coma
- 14 A feeling of rage
- 17 Less
- 19 Carrying on

DOWN

- 1 Remaining
- 2 Wealthy
- 3 Sleep lightly
- 4 Mix with a spoon
- 5 A large group of musicians
- 7 An emergency vehicle
- 9 Nearby



TRAVELOGUE

NAGMA MIRAJKAR'S MAGICAL EVENING ON THE PARISIAN STREETS

Nagma Mirajkar had the best of her times while on her trip to the beauty of Paris, exploring its culture, streets and everything else. We have the popular influencer on-board for our special Travelogue segment as she takes us through her voyage

TEJAL SINHA

Tired of your work, as you close your eyes, you envision a world where the desire to travel merges you into a wanderer. What's the best way to rejuvenate from a hectic schedule by exploring new cities, meeting new people and knowing different cultures and traditions? Well, that's how it's been for Nagma Mirajkar, who loves it when she jets off across a country as she gets to discover and explore new horizons, perspectives and cultures. "Travel inspires me to be more of me and be more creative," begins the social media star while in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, as she was much more keen than us to discuss her love for travel! While travelling, she certainly tries to capture and document as much as she can because, again, she's someone who loves to go back in time and relive beautiful moments.

Her latest trip was to none other than the French capital, Paris. "Paris was incredible! It's the city I always enjoy re-visiting, and being there during the Olympics made it even more special. Every time I visit the city, I'm amazed at its beauty and people," shares Nagma, who was all thrilled and proud to be in Paris for the Olympics. "It was amazing to see people from all over the world coming together in harmony in such a beautiful city." But what really stood out to her was watching the Indian team at the Olympic Opening Ceremony. The energy, she recalls, was incredible and the views were breathtaking. "I could have never been more proud of representing India," she says with utmost zing.

In Paris, she recalls how people are elegantly dressed, even if it's something basic but always stylish. Talking of keeping up with her fashion game on this trip, the beauty and fashion influencer shares, "I tried to keep up with the Parisian vibe by wearing chic outfits that mixed classic and modern styles. I picked up some chic tops and paired them with cute skirts and otherwise I kept it simple but elegant for the Olympics." Apart from being at the Olympics, just as her 'gram' posts hint at, she got to explore Paris' rich culture by visiting museums, historic sites and enjoying local art. "I also talked to locals, which helped me understand their culture better," she enthuses and she also goes on to share how she explored famous spots like the Louvre and Notre-Dame and tried delicious French food like croissants and macaroons! "The food in Paris was amazing; the desserts are to die for and I enjoyed every meal." We get it, Nagma, we get it!

For this trip, she chose to stay at an Airbnb property. Speaking of her experience at the property, with much exhilaration, she shares, "It was chic yet minimal and cozy, with a blend of modern and classic Parisian design. It felt like a mini vacation every time I came back after a day of exploring." In fact, this trip was more than a liberating experience for her because "their desserts are top-tier! I changed my workout plan the minute my Paris plan was confirmed so that I could eat all the desserts I wanted. They also have amazing bakeries and my go-to is their baguettes and croissants."

Since the trip was brief, she took in the famous sights of Paris from a distance, enjoyed the local cuisine, went shopping and strolled through the picturesque streets, embracing the charm and culture of the city. Apart from this, her trip to Rajasthan was one of those trips that she cherishes, as she was completely blown away by its beauty and cultural richness. "The experience was unlike anything I've encountered outside of India. The hospitality was exceptionally warm and the vibrant festivities, particularly in the Golden City and its mesmerising desert, made for an unforgettable and truly unique journey."

We could completely relate to her as she spoke of her go-to place for relaxation and we are sure you would too, because it's none other than her home. "Since I'm always travelling, just being able to be with my family and Pookie at home relaxes and makes me content."

There's always something bad happening behind the good. While she's always had a great time in all her travels, there was also a frightening experience she had been through. "Once, my bag was lost in a foreign city at night. It was a bit scary, but I managed to find my way back and it turned into an adventure I'll never forget."

So where is Nagma heading next? Well, it's Korea on her travel list. "I'm excited to dive into the world of K-Beauty, especially its renowned skincare products. I'm also eager to explore the vibrant fashion scene and can't wait to indulge in some serious shopping while I'm there," signs off the travel-bee on a concluding note!



Banking spreadsheets to mastering scripts

AARTI SREENATH

In the world of Bollywood, where dreams often shimmer as elusively as stars, few dare to leap into the unknown. Jitin Gulati, a former banker, traded in his spreadsheets for scripts. Jitin's journey from the corridors of finance to the dazzling sets of Bollywood is a tale of passion, persistence and an unwavering belief in the magic of cinema. With each role, he's rewriting his own story, one that proves it's never too late to follow your dreams.

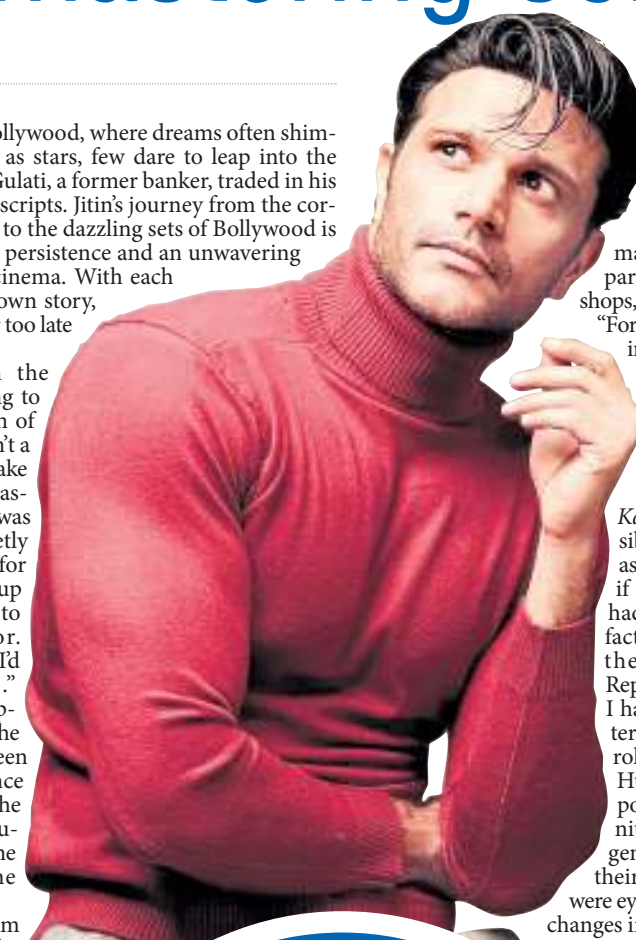
Transitioning from the secure world of banking to the unpredictable realm of modeling and acting isn't a decision many would make lightly. But for him, it wasn't just a sudden leap; it was a calling that had quietly simmered within him for years. "I didn't wake up one day and decide to become an actor. Somewhere deep down, I'd always wanted this." Growing up, he was captivated by the magic of the silver screen and had been performing on stage since childhood. Each choice he made was subtly influenced by the dream of one day stepping into the world of acting.

However, coming from a middle-class background, pursuing such a dream was far from easy. "My father served in the Indian Navy and my mother was a teacher. Our background was worlds apart from the glitz and glamour of Mumbai," he explains. Yet, with unwavering determination, *The Warning 3D* fame began taking small, deliberate steps toward his goal. While working in the banking sector for nine years, he wasn't just crunching numbers; he was also honing his skills in theatre and dance, quietly preparing for the day he'd move to Mumbai.

His breakthrough came when his banking job made him relocate to Mumbai, a chance he grabbed with both hands. Reflecting on this transition, he acknowledges, "Yes, banking is stable and this industry is not. But if you love something, stability is just a matter of perspective. The discipline I learned in finance, especially compliance, is what I've carried with me, but otherwise, these two worlds couldn't be more different."

"I never considered myself a model-turned-actor," he clarifies. "The idea behind doing all those commercials was to learn the technique of acting and to get as comfortable as possible with the camera."

His acting debut was a pivotal moment in his career. "It was a dream come true," he recalls with emotion. "For someone who grew up in Faridabad, dreaming of the big screen and seeing myself up there was surreal." Working with industry veterans like Anubhav Sinha, Gurmeet Singh and Sandhya Mridul, who was then a casting director, was a learning experience unlike any other. "Every role, no matter how small or big, teaches you something. Acting might seem easy from the outside, but there are countless nuances that you only understand once you're in it. That first role paved the way for me to become a better actor, and I'll always be thankful



Actor Jitin Gulati, who has created a niche from being a banker to an actor, speaks to *The Pioneer* about his humble beginnings, getting onboarded into popular productions and more

for that opportunity?"

The *Broken But Beautiful* fame career is marked by a variety of challenging roles, from playing a cricketer in *MS Dhoni: The Untold Story* to a transgender character in *Kaala*. Despite not being formally trained in acting, Jitin has participated in numerous workshops, learning from each experience. "For me, it's about fully understanding the character I'm portraying. Whether it's wearing heels for a transgender role or mastering a British accent, I dive deep into what makes the character tick."

When asked about his role in *Kaala*, he admits it was a responsibility he didn't take lightly. "I asked my director, Bijoy Nambiar, if people from the community had been tested for the role. The fact that I got it made me realise the responsibility I had. Representation matters and I knew I had to do justice to this character." To bring authenticity to the role, he met the head of the Humsafar Trust, an agency supporting the LGBTQIA+ community and spent time with transgender individuals, listening to their stories. "Those conversations were eye-opening and even led to some changes in the script. The character was an army guy who eventually realises he's a woman trapped in a man's body. It was crucial to portray the journey authentically, without revealing too much too soon."

He found inspiration in Caitlyn Jenner's life, drawing parallels between her experience as a gold medal-winning Olympian and his character's journey. "Once I had a reference point, I could work on the body language, the accent and the overall arc of the character. It was a lot of reading, research, and writing—making sure I didn't make a fool of myself," he laughs.

Being part of productions like *MS Dhoni: The Untold Story* and *24* significantly influenced his career. "As an actor, you learn a lot from big-scale projects like these. *MS Dhoni* was a global icon and *24* had massive stars in it. My biggest takeaway was learning how to maintain your craft on big sets." Even though some projects didn't perform well at the box office, they still opened doors for him. "People still recognise me from *Dhoni*, even if it was a smaller role. It led to better opportunities and that's what matters."

With the rise of OTT platforms, his career has seen a new wave of success through web series like *Inside Edge* and *Bambai Meri Jaan*. However, when it comes to choosing roles, he relies on instinct rather than platforms. "OTT is a boon. I'm calling myself an actor today because of OTT," he says gratefully. "But the choice of roles is never about the medium; it's about what calls out to you and where you want to go in your career."

Looking ahead, he is excited to explore different genres, especially drama and romance. "I've done a lot of dark, dramatic parts. I'd love to try my hand at romance next," he shares. As for directors he aspires to work with, names like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Zoya Akhtar, Neeraj Ghaywan, Arun Dhawan and Randeep Jha top his list. "Working with Mr. Bhansali is a dream for any actor," he gleefully signs off on a concluding note.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY SKIN DURING MONSOON TRAVELS

Rainy season feels enjoyable to many, but has serious implications on our skin. The high temperature, humidity and moisture in the atmosphere during such times highly affects the skin as it becomes an ideal place for fungal and bacterial growth. Skin gets more predisposed to acne and breakouts. So taking extra care of your skin in such a weather condition is quintessential, especially while traveling.

Skincare tips during monsoon travel

1. Prefer loose and breathable clothing - Skin infections happen when skin gets damp or sweat accumulates. So while traveling in the monsoon, prefer loose clothing especially made of cotton or any other breathable fabric.

2. Have a wholesome diet - For healthy looking skin while traveling, carry a snack box with mixed nuts and berries or fresh fruits. Berries and fresh fruits such as apple, banana, oranges etc. are high in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants while seeds give essential fatty acids, all needed for a healthy and glowy skin.

3. Have adequate water intake - To keep skin youthful and hydrated, never skip water while traveling. Keep a water bottle handy and keep on sipping water to flush out the body toxins and not giving a dull appearance. You can also relish coconut water to beat the heat.

4. Keep your body dry - When you are traveling in the monsoons, always carry an umbrella and waterproof clothing as well as shoes. Rainwater, if directly exposed to the skin, is harmful due to its acidic nature and environmen-

tal pollutants in it. Try avoiding direct exposure to rain water. If you get wet in the rain, take a shower immediately or pat yourself dry with a soft and dry towel.



5. Always carry and apply anti fungal powders - All those areas of the skin that remain damp such as the groin area, armpits or space between your fingers and toes are more prone to fungal infections during the hot and humid weather of monsoons. Try to keep such areas dry as much as possible and prefer application of antifungal powders. They have the tendency to absorb extra moisture and prevent skin infections.

6. Follow patterned ritual of cleansing, moisturisation and SPF protection - Three practices

should remain constant in your skincare routine - Cleansing, hydration and sunscreen protection. Make use of a gently non-oily cleanser to remove dirt, impurities and extra sebum from the skin. After face cleansing, apply a non-oily moisturizer for skin hydration and layer it up with a broad spectrum sunscreen of at least 30 SPF. If you spend a lot of time outdoors, reapply sunscreen every 2-3 hours.

7. Use light makeup products - Practice extra caution with your skin while traveling in the monsoons and use lightweight, non greasy, waterproof, non comedogenic and breathable makeup products. If you use extra heavy products, they have the ability to clog the pores of the skin resulting in more breakouts.

8. Deep cleansing at least twice a week - In order to take extra care of your skin, opt for deep cleansing treatment for your face such as medi facials that use the technique of cleansing, exfoliation and hydration on your face to nurture it. The use of dermatologically proven ingredients to treat the skin, keeping pores clean should be performed at least once or twice a month under an expert supervision.

Bottom line

Your skin demands your special attention during the monsoon. So be extra vigilant and follow a proper routine, especially while traveling for a youthful, glowy and shiny skin.

(The author, Dr. Neha Saraswat Kalra, is a Senior Aesthetic Consultant, PGDCC, PGDMT, at Kosmoderma.)

LORD'S TO HOST ITS FIRST-EVER WOMEN'S TEST BETWEEN INDIA AND ENGLAND



PTI ■ LONDON

The 'home of cricket' Lord's will host its first-ever women's Test to be played between India and England in 2026, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Thursday. The ECB said on its website that after a three-match ODI

series between India and England in July 2025, the former will return in 2026 for a one-off Test. "I'm also delighted we can confirm that India Women will return in 2026 to take on England Women in the first-ever women's Test match at Lord's. It will be a truly special occasion, and one of real significance," ECB CEO

Richard Gould said. India and England will play three ODIs on September 2, 4 and 7 at Headingley, Lord's and Southampton respectively. "It has also been confirmed that India Women will return in 2026 for a one-off Test match at Lord's - the first-ever Women's Test to be staged at the Home of Cricket," the ECB added.

"England Women have played white-ball matches at Lord's for the past three years, with another scheduled next year, but it will be the first time the ground has hosted a Women's Test match." India have played nine Tests so far against England in their backyard from June 1986 with their last clash at Bristol in June 2021 ending in a draw.

'Future economist' Archana bids farewell to TT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Archana Kamath will dearly miss donning the Indian jersey, but the table tennis player is determined to serve the country in a "different way" in future, helping to shape its public policies as an economist. Days after recording India's only success in the quarterfinal loss to Germany in the recent Paris Olympics, the 24-year-old from Bengaluru has re-entered student life in the USA where she is studying for a Masters in Public Policy at the University of Michigan. Having started her professional career as a teenager, Archana's decision to move away from table tennis has been quite emotional. But she has equally enjoyed studying since her school days where she was a topper, securing 98.7 and 97 percent in her 10th and 12th exams. Now, she is pursuing her second masters degree in Michigan, having already completed her post graduation in International Relations. Archana obtained her bachelor's degree in economics and she wants to return to India after two years and serve

FROM PARIS TO MICHIGAN IN A FORTNIGHT



the nation, probably as an economist. Her role models range from well-known economist Sanjeev Sanyal to the likes of tennis stars Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal whom she met at the Games Village in Paris earlier this month. Speaking to PTI from Ann Arbor in Michigan, Archana explained her decision to leave elite sport right after the Olympics. She categorically stated that "she is not in it" for a better financial future as she has been taken care of by her employers Indian Oil, OGQ and the government. "I have always liked studying,

as much as table tennis. I had inquired about this course in Michigan last year as well but then we qualified for the Paris Olympics as a team for the first time and I wanted to focus on that. "Now that the Olympics are done, I want to study more and come back to India after two years and serve the people in a different capacity. My decision has nothing to do with financial returns. "I have got all the support I have needed while playing for India, which has been the biggest honour," said the soft-spoken athlete, who has gone to Michigan after applying for

a study leave with her employer. She comes from a financially secure family of doctors with both her parents being ophthalmologists. Her brother is currently pursuing a PHD in aerospace engineering in the USA. But her memories cannot be ripped away from table tennis as it was the first time that both Indian men and women had qualified for the team event of the Olympics. Archana hopes to continue playing table tennis in the USA and will miss the team environment the most. "The best thing about the Olympics was being with seniors like Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra. The environment was so good. I also got to meet Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz. I made memories for life there. "I have also loved fighting for my country and that is something I will miss the most. I hope to keep playing here (in the US)," she said. Archana is certain about being a public servant in India after her course in Michigan but she is yet to work out the finer details.

Berge joins Fulham and Liverpool sells teenager Clark

AP ■ LONDON

Fulham completed the signing of Sander Berge from relegated Burnley for a reported 25 million pounds (\$32.8 million) on a five-year contract on Thursday, with the Norway international set to

replace the departed Joao Palhinha as the club's holding midfielder. Palhinha left for Bayern Munich in the transfer window. "It's been a little bit back and forth the last few weeks," Berge said, "but I'm finally sitting

here in the shirt in this beautiful stadium, knowing that my future is here, which feels great." Berge, who has also played for Sheffield United in the Premier League, could be in contention to make his debut for Fulham against Leicester

on Saturday. Liverpool sold 19-year-old midfielder Bobby Clark to Salzburg for a reported 10 million pounds (\$13 million). Clark was one of the youngsters who helped Liverpool win the English League Cup last season.



Mohun Bagan, East Bengal to clash in Lucknow on September 2

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow, the city of Nawabs, is gearing up to host traditional rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal for the first time on September 2 as part of plans to promote football in Uttar Pradesh. The derby will be played at state capital's K.D. Singh Babu Stadium. State Sports Director R.P. Singh told PTI that preparations are on full swing for the high-voltage match that will be played under floodlights. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also expected to watch the proceedings and about 10,000 spectators are expected to throng the stadium. As part of the preparations, the testing of the recently-installed flood lights in the stadium has started and dressing rooms and other facilities are being arranged for the players. Singh said that All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Kalyan Chaubey had met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow recently and expressed the need to promote football in Uttar Pradesh. It was during that time, that he had proposed to organise the derby and the state government accepted the proposal. Both the teams will reach Lucknow on September 1.

Teen prodigy Kartik to lead Indian challenge at Asia Pacific Amateur golf

PTI ■ GOTEEMBA (JAPAN)

A year after becoming the youngest golfer to make the cut at the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, 14-year-old Kartik Singh will spearhead the Indian challenge at the 15th AAC to be held here from October 3-6. Kartik is the highest ranked Indian at 199 while the other three players to have received the invitation for this prestigious event are Krishnav Nikhil Chopra, Vedant Sirohi and Rakshit Dahiya. Krishnav and Vedant have earlier participated in the tournament. A regular winner in junior and amateur events, Kartik has also been named in the 2024 Junior Presidents Cup team. Apart from Kartik, seven

others have been named in the 2024 Junior Presidents Cup International Team. They are Joshua Bai, Warut Boonrod, Xihuan Chang, Rayhan Latief, Khanh Hung Le, Thangwin Lee, Anh Minh Ngyuyen. As many as 113 players have been confirmed for the Championship, which will be held at Taiheiyō Club in Gotemba, Japan. The field will have 120 players with a few more names to be added by the organisers. India's best ever performance has been the second-place finish by Rayhan Thomas in Sentosa, Singapore in 2018. The Dubai-based Indian has since turned professional, and last week won his first pro title on India's Professional Tour of India Tour. Krishnav, who plays college



golf in the US, is the son of former India cricketer turned commentator Nikhil Chopra, who often takes the role of a caddy for his son. Created in 2009, the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship was established by the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC), The R&A and the Masters Tournament to further develop

amateur golf in the Asia-Pacific region. The champion will receive an invitation to compete in the 2025 Masters Tournament and The 153rd Open, while the runner(s)-up will gain a place in Final Qualifying for The Open. The confirmed list which has players from 38 APGC member organizations is

highlighted by defending champion Jasper Stubbs of Australia and four players representing China inside the top 100 of the World Amateur Golf Ranking: Wenyi Ding (No. 4), Xihuan Chang (No. 36), Xiangyun Bai (No. 61) and Paul Chang (No. 97). Ding finished runner-up to Stubbs in the 2023 Asia-Pacific Amateur while Xihuan Chang reached the semi-finals of the U.S. Junior Amateur in July. Other top-100 participants include Vietnam's Anh Minh Ngyuyen (No. 68) and Japan's Rintaro Nakano (No. 78). Notable past competitors include 2021 Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama, a two-time winner of the Asia-Pacific Amateur, and 2022 Open champion Cameron Smith.



Guys like Pant have muscle memory and thirst for victory: Hayden

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Batting great Matthew Hayden feels Rishabh Pant will be a key player for India when they travel to Australia for a five-Test series later this year owing to his "muscle memory and thirst for victory" that made him such a sensation during the team's previous tour Down Under. The eagerly-anticipated five-Test series starts on November 22 at Perth. "Guys like Rishabh Pant have got a muscle memory and the thirst for victory. He was such a key player last time he played there and the Australian public loved him as well, because of the nature of the way he played his game," Hayden told media on the sidelines of 'CEAT Cricket Rating Awards' here on Wednesday. "It was exciting. It was innovative. It was just fresh and good. Then you have got your old stewards, like Virat Kohli, (he) will want to make an impression again. From a batting point of view, I'm excited to see how India have that strategy to take on the Australian conditions," the Australian added. Pant, who has made a successful return to cricket after a life-threatening accident in 2022, was an outstanding performer for India in the 2020-21 tour, notching up brilliant knocks of 97 and 89 not out in the landmark trip. India outgunned a full-strength Australia despite missing several frontline players in one of the most dramatic turnarounds in the history Test cricket. The visitors bounced back from the ignominy of 36 all out in the opening Adelaide Test to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2-1 for a second consecutive time. Kohli had to return home after the Adelaide game due to personal reasons and five other players, including key pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, were forced out due to injuries and fitness issues. "The great thing from an Indian

perspective is that when you look at the last victory, there was no Virat Kohli. There was a very much a second team bowling line-up that won at the Gabba, Hayden said. "That's the kind of confidence that you can expect this Indian unit to go to our shores (with) and go, 'guys, we've done this before, and we've done it in a way that's second to none, even without our key players,'" he said. **PINK TESTS TAKE AWAY AUSTRALIA'S HOME ADVANTAGE:** Hayden said scheduling a day-night Test tends to take away the advantage enjoyed by Australian teams in the past. Even in the upcoming tour, the two teams will play a Pink Test in Adelaide. "Once you get those overhead conditions under that twilight zone, they can be really difficult," he said. "I would go as far as to say that the home advantage in Australia has been taken away quite a lot, simply on the basis that if you get (on) the wrong side of a certain session, be that you are four for 130 at twilight, you can (soon) be eight for 150. "There's no chance to actually really naturally dominate a game," he added. Hayden said Pat Cummins, who led Australia to the World Test Championship and ODI World Cup wins last year, has rallied his troops like no other Australian captain in the past. "He has a very special leadership style and ability. It's a very different style to the former captains of the Australian cricket team that were (about) very much a carrot and stick type approach," he said. "He's operating on a model that's bringing out the individuals and individual preparation in particular - something which our game struggles with being a team sport," he added. Hayden said Australia under Cummins has been an extremely close-knit team which has earned respect from former players like him who were upset with the manner in which previous coach Justin Langer was removed.

Bahrain's track team sanctioned over doping and blocked from naturalising more athletes

AP ■ MONACO

Bahrain's track team will have to pause its successful strategy of naturalizing athletes from Africa after accepting a package of sanctions related to doping. World Athletics said Thursday that Bahrain had been restricted to a maximum of 10 athletes in the track and field events at the Paris Olympics - which wasn't announced at the time - and at next year's world championships in Tokyo. Bahrain's team in Paris included Kenyaborn Winfred Yavi, who won gold in Paris in the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase, and Nigeria-born sprinter

Salwa Eid Naser, the silver medalist in the 400. Neither athlete was accused of any wrongdoing in the case announced Thursday. The Bahrain Athletics Association admitted a charge of "conducting itself in relation to doping, negligently and/or recklessly and/or so as to prejudice the interests of World Athletics or bring the sport of athletics into disrepute," and another related to its employment of staff to work with athletes, governing body World Athletics said. That followed an investigation into allegations two athletes used blood transfusions at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and into the BAA having



"engaged" a coach who was under a doping-related ban, World Athletics added. Bahrain has agreed not to recruit any more foreign athletes until 2027, World Athletics said. The next Summer

Olympics are in Los Angeles in 2028. Bahrain has also committed to fund a "talent academy" to develop local athletes and has set up a new national anti-doping body. It's not the first time Bahrain has faced scrutiny over doping, particularly among its roster of athletes who were naturalized. Naser missed the Tokyo Olympics while serving a ban for not being available for drug testing. Kemi Adekoya, a former world indoor champion in the 400, got a four-year ban in 2019 in a steroid case. Marathon runner Marius Kimutai was banned for three years in April after failing a drug test.

Cash-strapped Barcelona sheds players one year after their arrival

AP ■ BARCELONA (SPAIN)

If trying to compete with Real Madrid and newly arrived Kylian Mbappé wasn't daunting enough, now Hansi Flick's Barcelona squad is being thinned out by departures. Barcelona looks set to lose both Ilkay Gundogan and Vitor Roque in the coming days - or even hours - with both players reportedly close to exits. Gundogan appears set on returning to Manchester City a year after the midfielder left the serial winners to start a new chapter in Spain. That could be cut short because of Barcelona's need to trim its salary burden, leaving the team without one of its top playmakers from last season. Roque is also reportedly close to leaving on loan for Real Betis, although Portugal's

Sporting has made inquiries. The young Brazilian forward cost Barcelona a 30-million-euro (USD 33-million) transfer last summer. He arrived in the winter transfer market but never earned consistent playing minutes despite the significant investment made to sign him. When their exits are made official, it will confirm that the club's efforts last summer to strengthen the squad turned out to be makeshift moves. Last summer, Barcelona maintained the quality of a squad that lost veteran leaders Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba without spending much money. Gundogan and former Athletic Bilbao defender Inigo Martinez arrived as free agents, Oriol Romeu's move from Girona cost a reported 4 million euros, and João Félix and João Cancelo both arrived on loan deals from Atletico



Madrid and Manchester City, respectively. But a year later, only Martinez appears set to continue with the team that finished last season without a title and the departure of coach Xavi Hernández, who was pushed out after he publicly complained that the club's lack of money would make it hard to compete with Madrid or the other top European clubs. Barcelona has locked up the arrival of Spain midfielder Dani Olmo from Leipzig. But, it has yet to meet the financial requirements of the Spanish league necessary to register him to play. Flick is also without key players Gavi Páez and Ronaldo Araújo, who are recovering from leg injuries. With players hurt or leaving, Flick has not hesitated in relying heavily on the products

of Barcelona's famed La Masia youth academy. He gave debuts to midfielders Gerard Martín and Marc Bernal at the always demanding outing at Valencia in their Spanish league opener when Robert Lewandowski scored a brace for a 2-1 victory. In total Flick aligned three 17-year-olds in his starting 11 between Lamine Yamal, Bernal and Pau Cubarsi. As Lewandowski said after the victory, "We can win games with these youngsters." **NEXT TEST:** Barcelona will face a good test on Saturday in the second round of league fixtures when it hosts Athletic Bilbao, including Nico Williams. Williams and Barcelona teen Lamine Yamal helped lead Spain to the European Championship title this summer. Barcelona had been rumoured to be interested in securing Williams' transfer

from Athletic, but right now that looks like wishful thinking given the Catalan club's ongoing financial struggles. Coached by former Barcelona manager Ernesto Valverde, Athletic will look for its first victory at Barcelona since the 2001-2002 season. Since then, it has gone 22 visits without a victory, with Barcelona winning 19 times. Athletic, which won the Copa del Rey last campaign, will likely have to use its youth-team goalkeeper, Alex Padilla, after minor injuries to Spain's keeper Unai Simón and backup Julen Agirretxabala. Madrid hosts Valladolid on Sunday after the defending champions were held 1-1 at Mallorca in their league opener. Atletico Madrid hosts Girona on the same day in a matchup of the respective fourth- and third-place finishers from last campaign.

ALLU ARJUN INDIRECTLY DEFENDS HIS NANDHYAL VISIT!

Allu Arjun had kept mum for the last few weeks. However, now the actor has once again is in the news! It is known that the actor visited Nandhyal during the elections, where he campaigned for YSRCP candidate Shilpa Ravichandra Kishore. This didn't go well with the Mega family members, including Mega Star Chiranjeevi and from then on, there seemed to be a distance between Allu Arjun and the family.

Not just this, the *Pushpa* star was a target of trolls in regards to campaigning for the YSRCP candidate and not for his close relative and Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan. Since then, there has been a war of words on social media between both their fans. Apparently, Allu Arjun supports his action of going to campaign for his friend. In an event, he indirectly indicated that he is not doing anything wrong and reiterated that he would do anything for his friends and the people he likes.

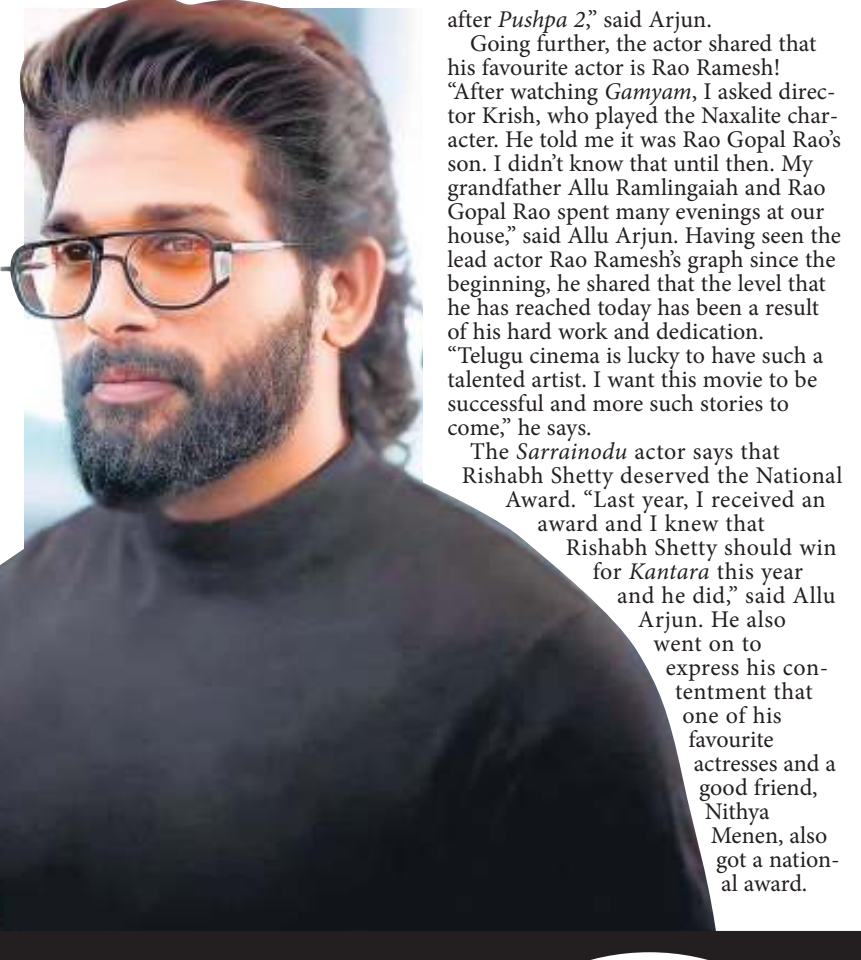
The *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo* star had attended the *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam* pre-release event as a chief guest latterly. The film is presented by popular director Sukumar's wife, Thabitha Sukumar.

"I was obliged to attend the event when Thabitha came and requested that I attend the event as a chief guest," he said, again adding that he would do anything for people he likes. Indirectly, he defended his action that he had taken a few months ago. "I do whatever

I like," he asserts once again. This has once again started a big discussion on social media. This is not the first time that he has been in the news and trolled for his remarks. Earlier, when fans asked him to talk about Pawan Kalyan at one of his film's functions, he said *cheppanu brother* (I will not tell brother). This led to massive trolls by Pawan Kalyan and Mega fans for his remarks.

Meanwhile, the actor congratulated all the National Award winners. However, he did not say anything in regards to Chiranjeevi's birthday (August 22). For now, a producer on the condition of anonymity says, "Allu Arjun took his time to congratulate the National Award winners, but he doesn't have time to convey birthday wishes to Chiranjeevi from the same dais." The producer further stated that this might now turn into trouble and affect the relationship between the two families.

Well, going ahead, in the function, he gives credit to his fans. "My fans are crazy. I love you all so much. I always say that everyone becomes a fan of a hero, but I became a hero after seeing my fans," said Allu Arjun. He added that his last film was released three years ago, but fans are still patient and show so much love for him. "This time I won't disappoint you and I will do more films



after *Pushpa 2*," said Arjun. Going further, the actor shared that his favourite actor is Rao Ramesh! "After watching *Ganyam*, I asked director Krish, who played the Naxalite character. He told me it was Rao Gopal Rao's son. I didn't know that until then. My grandfather Allu Ramlingaiah and Rao Gopal Rao spent many evenings at our house," said Allu Arjun. Having seen the lead actor Rao Ramesh's graph since the beginning, he shared that the level that he has reached today has been a result of his hard work and dedication. "Telugu cinema is lucky to have such a talented artist. I want this movie to be successful and more such stories to come," he says.

The *Sarrainodu* actor says that Rishabh Shetty deserved the National Award. "Last year, I received an award and I knew that Rishabh Shetty should win for *Kantara* this year and he did," said Allu Arjun. He also went on to express his contentment that one of his favourite actresses and a good friend, Nithya Menen, also got a national award.



Cast: Rao Ramesh, Ankit Koyya, Indrāja, Ramya Pasupuleti, Sivannarayana, Ajay, Annapurna, Harshavardhan, Praveen and others
Cinematography: M. N. Balreddy
Music: Kalyan Nayak
Director: Lakshman Karya
Producers: Mohan Karya, Bujjirayudu Pendyala
Rating: 3.5/5

Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam: Rao Ramesh steals the show; credit goes to director for a clean entertainer

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Rao Ramesh, known for his character roles in many Telugu films, has now turned lead actor for the first time with *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*. The film is directed by Lakshman Karya, which marks his second project. Ankit Koyya and Ramya Pasupuleti star as the lead pair in this film, produced by Mohan Karya and Bujjirayudu Pendyala.

Now that Rao Ramesh is playing the lead role, we have to see how the audience will take it.

STORY

Subramanyam (played by Rao Ramesh) resides in Maruthi Nagar and is determined to secure a government job, refusing to consider any other employment. His wife, Kalarani (Indrāja), is the sole breadwinner and manages the finances through her salary. They wish to build a good house that is constructed incompletely. Now that Subramanyam has a government job, he is keen on getting the construction done. Their son, Arjun (played by Ankit Koyya), has fallen in love with a girl (played by Ramya Pasupuleti), the daughter of a family friend (played by Harshavardhan), who works in a bank. He always feels that he is the son of Allu Aravind, and he is growing up here as Subramanyam's son. Subramanyam's mother-in-law, Annapurna, also lives with them. Tragedy strikes when she unexpectedly passes away. Kalarani decides to take a ten-day leave from work to scatter her mother's ashes at sacred sites. During her absence, Subramanyam faces mounting pressure from family members to consider applying for a private job. One day, Subramanyam is shocked to discover a deposit of Rs 10 lakh in his bank account. This unexpected windfall sets the stage for the real story, unraveling the mystery of who transferred the money and how Subramanyam decides to use it. Is Arjun really a rich kid? There are many twists and turns in the remaining story.

ANALYSIS

Director Lakshman Karya's first film, *Happy Wedding*, released in 2018, was a big flop. After six years, he came up with the story of *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*, which he has taken from a real-life incident.

In this family, the father is waiting for a government job even though he is 50 years old; his wife is working, and because of her, the family is running. Their son feels that he was born into a rich family, but they left him with Subramanyam. He feels that one day his rich parents will come and take him away from them. On the other hand, Subramanyam is borrowing money from people, and he is under pressure to repay them. The director set up a middle-class family story pleasantly and introduced all the characters in the beginning without dragging much. From the beginning to the end, the director narrated the story in a hilarious way! When Subramanyam's account gets credited with Rs 10 lakh, the story becomes even more interesting and hilarious.

Who credited that much to Subramanyam? The twist after the interval is more interesting, something that one can't expect. The director takes a simple story and narrates it more like a screenplay-based film. Every dialogue and every character creates guffaw and the director comes up with a clean entertainer. There is one particular scene in the film where Subramanyam wants to repay one lakh, which he borrowed from Ajay. You won't be able to control your laughter after watching this particular scene! Actually, the entire film is full of comic scenes. The climax is also a big surprise and complete credit goes to director Lakshman Karya for coming up with a film like this. I'm not revealing the story much because I don't want to spoil the interest, but the director made a good story for around Rs 10 lakh. Many of the characters resemble middle-class families and the director makes good use of every artist in the film.

PERFORMANCE

When it comes to the performance, it is Rao Ramesh who leads the front. He is a versatile actor and one of the best actors that Telugu cinema has. Give him any character, he not only delivers with good performance but takes it to the next level. He is the backbone of this film and his comedy timing, dialogue delivery and behaviour as a character are simply superb. Only Rao Ramesh can do such kinds of roles; Subramanyam is one of them. When a director comes up with a good story, the actors should give a better performance and Rao Ramesh did an excellent job. From the beginning to the end, he is simply superb.

The other performer is Ankit Koyya, who appeared along with Rao Ramesh throughout the film. His performance is lively and surprises everyone with his acting. He has a bright future as an actor. He completely transformed into his role and delivered a stunning performance. Indrāja is neat and in the climax scenes, she is the highlight with her amazing dance performance. Ramya Pasupuleti is cute and bubbly. She doesn't have much of a role, but she did a neat job. Harshavardhan, as a bank employee and Sivannarayana, as the neighbour of Subramanyam, also played their respective characters well. Ajay played his role too well. After a long time, comedian Praveen can be seen in such a good role in this film. Annapurna appears briefly, but her presence is very important.

The music is good and the cinematography is neatly done. The dialogues written by Lakshman Karya are impressive and entertain everyone. Though there are a few logics, you can ignore them because it's an entertainer.

VERDICT

Finally, *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam* is a clean and hilarious entertainer. From the beginning to the end, one can laugh at every scene and character. At times, many of the films are filled with blood, gore, romance and a lot of action sequences, but this film is completely fresh, where there are no fighting sequences, no blood and not even a single knife. In recent times, this kind of hilarious movie hasn't come out and you must watch it.



Chiru's look from Vishwambhara released

On the occasion of Mega Star Chiranjeevi's birthday, the makers of *Vishwambhara* released his look from the film. Directed by Mallidi Vasishtha, the film is releasing on January 10, 2025, on the occasion of the Sankranti festival. This film is one of the most-awaited projects, as Chiranjeevi is playing a fantasy film after so many years. On the other hand, director Vasishtha made his debut with a hit film like *Bimbisara*, which is also a fantasy one.

In this poster, Chiranjeevi is seen seated on a rock, wielding a trident instilled with special powers. The background features a radiant divine force deriving from a hill, while the atmosphere is charged with

electric energy and thunder. The makers feel that this film is going to be a visual treat, with graphics taking an important part in it. For director Vasishtha, this film is going to be a prestigious one, as he got a chance to direct Mega Star as his second film. He created a fantasy world for this film that promises to be a visual wonder with top-notch VFX and high-octane action episodes.

UV Creations is producing this film, while Trisha Krishnan and Ashika Ranganath are set to star as the female leads, and Bollywood actor Kunal Kapoor will be seen in a powerful role. MM Keeravani is collaborating with Chiranjeevi after many years and providing music for this fantasy film.

RHEA SACHDEVA INTRODUCED AS VARSHA

The upcoming project *Hide N Seek* has been making waves, creating much anticipation around the film. The film is being directed by debutant Basi Reddy Rana and is touted to be a crime thriller.

The film stars Viswanth as the hero, while Shilpa Manjunath and Rhea Sachdeva are the lead actresses in the film.

On Thursday, the makers released the first look poster for actress Rhea Sachdeva, introduced as Varsha. "Love is the ultimate crime... it's the one we all want to be guilty of," reads the poster. The film has further completed its shoot and will hit theatres on September 13.



Randeep Hooda jets off to Hyd for Gopichand's next shoot

Randeep Hooda, who recently announced his association with Gopichand Malineni starring Sunny Deol for the upcoming untitled film on August 20, has flown down to Hyderabad to commence the shoot for the film.

One of the most versatile and talented actors in the industry, Randeep Hooda, has raised the anticipation and interest of the audience for his upcoming action entertainer. Expressing his excitement to collaborate with Sunny Deol, Randeep announced joining the cast on social media. After the success of *Swatantra Veer Savarkar*, which not only featured the actor but was also written, directed and produced by him, Randeep Hooda is all set to dive into #SGDM in Hyderabad. Touted as the biggest action film in the country, the film is produced by Naveen Yerneni, Y. Ravi Shankar and T.G. Vishwa Prasad under the banners of Mythri Movie Makers and People Media Factory.

To compensate for loss, Puri decides to direct a film

Director Puri Jagannadh, after delivering a big flop like *Liger* with Vijay Deverakonda, has now seen another big flop in the name of *Double iSmart* with Ram Pothineni.

Doubtless, the director is in a lot of trouble with two continuous flops! When *Liger* became a disaster, the distributors and exhibitors incurred huge losses because they bought the film for a high price. After a couple of days, the distributors wanted some compensation from Puri. However, he refused to repay them. Instead of that, he officially lodged a complaint with distributor Warangal Srinu and others that they were threatening him.

Now, Puri Jagannadh delivered another dud, *Double iSmart* with Ram Pothineni. This time, *Hanuman* producer Niranjan Reddy has bought the rights to this film for approximately Rs. 60 crore, says the source. But the film didn't fare well at the box office; hence, Niranjan Reddy may incur huge losses. Unlike the earlier *Liger* incident, this time Puri Jagan wanted to compensate for Niranjan Reddy. According to the source, Puri Jagannadh assured Niranjan Reddy that he would make a film for him. "Though the details are not known, in the future, Puri Jagan may direct a film for Niranjan Reddy. This underlines the losses that were incurred due to the *Double iSmart* failure," added the source. Puri and Charmme are the producers of this film and they sold the OTT rights for a good amount, according to the source. The makers paid nearly Rs 15 crore for Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt for this film. He played the villain opposite Ram Pothineni. This is a sequel to the earlier hit film *iSmart Shankar*. Because of that hit, the distributors and exhibitors expected something better in this sequel, but Puri disappointed everyone.

Entha Pani Chesav Chanti trailer launched by Trinath Rao

The trailer for *Entha Pani Chesav* was released by sensational director Trinath Rao Nakkina who appreciated the director and the team. "This film is only for women; men should not watch it even by mistake," declared director Uday Kumar. The film, produced by P J K Movie Creations, is a unique story directed by Uday Kumar, who gave entry as director with *Tasmath Jagratha*. The film, produced by the Ladde Brothers, will be released soon. The trailer release event was held at the Producers Council Hall in Hyderabad, where Trinath Rao Nakkina was the chief guest. He released the trailer and expressed his wishes for the film's success. The film's hero Srinivas Ulishetty, heroines Diya Raja, Neaharika and Shanthi Priya, producers Ladde Brothers, cinematographer Santosh, actor Trinath and co-director Battina Suryanarayana attended the event.



STANDALONE

Renowned actor and motorsport enthusiast Akkineni Naga Chaitanya is set to ignite the Indian Racing Festival (IRF) as he takes the helm of the Hyderabad Blackbirds as team owner for the 2024 season of the Indian Racing League (IRL). A passionate follower of Formula 1 and a dedicated collector of supercars and motorcycles, Chaitanya brings a unique blend of motorsport fervour and star power to the league. His deep-rooted love for racing, coupled with his influence as a youth icon and his stature in the entertainment industry, is expected to significantly boost the festival's visibility and attract a broader audience to the thrilling event.

