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**National interest vital: SC**




**RELIANCE NOT**  
BUILT ON LARGESSE; NOT  
HOARDING WEALTH: MUKESH AMBANI



**Saripodhaa Sanivaaram**  
Nani's film is a bit lengthy, making it a one-time  
**WATCH**



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer  
It has come to the government's notice that revenue, municipal, and irrigation officials are demanding money by intimidating people in the name of HYDRRA by using old notices and complaints filed two or three years ago. Strict action will be taken against those involved in such acts. The ACB and Vigilance have been asked to check this and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.  
— Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister, Telangana



**DON'T MISS...**

**'Preserve & promote Telugu'...**

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised the importance of studying in one's mother tongue, asserting that true knowledge comes from such education. Speaking at the "Telugu Bhasha Dinotsavam" celebrations held at Tummalapally Kalakshetra in Vijayawada on Thursday, the Chief Minister highlighted the significance of preserving and promoting the Telugu language. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister warned that neglecting one's native language could lead to the erosion of cultural identity. He praised Gidugu Venkata...

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**Kerala govt has invested Rs 1,000...**

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the government has invested Rs 1,000 crore in the past three years to develop the Ayush infrastructure in the state, including an International Institute of Ayurveda Research and a new Ayurveda medical college in Idukki district. The CM inaugurated a two-day Global Ayurveda Summit and Kerala Healthcare Tourism here and set the tone for the deliberations by focusing on the policy initiatives of the state government to facilitate a holistic healthcare environment...

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**Two-wheeler industry expects...**

The two-wheeler industry is expected to witness robust sales in the upcoming festive season, riding on the back of strong revival in rural demand and bountiful monsoon so far, according to TVS Motor Company Senior Vice President - Head Commuter Business Aniruddha Haldar. In an interaction with PTI, he noted that the growth in the two-wheeler industry is also being driven by rising acceptance of scooters in the rural areas. "In the first few months of this fiscal, we have seen the two-wheeler..."

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**India's chances of winning in ...**

Former Australia coach John Buchanan believes India's chances of completing a hat-trick of Test series wins Down Under will hinge on how the visiting batters, including "ageing" stars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, tackle the hosts' battery of pace bowlers. For the first time since 1991-92, India will tour Australia for a five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with the opening game scheduled to be played at Perth from November 22. Buchanan, who presided over Australia's golden run in all...

-SPORTS

# Welfare of workers NDA govt's priority: CM

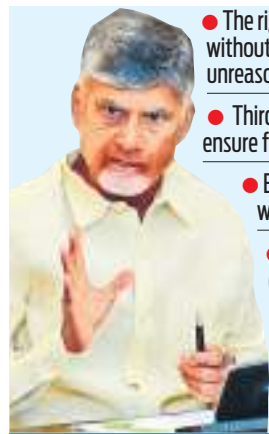
**New insurance scheme with Rs 10 lakh cover to be launched for workers**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday reiterated that the safety and welfare of workers are the priorities of the TDP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in the State. He underscored the importance of protecting workers' rights while ensuring that unreasonable regulations do not burden industries.

During a review meeting with the Labour Department, the Chief Minister instructed officials to maintain strict standards for the safety and security of workers. He also expressed a strong desire for third-party audits to be conducted to assess factory safety standards.

The Chief Minister announced plans to strengthen ESI hospitals, with the State's share of funds to be released soon for this purpose. He lamented that the Chandranna Bheema scheme, which was in effect before 2019, had been entirely dismantled by the YSRCP government. Not only was the number of beneficiaries significantly reduced, but the



- The rights of workers to be protected without burdening industries with unreasonable regulations.
- Third-party audit to be conducted to ensure factory safety standards.
- ESI hospitals to be strengthened, with State funds soon.
- Factory management directed to create effective safety plans for their workforce.
- Strict action to be taken against companies negligent in worker safety.

• Insurance coverage to be extended to Employment Guarantee workers, farm labourers, and others.

compensation amount was also unjustly lowered, he said. "We will soon launch a scheme offering an insurance amount of Rs 10 lakh," Chandrababu Naidu declared, reiterating that the safety and security of factory workers are of the highest priority for the NDA Government. He urged factory management to develop comprehensive action plans to ensure workforce safety. The Chief Minister also directed Labour Department officials to take

strict action against any company management found negligent in the event of an accident.

Chandrababu Naidu highlighted the importance of employment generation, stating that it can only be achieved if more companies are established.

He urged officials to act transparently when granting permissions for new industrial units.

**Amaravati to be developed as AI hub**



- ◆ **Revival of Scaled projects:** The Chief Minister instructs officials to complete the CRDA office building and the revival of the 'Happy Next' housing project, both neglected by the previous government.
- ◆ **Land Acquisition:** Chandrababu Naidu highlights the need to acquire 3,558 acres for the capital, with farmers willing to contribute, and stresses resolving any land allotment issues.
- ◆ **Metro Rail Progress:** CM instructs the acceleration of metro rail projects in Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada, with a focus on timely completion.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to develop Amaravati as a city centred on Artificial Intelligence (AI). During a review meeting on Thursday, which included Minister for Municipal Administration Narayana and officials from the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA), Naidu instructed that the Amaravati

logo be designed with the first letter 'A' and the last letter 'I' to symbolise Artificial Intelligence.

Chandrababu emphasised the importance of integrating technology into every aspect of the capital's development. He lamented that Amaravati, referred to as the "capital of the Gods," had suffered under the previous government, which had neglected its development. He urged the officials to accelerate the

revival of work on the capital, which had been stalled.

The CRDA officials informed the Chief Minister that the construction of their office building planned as a G+7 structure, had been delayed for five years due to the previous government's negligence. Chandrababu directed that the building be completed within 90 days, insisting on no compromises in quality and the use of the latest technology.

Continued on Page 2

**Naidu unveils RT PCR kits for Monkeypox**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday unveiled RT PCR kits for the detection of the monkeypox virus, commending the efforts of the Med Tech Zone in Visakhapatnam for manufacturing these kits.

"I am truly proud to launch the first domestically-produced Monkeypox test kits, which will significantly bolster the 'Make-in-AP' brand," said Chandrababu Naidu during the launch event at the State Secretariat. The Chief Executive Officer of Visakha Med Tech Zone, Jitendra Sarma, along with other representatives of the zone, were present at the occasion.

The Med Tech Zone representatives assured Mr Naidu that these kits would be made available at a very reasonable price. In response, the Chief Minister pledged full support from the State Government to the Med Tech Zone. Additionally, the zone's team members revealed plans to soon manufacture an electronic wheelchair powered by solar energy.

**'CASH-FOR-VOTE CASE' TAKES CURIOUS TURN**

## Apex Court pulls up TG CM Revanth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's reported tendentious comments on the bail granted to Bharat Rashtira Samithi leader and MLC K Kavitha seem to have landed him in a soup with regard to the 'cash-for-vote scam' case, in which the CM is the prime accused and which has now taken a curious turn with the apex court having second thoughts on appointing a special public prosecutor for trying the case in Telangana itself, instead of moving it to Madhya Pradesh as sought by the petitioners.

The Supreme Court strongly objected to Revanth Reddy's reported comments following the bail granted to Kavitha. As per media reports, during his interaction with the media on Tuesday, Revanth said there were doubts about how Kavitha had secured bail within five months when Manish Sisodia, a former deputy chief minister of Delhi, got it after remaining behind bars for 15 months and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is yet to get the relief.

"It is a fact that BRS worked for the victory of the BJP in the 2024 LS polls. There is also talk that Kavitha got bail because of the deal between BRS and BJP," the Chief Minister reportedly alleged.

While taking note of the insinua-



**Having considered appointment of a special public prosecutor to try the cash-for-vote case in TG itself; the Court observes the trial in the case could be held elsewhere if the CM does not have respect for the Supreme Court.**

**While taking note of the insinuations made through the foregoing comments, the Supreme Court asked on Thursday: "Do we pass orders after consultations with political parties?"**

ations made through the foregoing comments, the Supreme Court asked on Thursday: "Do we pass orders after consultations with political parties?"

The top court said such statements might create apprehensions in the minds of people.

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**Kannayya appointed advisor to Irrigation department**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has appointed Kannayya Naidu as advisor to the Water Resources Department. The government issued an order appointing Kannayya Naidu as advisor to the Mechanical Department within the Water Resources Department on Thursday. He is a consultant specialising in hydraulic gates and handling equipment for irrigation projects. The government has expressed concerns over the gates of various irrigation projects in Andhra Pradesh. Kannayya's recommendations regarding gate maintenance, including repairs, will be welcomed. Chief Minister Chandrababu recently honoured Kannayya for his contributions to fixing the Tungabhadra project gates.

An irrigation engineering expert with over five decades of experience, Kannayya Naidu recently achieved a significant feat by installing a temporary stop log gate to replace the washed-away 19th gate at the Tungabhadra Dam within a record time.

Thanks to the expertise and dedication of the 78-year-old Kannayya Naidu, the stoplog gate was installed within a week, preserving approximately 30 TMC of Tungabhadra river water. A dedicated engineer with a keen interest in irrigation, Kannayya Naidu's career began modestly. He was born in Rasanapalle, Gudipala Mandal, Chittoor District, in 1946.

# YSRCP MPs Mopidevi, Beeda quit RS; more defections likely

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant blow to the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), led by former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Rajya Sabha members Mopidevi Venkata Ramana and Beeda Mastan Rao have resigned from their positions. On Thursday, the MPs submitted their resignation letters to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhanekar in Delhi. Mopidevi Venkata Ramana has already declared his intention to join the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and it appears Beeda Mastan Rao may follow suit.

Following his resignation, Beeda Mastan Rao addressed the media at Parliament, explaining that he stepped down despite having four years remaining in his term, and Mopidevi having



**Reports suggest that Venkata Ramana and Mastan Rao are expected to be joined by six other YSRCP MPs who may also resign from the party. Of these, four are expected to join the TDP, while the remaining four may prefer the BJP.**

two. He emphasised that his resignation was made voluntarily, without external pressure or inducement. Mastan Rao

mentioned that he would decide his future course of action after consulting with his family and supporters. He also joked about his lack of interest in local politics. Mopidevi Venkata Ramana has been an active figure in the constituency and has held several positions over the years. Reports suggest that Venkata Ramana and Mastan Rao are expected to be joined by six other YSRCP MPs who may also resign from the party. Of these, four are anticipated to join the TDP, while the remaining four are likely to align with the BJP.

Andhra Pradesh has a total of 11 Rajya Sabha seats. Since the YSRCP came to power in 2019, it has secured all 11 seats in the three-phase elections, becoming the fourth-largest party in the Rajya Sabha in terms of numerical strength.

**House panel to prepare draft new excise policy**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Principal Secretary of the Prohibition & Excise Department, Mukesh Kumar Meena, issued an order (GO Rt No 582) on Thursday to establish a Cabinet Sub-Committee tasked with recommending a draft New Comprehensive Excise Policy. This policy will cover retail trade, liquor pricing, and taxation.

The members of the sub-committee include Kollu Ravindra, Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise;

Nadendra Manohar, Minister for Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs; Kondapalli Srinivas, Minister for MSME, SERP, and NRI Empowerment & Relations; Satya Kumar Yadav, Minister for Health, Family Welfare, and Medical Education; and Gottipati Ravi Kumar, Minister for Energy.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee will assess the department's proposals by examining best practices related to retail pricing, and taxation in the Excise Department.

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**Vizag will be turned into IT capital: Lokesh**

P3

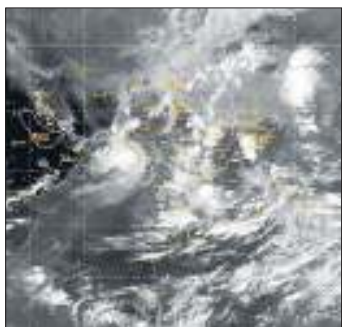
## Low pressure over Bay

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A low pressure area has formed over the central and adjoining North Bay of Bengal, influenced by a cyclonic circulation in the east-central Bay of Bengal and its surroundings. According to the Meteorological Centre, this system was identified at 0830 hours on Thursday.

The report indicates that the low pressure area is expected to move west-northwest and become more pronounced over the west-central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal by August 30. It may further intensify into a depression over the west-central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal within the next two days as it progresses towards the North Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coasts.

The southwest monsoon remains normal in Coastal Andhra Pradesh but weak in Rayalaseema. Heavy to very heavy rainfall is anticipated in



isolated areas of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on August 30 and 31, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on August 30.

Heavy rain is also forecasted for isolated areas in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 24 hours and on September 1, with similar conditions expected in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on August 31.

Continued on Page 2

# Wealthiest Indian with a networth of Rs 11.6 lakh cr

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Recouping the dent caused by the Hindenburg Research report, Gautam Adani's networth shot up 95 per cent to Rs 11.6 lakh crore last year, which helped him replace Mukesh Ambani to become the richest Indian, a report said on Thursday.

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Ambani's overall networth increased by 25 per cent to Rs 10.14 lakh crore, as per the 2024 Hurun India Rich List.

In 2023's report, Adani's wealth declined by 57 per cent to Rs 4.74 lakh crore, and Ambani was way ahead with a fortune of Rs 8.08 lakh crore.

It can be noted that Adani's networth declined sharply following various allegations levelled by US-based short seller Hindenburg

Research. The conglomerate has denied all the allegations.

In the 2014 edition, Hurun had pegged Adani's fortunes at Rs 44,000 crore, which made him the tenth richest Indian then.

Shiv Nadar and family of HCL gained one spot to be the third richest with a networth of Rs 3.14 lakh crore, while Serum Institute of India's Cyrus Poonawalla slipped by one notch to the fourth position with a networth of Rs 2.89 lakh crore in 2024.

Sun Pharmaceuticals' Dilip Shangvi continued his ascent on the list, securing the fifth richest tag against sixth last year with a networth of Rs 2.50 lakh crore.

Radha Vembu of Zoho was the wealthiest among self-made women with a fortune of Rs 47,500 crore, while Zepto's co-founders Kaivalya Vohra and Aadit Palicha, who are in their

## ADANI REPLACES AMBANI



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early 20s, were the youngest on the list with a networth of Rs 3,600 crore and Rs 4,300 crore,

respectively. The list, which captures Indians having a networth of over Rs

1,000 crore, grew by 220 individuals to 1,539 people in 2024. The cumulative wealth has seen a 46 per cent jump in the year.

Actor Shah Rukh Khan made his debut on the list with a fortune estimated at Rs 7,300 crore, which was much higher than business partner Juhi Chawla with Rs 4,600 crore networth secured second place among the entertainers.

Interestingly, 16 professionals also made it to the list with Arista Networks' chief executive Jaysree Ullal being the wealthiest at Rs 32,100 crore and followed by D-mart chief executive Ignatius Navil Noronha at Rs 6,900 crore, according to the list.

Gera Developments' Kumar Pritamdas Gera's wealth grew the fastest at 566 per cent in the 2024 list, while Ambani and Adani had the biggest growth by quantum, the list said.



TELUGU BHASHA DINOTSAVAM

'Preserve & promote Telugu'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised the importance of studying in one's mother tongue, asserting that true knowledge comes from such education. Speaking at the 'Telugu Bhasha Dinotsavam' celebrations held at Tummalapally Kalakshetra in Vijayawada on Thursday, the Chief Minister highlighted the significance of preserving and promoting the Telugu language.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister warned that neglecting one's native language could lead to the erosion of cultural identity. He praised Gidugu Venkata Ramamurthy for his dedication to the Telugu language, underscoring that primary education should be conducted in the mother tongue to facilitate effective learning.

Naidu reassured that the state government is committed to protecting Kuchipudi, a cherished Telugu heritage.

The Chief Minister refuted claims made by the previous YSRCP government that survival depended solely on proficiency in English, arguing that language is merely a tool for communication. He asserted that the current administration is devoted to preserving the Telugu language, noting that while English may be taught for



employment, Telugu is integral to life.

Naidu noted that Telugu is spoken by 100 million people, making it the fourth most widely spoken language in India, after Hindi, Bengali, and Marathi. He pointed out that while Indians are spread across the globe, approximately 30 per cent are Telugu speakers. He recalled that Andhra Pradesh gained recognition as a 'Telugu-speaking state' after NTR founded the Telugu Desam Party.

Looking ahead, the Chief Minister expressed his ambi-

tion for Andhra Pradesh to become the leading state in India by 2047, pledging the government's dedication to achieving this goal. He anticipated a future where people would proudly identify as Telugu. Naidu also mentioned that the government will review GO No 77 and sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to facilitate international performances by local artists. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh were also present.

AWARDS TO DISTINGUISHED PERSONALITIES

- Achanta Balaji Naidu - Drama, NTR District
- Patibandla Ananda Rao - Social Drama, Prakasam
- Vanaparthy Durga Rao - Tholubommalata, Narasaraopet
- Malladi Suri Babu - Vocal Carnatic, NTR District
- Sarada Ramakrishna - Andhra Natyam, NTR District
- S. Vijaya Kumar - Painter, Guntur
- Dr. Kandimalla Sambasiva Rao - Writer, Palnadu
- Borra Govardhan - Writer, Guntur
- Palamaneru Balaji - Writer, Chittoor
- P. Satyanarayana Reddy - Writer, Konaseema
- G. Lakshmi Narasayya - Writer, Krishna District
- Challapalli Swaroopa Rani - Writer, Bapatla
- Dr. KVND Varaprasad - Literary Scholar and Critic, East Godavari
- Acharya Mule Vijaya Lakshmi - Retired HOD, Padmavathi Mahila University
- Sambhasiva Rao - Kondapalli Toys, Kondapalli
- Ashok Kumar - Ashok Book Centre/Alakananda Prachurnulu, NTR District
- Modumudi Sudhakar - Top Grade Musician, NTR District

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Andhra Pradesh president and Rajamahendravaram MP, Daggubati Purandeswari, has accused opposition parties of spreading misinformation about the Scheduled Caste (SC) classification due to their lack of understanding. She expressed frustration with the opposition alliance for criticising the SC classification.

MP Purandeswari attended the BJP-affiliated SC Morcha Sadasyatha Abhiyan Workshop at the party state office in Vijayawada on Thursday. During the workshop, she outlined the strategy for promoting SC Morcha membership to the public.

In her address, Purandeswari highlighted that millions joined the BJP in



2014, and membership increased by 10% in 2019. She noted that the party's membership drive reflects the efforts of its workers in expanding the party's reach.

Purandeswari further asserted that the SC Classification would benefit SC communities, but claimed that opposition parties were misrepresenting this. She advised these parties to educate themselves about the SC Classification. Additionally, she reiterated

the Union Government's commitment to the construction of the state capital, Amaravati, and reminded that Rs. 2,500 crore was allocated in 2014. She also mentioned that the central government has released Rs. 13,000 crore for the completion of the Polavaram Project.

Purandeswari criticised the previous YSRCP government, alleging that issues caused by the former administration necessitate the reconstruction of the Diaphragm Wall. She assured

that the Union Government will support this construction. She attributed the support for the NDA alliance to the previous government's failure to govern effectively.

The workshop was also attended by BJP SC Morcha South India In-Charge Mahanth Shabbunath Tundia, State President Gudise Devanand, National Secretaries S Kumar and Boddu Naga Lakshmi, BJP senior leader K Dilip, and others.

Expedite VCIC project, Chief Secy tells officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad has instructed officials from the Industries, APIIC, APRDC, APTransco, and other departments to expedite the development of the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC). This includes the expansion of roads and the provision of essential infrastructure such as land, electricity, roads, and water facilities needed for industrial growth. The 5th steering committee meeting of the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor Development Project was held on Thursday at the State Secretariat in Velagapudi, Amaravati, under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary emphasised the importance of the corridor for industrial advancement in Andhra Pradesh. He stressed the need for timely provision of infrastructure to support large-scale industries. To accelerate progress, he proposed the preparation and submission of monthly and daily progress reports on physical and financial goals, which will be presented to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for timely fund sanctions.

Chief Secretary Prasad reviewed the progress of the corridor development and the allocation of funds from the



ADB to APIIC, APRDC, AP Transco, and GVMC. He reiterated the critical role of the Chennai Industrial Corridor in the state's industrial future and urged officials to complete all related tasks promptly.

Industries and Commerce Secretary Dr N Yuvraj delivered a PowerPoint presentation during the meeting, highlighting that Andhra Pradesh is connected by three of the country's eleven industrial corridors: Visakhapatnam-Chennai, Chennai-Bangalore, and Bangalore-Hyderabad. He provided an update on the progress of both physical and financial goals related to these corridors.

The meeting was attended by Industries Commissioner Ch Sridhar, along with officials from the AP Road Development Corporation, AP Transco, Finance, and other relevant departments.

Kavitha turns emotional Meets KCR at his Erravelli home

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As soon as he saw his daughter Kavitha KCR turned emotional. Kavitha respectfully bowed at her father's feet and KCR affectionately embraced his daughter. Kavitha, accompanied by her husband and son visited the Erravelli residence of KCR on Thursday afternoon.

Kavitha was welcomed with a traditional evil-eye removal ceremony. The joy on KCR's face was evident as he saw his daughter who was recently released from detention.

After a long time, KCR was seen in high spirits. BRS leaders and staff shared the joy of their leader. The arrival of Kavitha brought happiness to KCR's Erravelli residence.

Steps to ensure transparent 'laddu' distribution

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In a bid to eliminate the influence of middlemen, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has introduced measures to ensure that the distribution of Laddu Prasadam to Srivari devotees is conducted more transparently. As part of this initiative, Aadhaar validation for devotees without tokens has been implemented, effective from Thursday.

Addressing certain baseless rumours circulating on social media and some electronic media outlets, TTD Additional Executive Officer, Ch. Venkaiah Chowdhary, clarified the decision, emphasising that it was made in the best interests of the common devotees.

"We have observed that some middlemen are exploiting the system by selling laddus in the black market. To curb this malpractice, we have decided that, henceforth, devotees without darshan tokens can register their Aadhaar cards at the Laddu counters and receive two laddus. Special counters have been established within the Laddu complex for this purpose. Devotees can avail themselves of these laddus at counters numbered 48 to 62.

We have not imposed any other restrictions. Devotees holding darshan tokens or tickets may continue to purchase additional laddus as before, in addition to receiving one free laddu. This new system will enhance transparency in the Laddu distribution process," he asserted.

He also urged devotees not to be swayed by the false rumours spread by certain sections of the media and to support the TTD in implementing this transparent system.

Perni accuses CM Naidu of political manipulation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister Perni Venkatramaiah (Nani) has branded Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP President Nara Chandrababu Naidu as the 'master of betrayal', condemning his alleged attempts to manipulate political allegiances as 'pitiful'.

Addressing the media at the party central office on Thursday, Nani accused CM Naidu of trying to sideline YS Jagan since 2011 due to fear of his rising political influence. Despite these efforts, YS Jagan has returned stronger, securing 67 seats in previous elections, Nani pointed out. He recalled Naidu's previous attempts to weaken YS Jagan by facilitating the defection of 23 YSRCP MLAs to TDP, which he claimed failed to make a notable impact. Nani criticised Naidu for swearing in four of these defectors as ministers in the presence of the Governor, without requiring their resignation from the YSRCP.

Nani asserted that Naidu's betrayal and deception are



second nature to him. He questioned why Naidu demanded resignations from defectors joining the TDP but did not enforce the same when 23 YSRCP members joined the TDP between 2014 and 2019. He also questioned the lack of resignations by recent defectors, including mayors and corporators in Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada. Nani accused CM Naidu of focusing solely on political manoeuvres rather than delivering on promises to the public, warning that Naidu will face public backlash by 2029.

Nani challenged Naidu to demonstrate consistency by fielding candidates from the same communities for the upcoming Rajya Sabha seats

expected to be vacated. He also criticised Naidu, the Andhra Pradesh government, and 'yellow media' for allegedly orchestrating a scandal involving a woman with multiple allegations to target IPS officers. Nani clarified that Vidyasagar, who contested the 2014 Assembly elections but never joined YSRCP, is being falsely linked to the party in this alleged conspiracy, and noted that the woman's legal troubles across several North Indian states would eventually come to light.

In a separate press conference in Nellore, Former Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy lambasted the TDP for its history of luring and purchasing MLAs and MPs. He accused Chandrababu Naidu of distracting from his failure to meet election promises through political defections.

Reddy also alleged that TDP leaders are exploiting a supposed free sand policy to loot sand, causing a dramatic increase in sand prices, and warned of public protests if the issue is not addressed.

Apex Court pulls up TG CM...

Continued from Page 1

"Have you read in the newspaper what he said? Just read what he has stated. What sort of statement is this by a responsible chief minister? That might rightly create apprehension in the minds of people. Is this a kind of statement which should be made by a chief minister? A constitutional functionary is speaking in this manner.

"Why should they drag court in political rivalry? Do we pass orders after consultations with political parties? We are not bothered by politicians or if anybody criticises our orders. We do our duty as per conscience and oath," a three-judge bench headed by Justice B R Gavai told senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Revanth Reddy.

The apex court said it is a fundamental duty of political parties to show respect to institutions. "We always say we will not interfere in the Legislature, then that is expected from them also. Do we pass orders on political considerations?" the bench, also comprising Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan, said.

The observations by the top court came while hearing a petition seek-

ing transfer of the trial in the 2015 cash-for-vote case, in which Reddy is an accused, from Telangana to Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal.

Earlier in the morning, the top court had said it would appoint a special prosecutor to conduct the trial in the case to inspire confidence among the parties involved. When the matter was taken up in the afternoon, the apex court discussed the names of lawyers Surendra Rao and E Uma Maheshwar Rao as possible contenders.

The counsel appearing for the petitioners in the case referred to the statements made by Reddy and said the bench should ask the police to report directly to the court and not the chief minister about the progress in their investigation in the cash-for-vote case. Reddy also holds the home portfolio.

It was then that Justice Gavai questioned Rohatgi about the statements made by Reddy. "See the manner of the statement you (Reddy) made. Such statements by a chief minister!" the bench observed and asked Rohatgi to go over the statement.

Rohatgi apologised on behalf of Reddy and said, "Let me make amends and keep the matter on

Monday." "Let the trial be (held) elsewhere then, if you do not have respect for the Supreme Court," a visibly annoyed bench told Rohatgi, while posting the matter for the coming Monday.

At the outset, senior advocate C Aryama Sundaram, appearing for Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLA Guntakandla Jagadish Reddy and three others, sought transfer of the trial, saying the Telangana Chief Minister had been publicly making statements about the cash-for-vote case.

"Only on apprehension, how can we entertain...If we entertain such petitions, we will be disbelieving our judicial officers," the bench observed. Sundaram submitted that Reddy is now also the state's Home Minister. "There is a rule of natural justice that no person should be a judge in his own cause," he said.

On May 31, 2015, Revanth Reddy, then with the Telugu Desam Party, was apprehended by the anti-corruption bureau (ACB) while allegedly paying Rs 50 lakh in bribe to Elvis Stephenson, a nominated MLA, for supporting TDP nominee Vem Narendar Reddy in the Legislative Council elections.

Welfare of workers NDA...

Continued from Page 1

During the meeting, officials provided the Chief Minister with a detailed overview of existing factories, their employees, and the safety measures in place.

Labour Minister Vasamsetti Subash informed the Chief Minister that the number of employees utilising ESI services had increased from five lakh to 11 lakh between 2014 and 2019, but had drastically declined after the YSRCP came to power. Despite clear guidelines requiring a senior doctor to serve as the superintendent of ESI hospitals, the previous government failed to comply, the Minister added. He also briefed the Chief Minister on irregularities in the YSR Bheema scheme.

Upon learning of the pending release of Rs 54 crore of the State's share for ESI hospitals, the Chief Minister ordered the immediate disbursement of the funds. He also directed that the Labour Welfare Board, Minimum Wages Board, and Building and Other Construction Workers Boards be reactivated to ensure that workers have access to necessary services.

The Chief Minister further instructed officials to formulate a scheme to extend insurance coverage not only to industrial workers but also to Employment Guarantee workers, farm labourers, and other vulnerable sections. Chandrababu Naidu affirmed that the accident insurance scheme would be implemented in letter and spirit through DWCRAs Groups.

Amaravati to...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also addressed the stalled 'Happy Next' project, initially launched to provide housing within the capital area. The project had seen high demand during the TDP regime, with plots selling out in just one hour, but was neglected by the previous administration. Chandrababu ordered immediate action to revive the project. Furthermore, he noted that 3,558 acres still need to be acquired for the capital's development, with farmers willing to offer their land. He instructed officials to resolve any issues in allotting plots to farmers and to use drones for overseeing jungle clearance, of which 60 per cent is complete. Chandrababu also urged the swift progression of metro rail projects in Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada.

Low pressure...

Continued from Page 1

Thunderstorms with lightning and strong surface winds, ranging from 30-40 km/h, are likely in isolated places across North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam over the next five days, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next four days. Strong surface winds of 30-40 km/h are also expected in isolated areas of South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on September 2.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are predicted for many places or a few locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Rainfall was observed at many locations in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at a few places in Rayalaseema in the last 24 hours, the report concluded.

House panel to prepare draft...

Continued from Page 1

They will evaluate the current Excise policy, including its objectives, implementation, and impact on stakeholders, and identify any issues, deficiencies, and areas for improvement. The committee will also review effective practices and policies from other states to ensure a comprehensive approach to retail trade, including shops and bars, as well as the taxation and pricing of alcoholic beverages, considering the needs of various income groups.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee will adhere to the terms and conditions while reviewing and recommending the draft Comprehensive Excise Policy on Retail Trade, Pricing of Liquor, and Taxation for presentation to the Council of Ministers.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Dwadashi: Aug 30 01:37 AM to Aug 31 02:25 AM

Trayodashi: Aug 31 02:25 AM to Sep 01 03:41 AM

**Nakshatram:**

Punarvasu: Aug 29 04:39 PM to Aug 30 05:55 PM

Pushya: Aug 30 05:55 PM to Aug 31 07:39 PM

**Rahukalam:** 10:43 AM to 12:16 PM

**Yamagandam:** 3:22 PM to 4:54 PM

**Varjyam:** 02:30 AM to 04:13 AM

**Gulika:** 7:38 AM to 9:11 AM

**Amritakalam:** 03:24 PM to 05:05 PM

**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 11:51 AM to 12:41 PM

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Showers

Temp: 28°

Humidity: 91%

Sunrise: 5:54 AM

Sunset: 6:22 PM

Updated: August 29, 2024 5:00 PM

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# Vizag will be IT capital: Lokesh

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Minister for Human Resource Development, Information Technology, and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, has announced plans to introduce a new IT policy aimed at attracting major tech firms to Andhra Pradesh. Speaking at a recent meeting with the Andhra Pradesh IT Association in Visakhapatnam, Lokesh addressed concerns and outlined the government's strategy for the sector. "We will develop a new IT policy by looking at successful models from Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Chennai," Lokesh said. "Our goal is to create 2 million jobs in the state over the next five years, with the IT and electronics sectors playing a key role."

Lokesh also revealed that discussions are ongoing with India's top 10 IT companies, promising positive news about industry investments soon. "We are committed to setting up a world-class AI University in Visakhapatnam, similar to the Indian School of Business," he added. "Visakhapatnam will become an AI hub, integrating IT with robotics, healthcare, and education. We aim to turn the city into a \$100 billion economy within five years."

Highlighting former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's success in developing Hyderabad's IT sector, Lokesh suggested that the state is entering a new era of growth. "We are moving towards a



**"We are committed to setting up a world-class AI University in Visakhapatnam, similar to the Indian School of Business," he added. "Visakhapatnam will become an AI hub, integrating IT with robotics, healthcare, and education. We aim to turn the city into a \$100 billion economy within five years."**

'Chandrababu Naidu 4.0' model of rapid and efficient development," he said. "Our focus will be on decentralising development and making Visakhapatnam the IT capital."

The IT sector has faced several challenges in recent years. Despite previous high-profile projects, there was a lack of IT infrastructure and basic amenities. The new administration is working to address these issues. "We are working with industry leaders to design a better IT policy and clear outstanding incentive dues from the previous government," Lokesh said. "We will streamline incen-

tives for both existing and new IT companies through a green channel. Visakhapatnam will host 90 per cent of new IT industries."

The government also plans to attract Telugu IT professionals who have left the state for nearby regions. An ambitious skill census programme will be launched to improve youth skills, and educational reforms will be implemented. "Our universities aim to rank among the top 100 globally," Lokesh said. "We will offer better incentives to create jobs and focus on innovation, incubation, and communication in IT."

IT Principal Secretary Saurabh Gaur highlighted the renewed energy in the sector. "The government is dedicated to creating a significant number of IT jobs and improving infrastructure," Gaur said. "Since the new government took office, we have resolved 50 per cent of the issues facing Visakhapatnam's IT sector."

Andhra Pradesh IT Association president Lakshmi Mukhavilli called for greater support for women entrepreneurs in IT. "We need better incentives to encourage women in the tech sector," Mukhavilli said. "Both Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh are committed to this vision." Visakhapatnam MP Muthukumilli Bharat also stressed the need for improved air connectivity and social infrastructure. "We must develop security, transport, and high-speed internet to support the IT industry," Bharat said.

# Plea to grant industry status to tourism

Push comes as govt is gearing up to unveil a new tourism policy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Several key players in the hospitality sector of Andhra Pradesh are advocating for the industry status to be granted to tourism in the State. This push comes as the NDA government is gearing up to unveil a new tourism policy. Representatives from the sector, who spoke with *The Pioneer*, emphasised the need for improved connectivity, enhanced infrastructure for accommodation and entertainment, a package of incentives for job creation, a welcoming environment for large-scale projects, and timely completion of metro rail and airport projects.

During a recent interaction with tourism sector representatives, Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh announced that the government is working towards launching a new tourism policy in April 2025, focusing on sustainable tourism.

Ravi Godey, owner of Hotel Grand Central, highlighted the benefits of industry status, including easier access to bank loans at lower interest rates, concessional power tariffs, and MSME sector benefits.

He noted that 14 States, including Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan, have already granted industry status to tourism.

Godey also called for the development of a designated entertainment zone in



Visakhapatnam, similar to those found in Gurgaon. He suggested creating an exclusive park for statues of warriors and other historical figures instead of placing them along the beach road. Besides, he proposed using one side of the beach road for parking as it faces heavy traffic during weekends and holidays.

The stakeholders also urged the government to reduce the licence fees for bars in hotels. K Vijay Mohan, president of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism

Forum, pointed out that several star hotels in the city have not renewed their licences due to the high fees, leading to a loss of MICE events and destination weddings. He estimated that the State and the hotel sector are losing Rs 450-500 crore annually due to this. Another hotelier highlighted the impact of the previous government's excise policy on bar licences.

He requested that the government restore the pre-2019 bar fees for hotels in the new

tourism policy.

Varun Group Chairman Prabhu Kishore emphasised the need for a review of Coastal Regulation Zone restrictions that hinder the development of tourist infrastructure on the Visakhapatnam-Bheemuniapatnam beach road. O Naresk Kumar, vice-president of the Visakhapatnam Air Travellers Association, called for the government to adopt best practices from other States in its new tourism policy.



IPE Bhanumurthy Raju and NTR DSEO Subba Rao presenting School of Sports Excellence Award to Nuuna ZP High School at the DEO office in Vijayawada on Thursday

## Sports Excellence Award for Nunna school

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Zilla Parishad High School, Nunna, has secured second place in the State and first place in NTR district in the School of Sports Excellence Awards (Kreedha Prathibha Awards).

The Inspector of Physical Education (IPE) and Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh unit of the School Games Federation of India (SGFI), G Bhanumurthy Raju, announced the Kreedha Prathibha Awards, exclusively presented to schools excelling in sports in Andhra Pradesh, on Thursday. "The initiative aims to recognise and encourage the students who participate in sports, as well as the physical directors and teachers who train them," he said.

On the occasion of National Sports Day, which commemorates the birth anniversary of Hockey Wizard Major Dhyan Chand, IPE Bhanumurthy Raju, along with NTR District School Education Officer (DSEO) UV Subba Rao and Assistant Director KVN Kumar, presented the awards to Zilla Parishad High School, Nunna, at the DSEO office on Thursday.

School HM Vijayalaxmi Bhupal Reddy and Physical Directors T Vijaya Verma and T Sreelatha were honoured on the occasion. Besides, awards were presented to Patamata KBCZP High School for Boys, Patama, which secured second place in the district, STVR VMC School (third place), SKPVV Hindu High School, Kothapeta, (fourth place), and ZP High School, Nidamanuru (fifth place).

Bhanumurthy Raju emphasised the pride and recognition that come with sports achievements, extending to families, villages, districts, States, and the country. He acknowledged the contributions of teachers and donors. He also voiced concern over India's performance in Olympics, noting the need for more focus on sports to improve the country's performance.

DSEO UV Subba Rao praised Nunna High School for its achievements and encouraged other schools to use it as a model for striving for excellence. Plans were made to organise more prominent sports events in the coming year to further promote sports culture.

## 'Dak Adalat' on September 3

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Postmaster, General of Vijayawada Region, DSVR Murthy, has said that the Postal department has proposed to hold a regional level "Dak Adalat" to hear complaints and grievances of the public, relating to Postal Services. He said the Dak Adalat will be held at his office on September 3 at 3.00 PM.

In a release here on Thursday, Murthy stated that the complaints and grievances from the public of Vijayawada Postal Region may be sent in postal envelope/cover to Assistant Director (Staff), O/o Postmaster General, Vijayawada Region, Vijayawada -520 003 to reach on or before September 2. He explained that the letters and envelopes should be superscripted with "Dak Adalat". Murthy added that applicants may also attend the Dak Adalat in person, to submit their grievances.

## 'Crackdown on drug abuse'

DC stresses importance of awareness campaigns at the grassroots-level

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Parvatipuram District Collector A Shyam Prasad has issued a strong warning against the growing drug menace in the region, calling for immediate and coordinated action to curb the spread of narcotics and intoxicants. Addressing the District Level Narcotics Control Committee meeting on Thursday, the Collector emphasised the urgent need to apprehend those involved in the drug trade and take stringent measures to prevent the further influence of drugs in the community.

"We must educate people about the devastating consequences of ganja and other intoxicants," the Collector said, stressing the importance of awareness campaigns at the grassroots-level. "Strict measures will be implemented to prevent the infiltration of drugs into educational institutions," he added, vowing to hold individ-



uals neglecting their duties accountable. The Collector also announced plans to withdraw government schemes from individuals found cultivating cannabis or other narcotic crops. He highlighted the need to tackle illegal sand mining and transportation, calling for a coordinated approach by all departments.

Superintendent of Police (SP) SV Madhava Reddy echoed the Collector's sentiments, emphasising the government's commitment to eradicating drugs and intoxicants. He announced the establishment of a special phone line for the public to report information about drug activities.

# Bapatla played key role in history of Telugu language: Collector

Telugu Language Day observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bapatla district has a prominent place in the history of Telugu language and literature, said J Venkata Murali, District Collector. He inaugurated the Telugu Language Day celebrations organised under the aegis of Forum For Better Bapatla on Thursday. He garlanded Telugu Talli statue near the Tahsildar's office.

The Collector also remembered the services rendered by Gidugu Rama Murthy Pantulu. He stated that the Addanki inscription in the district is testimony to a flourishing Telugu literature, much before the available literary texts. He pointed out that the Addanki inscription contains the first poem ever



to be written in Telugu. He explained that Bapatla is also the birthplace of Telugu Talli as Bapatla poet Rayaprolu Subba Rao first coined the word 'Telugu Talli'. He further explained that one of the 'Trinity of Poets' who rendered 'Andhra Mahabharatam', Yerrapragada, was from Bapatla district. He was the

court poet of Addanki Reddy Kingdom. Poet Srinadha popularised the prabandha style of composition. He was the minister in Addanki Reddy kingdom, the Collector said. MLA V Narendra Varma said that Bapatla also gave birth to the Linguistic States Policy. The foundations for this policy can be traced in the First Andhra Conference held in Bapatla in 1913, he added.

Telugu poet Ramaswamy Reddy was honoured on the occasion. Forum secretary Dr P C Sai Babu, District Revenue Officer Satti Babu, Bapatla RDO G Ravinder, Bapatla Tahsildar G Sridevi, eminent writers, artists, educationists, students and Telugu language lovers were present on the occasion.

# Govt plans corpus to provide financial aid to athletes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CM will consider the proposal: Ram Prasad Reddy

The Minister for Transport, Youth Services, and Sports, Mandipalli Ram Prasad Reddy, has announced that the State government, under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, is considering establishing a corpus fund starting from Rs.2 crore to Rs.5 crore to provide financial support to deserving but financially struggling athletes in the State. He said that this proposal will be taken into consideration by the CM, who is planning to

conduct a review meeting on sports soon.

On the occasion of National Sports Day, Minister Reddy, along with badminton player PV Sindhu, flagged off a sports rally at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium on Thursday. The event was organised by the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh. During the programme, Minister Reddy and the SAAP Vice-Chairman and Managing



As part of National Sports Day celebrations held at the IGMC Stadium in Vijayawada on Thursday, Minister Ram Prasad Reddy administering oath to sportspersons

Director PS Girisha felicitated outstanding athletes. Earlier, Minister Reddy administered the oath to the athletes.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Reddy stated that if the youth are encouraged by giving proper coaching, they could excel at the international level and win laurels. During the TDP regime from 2014 to 2019, Chandrababu Naidu had implemented many programmes for the promotion of sports. After a

long gap, good days are ahead for the sports sector in the State, he said.

Further, he stated that the SAAP will support the sports development in the State besides providing financial assistance to the outstanding sportspersons. The SAAP authorities are doing well in providing advanced sports materials including offering the best coaching to athletes. Meanwhile, he donated his monthly salary of Rs.3,16,000 to provide coaching and sports kits to financially struggling athletes.

# 'False case' against actor: ACP Sranvanthi Roy appointed inquiry officer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Following recent allegations against several IPS officers regarding a false case imposed against Bollywood actor Kadambari Jethwani, NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu has appointed Assistant Commissioner of Police, CCS, K Sranvanthi Roy as the inquiry officer. He issued orders in this regard on Thursday, instructing ACP Sranvanthi Roy to thoroughly investigate the matter and submit detailed reports at the earliest.

This year, a false police case was registered against actor Kadambari Jethwani at Ibrahimpatnam Police Station. Recently, it came to light and has become a topic of political dis-

**Media reports claimed involvement of several cops including IPS officers in the matter**

cussion across the State. Allegations were made against one of the former Police Commissioners, as well as Deputy Police Commissioners in this case. The former Inspector of Ibrahimpatnam and other members of the Commissionerate were also involved in this case.

The State government has taken the matter seriously and directed NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu to conduct a thorough probe. In response, the Commissioner appointed CCS ACP K Sranvanthi Roy as the investigation officer.

Commissioner Babu said that he would be verifying the facts and discussing them with the Director General of Police (DGP), Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, to ensure the genuineness of the case. Media reports have claimed the involvement of several cops including IPS officers in a case foisted against Kadambari Jethwani, he said.

Furthermore, he said that as per the media reports, the Vijayawada police have faced allegations of a false case. A case was registered under Cr. No.90/2024 of Ibrahimpatnam Police Station this year. It was necessary to get into the details and find out the truth in the media reports, hence CCS ACP Sranvanthi Roy is being appointed as the inquiry officer, he explained.

# e-Cabinet and GO uploads win praise

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Move enhances transparency and operational efficiency

In a bold and transformative move, the TDP-led NDA government has reinstated the practice of uploading government orders (GOs) on the public domain through the GOIR portal, significantly enhancing transparency and operational efficiency. This decision, coupled with the reintroduction of the e-Cabinet system, has been met with widespread acclaim from business leaders, industry bodies, and the general public.

The government's renewed commitment to transparency is being hailed as a pivotal step in restoring public trust. "Reinstating the practice of making government orders publicly accessible is a monumental decision. It not only strengthens accountability, but

also fosters greater trust between the government and its citizens," said Dr V Murali Krishna, chairman, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Andhra Pradesh. "The e-Cabinet system further highlights the government's dedication to adopting modern, eco-friendly governance practices."

In alignment with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision, the government announced the historic decision to implement the e-Cabinet—a paperless Council of Ministers meeting system. The inaugural meeting under this new format was held at the Secretariat on Wednesday, marking a significant mile-

stone in the State's governance.

The e-Cabinet system, originally developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in Delhi, is not unfamiliar to Andhra Pradesh. It was initially introduced during the TDP government's previous tenure but was discontinued under the YSRCP regime. Now, in its reinstated form, the system offers a range of innovative features, including the ability to conduct paperless Cabinet meetings, secure and real-time access to documents, and a comprehensive digital repository of past meeting records.

"The return of the e-Cabinet system is a forward-thinking

move that demonstrates the government's focus on enhancing efficiency and sustainability," remarked Ravi Eswarapu, CEO of Andhra University Incubation Hub. "By leveraging advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics, this approach is set to revolutionise the State's administrative processes."

Central to the e-Cabinet system is the Cabinet app, which ensures a secure and streamlined process for Cabinet discussions. The app's features include encryption, access controls, and audit trails, safeguarding sensitive information from unauthorised access and potential

breaches. Additionally, the app supports virtual Cabinet meetings and integrates seamlessly with the e-office system, enabling better collaboration and real-time decision-making.

"The general public has also shown strong support for these initiatives. It's encouraging to see the government take concrete steps to improve transparency and efficiency," said Sumanth Rao, a Visakhapatnam-based entrepreneur. "The e-Cabinet system, with its focus on sustainability and technological advancement, is a clear indication of the government's commitment to future-proof governance."



### 180 kg of ganja seized, 2 peddlers arrested



PNS ■ KAKINADA

Police have confiscated 180 kg of ganja being transported illegally in a lorry on Thursday.

Officers intercepted the lorry near the Eathakota checkpoint on the national highway and seized cannabis valued at Rs 9 lakh.

Two smugglers from Uttar Pradesh were arrested. They reportedly admitted that the cannabis had been transported from Vizag to Rajahmundry in another lorry before being transferred to this vehicle for shipment to Haryana. A case has been filed and further investigation is underway, police stated.

## Kailash Satyarthi: Protect, educate neglected children

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Renowned child rights activist and Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi stressed the importance of protecting and educating neglected children in society.

A workshop titled 'Bagaru Balyam' was held at the RIMS auditorium here on Thursday, featuring Kailash Satyarthi, Minister Balaveeranjanya Swamy, and Collector Thameem Ansariya.

In his address, Satyarthi highlighted the collective responsibility to safeguard the future of neglected children and girls. He emphasised that every child deserves safety, freedom, health, and education, and called on everyone to contribute to child protection and upholding children's rights.

Satyarthi further underscored the need for diligent efforts to protect children's

rights and eradicate child labour. He expressed satisfaction with the District Collector's special focus on child rights, notably through the 'Bagaru Balyam' programme in the district.

He asserted that education is crucial for personal growth and that safeguarding children's rights is essential in today's society. Satyarthi noted that health, education, and protection of children are integral to the government's sustainable development goals and urged collective effort to achieve these objectives.

Reflecting on his experiences, Satyarthi mentioned that he has travelled to around 150 countries over the past 25 years as part of his child rights advocacy. Minister for Social Welfare Balaveeranjanya Swamy explained that the Collector organised the meeting in



response to incidents highlighted on social and media platforms. He noted the government's initiative to establish residential schools for children from impoverished families.

The Minister praised the Collector for inviting Satyarthi and emphasised that government welfare schemes for children must reach those in need.

Collector Thameem Ansariya stated that the 'Bagaru Balyam' programme was organised to provide a bright future for neglected children, aiming to ensure their health, safety, and education.

SP AR Damodar assured full support to district authorities in protecting children's rights and facilitating their education. Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna, Social Welfare PD Madhuri, and other officials also attended the event.

## Cops urged to prioritise health, utilise free medical services

PNS ■ KADAPA

District Superintendent of Police, V Harshavaran Raju, has advised police personnel to prioritise their health and seek medical treatment promptly in case of any health issues.

On Thursday, the SP inaugurated state-of-the-art Liver FibroScan (Liver Function) tests, organised by Zyudus HealthCare in collaboration with police personnel and their families, at the District Police Welfare Hospital.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP highlighted that, as part of police welfare initiatives, these expensive liver FibroScan tests are being provided free of charge. He encouraged police personnel to take advantage of this opportunity, receive timely treatment, and maintain a healthy life.

The SP further informed that on the 3rd and 4th of September, a free cancer screening camp will be organised for women police personnel aged 45 and above, and those who have been married for 20 years, as well as for women in their families. Under the supervision of doctors from Vijayawada Manipal Hospital, Pap smear and mammogram tests will be conducted. The SP urged police



personnel to utilise this opportunity. The event was attended by AR Additional SP SSV Krishna Rao, Police Welfare Hospital doctor Mary Sujata, and District Police Officers Association president Dulam Suresh, among others.

### VARALAKSHMI VRATHAM

## Dy CM distributes 12,000 sarees

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj Pawan Kalyan has demonstrated his commitment to women in his Pithapuram constituency by providing 12,000 sarees for the Varalakshmi Vratam celebrations. The event, held en masse at the sacred Paada Gaya Kshetram temple in Pithapuram, took place on the last Friday of Sravanam, August 30.

Each year, women gather to perform Varalakshmi Vratam



together at the temple on the final Friday of Sravana Masam. This year, Pawan Kalyan

arranged for the distribution of sarees, as well as holy Kumkum and turmeric powder, and assigned MLC Pidugu Hariprasad to oversee both the distribution and the smooth conduct of the ritual.

Pawan Kalyan instructed the MLC and the temple Executive Officer to ensure that every participant receives the holy Prasadam. To prevent overcrowding, Hariprasad has requested the Executive Officer to organise the Varalakshmi Vratam ceremonies in three separate batches.

## SP: Ensure efficient night patrolling in Kurnool district

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Superintendent of Police G. Bindu Madhav has issued instructions to police officials to ensure efficient night patrolling as part of maintaining law and order in the district.

The SP carried out surprise inspections on Wednesday night at Adoni One Town, Two Town, and Yemmiganur Urban police station limits. He supervised the night patrolling and guided the police personnel. The SP warned that stringent action would be taken against any dereliction of duty during night shifts. He instructed the officers to thoroughly check anyone behaving suspiciously in the area.

"Night patrolling and visible policing have been intensified, and CCTVs have been installed at vulnerable and busy locations to deter criminal activities. Crime hotspots must be identified, and patrolling should be



increased in those areas," the SP advised the officers.

The SP also directed police officials to conduct random patrols to identify offenders.

The SP further ordered that the Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) and Circle Inspectors (CIs) should oversee

patrolling during peak crime hours and in high-risk areas. He emphasised that maintaining law and order effectively is only possible through diligent patrolling. The DSPs, CIs, and Sub-Inspectors (SIs) were among those who accompanied the SP during the inspections.



## 35 APSRTC bus passengers have miraculous escape

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Thirty-five passengers travelling on an APSRTC bus had a miraculous escape when the vehicle overturned in an agricultural field at Momidi village in Chillakuru mandal on Thursday.

According to the police, the RTC Pallevelugu bus was en route from Nellore to Kota

via Muthukur when the driver lost control. The bus veered off the road and overturned in the field.

Remarkably, all 35 passengers emerged unharmed. However, two passengers sustained minor injuries and received medical treatment. RTC officials expressed relief that no one was seriously injured in the incident.

## Junior officials using HYDRAA for extortion: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has responded to complaints that some junior officials in Hyderabad have been engaging in corruption by intimidating people using the name of HYDRAA (Hyderabad Disaster Response and Management Authority).

He said that it has come to the government's attention



that revenue, municipal and irrigation officials are demanding money by using old notices and complaints filed two to three years ago. He warned that strong action would be taken against those involved in such extortion attempts.

The Chief Minister alerted ACB and Vigilance and has asked them to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

## 91-year-old with advanced tongue cancer gets new lease of life

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A 91-year-old patient diagnosed with advanced tongue cancer was successfully treated at the American Oncology Institute (AOI) in Kanuru, Vijayawada. The patient presented with complaints of an ulcer on the right side of his tongue, causing pain and a burning sensation while eating and was diagnosed with Stage III tongue cancer. The patient underwent a rigorous treatment plan consisting of radical radiotherapy under the expert care of Dr Sai Snehit.

Harish Trivedi CEO CTSI - South Asia, stated, "The success story of Surapaneni exemplifies the importance of accessibility to world-class cancer care in regional locations like Vijayawada. At AOI, we strive to bridge the gap in healthcare by bringing cutting-edge treat-

ment options closer to home. Our mission is to empower patients and their families with the confidence that they are receiving top-tier medical attention, irrespective of their location. This achievement in Kanuru highlights our dedication to transforming cancer care across South Asia." Mahendra Reddy, RCOO, AOI Vijayawada, said, "We are immensely proud of the exceptional care provided by our team at AOI Kanuru, Vijayawada. Surapaneni's case is a testament to our commitment to delivering advanced cancer care with a patient-centric approach. Our state-of-the-art facilities and dedicated medical professionals continue to set new benchmarks in cancer treatment, ensuring that even our most senior patients receive the highest quality of care."

## 8-member gang arrested in loan fraud case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The sleuths of Cyber Security Bureau, Wanaparthi and Kothakota Police, in a joint operation, arrested a gang of eight members involved in a large scale loan fraud case here on Thursday.

Arrested people have been identified as Varthiyavath Narsingh (32), Rathlavath Ramesh (32), Pothulapally Kurumurthy (28), Eslavath Ramulu (32), Kothapally Umesh (25), Boya Veeresh (24), Eslavath Suraj (18) and Varthiyavath Praveen (18).

Victims have lodged complaints against these people. The Cyber Security Bureau's data analysis team detected numerous complaints reported on the NCRP portal against several mobile numbers, revealing that the fraudsters were deceiving victims under the guise of providing loans.

## 'Space on Wheels' exhibition at Andhra Loyola College



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

ISRO scientist Sambasiva Rao has said that science is developing rapidly and students should be introduced to the latest technology.

On Thursday, the Department of Physics at Andhra Loyola College launched an exhibition of models with various elements named 'Space on Wheels' to celebrate the achievements of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

"From the first satellite sent by ISRO, Aryabhata, to Chandrayaan-3, we have made great achievements," he said. Further, he said that ISRO has

the honour of sending satellites into space that achieve wide benefits for the development of humanity at low cost and quality in the world.

Physics Department Professor T Sri Kumar said that the exhibition was a success with the help of a special vehicle from ISRO and the team of that organisation and models like Mangala Yan, Gaganayan and Aditya.

Andhra Loyola College Rector Dr PR John, Correspondent P Sagayaraju, Principal GAP Kishore, Intermediate Vice-Principal Raju, Physics Department P Srinivas Shastry and others were present.



Prohibition and Excise Joint Action Committee members felicitating Minister Savitha at her chamber on Thursday

## Aim is to make AP drug-free: Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Prohibition and Excise Joint Action Committee members have met the Minister for BC Welfare, EWS, Handloom and Textile, S Savithan to extend thanks for restoring the Prohibition and Excise Department in place of the Special Enforcement Bureau, at her chamber on the premises of the Secretariat at Velagapudi on Thursday.

They expressed happiness over the decision and extended

thanks to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Also, they told the Minister that they will strive to prevent ganja and drug menace.

In this connection, Minister Savitha said that the Prohibition and Excise Department should put an iron foot on the cultivation of ganja and its illegal transportation in the State. She said that her government is people-centric and the government has decided to transform the State into a drugs and ganja-free one. Besides, she was unhappy

that the youths are being led astray by the illegal sale of ganja and drugs. So, she appealed to the JAC leaders to take appropriate steps to prevent illegal cultivation, transportation and sale of ganja.

Prohibition and Excise Joint Action Committee chairman Babji Rao, secretary Narasimhulu, co-chairman M Kotiah, Superintendent Lavanya, Assistant Commissioner Swathi, Inspectors Varma, Kameswara Rao and others were present.

## BJP growing strong with 18 cr members: Purandeswari

PNS ■ GUNTUR

BJP MP D Purandeswari has asserted that her party has become a formidable force in the country, boasting a membership of over 18 crore.

Speaking at the Kisan Morcha State executive meeting here on Thursday, she noted that despite the opposition parties' misleading campaign suggesting that the BJP would amend the Constitution if elected, the BJP managed to secure



power, even though it lost 60 seats.

"The BJP has emerged as the largest political party in the world, with over 18 crore members. In Andhra Pradesh alone, the party has over 35.36 lakh members. BJP leaders have remained accessible to the public for the past decade, consistently addressing their concerns," she remarked. She also recalled that in 2012, the BJP had just 25 lakh members nationwide.

Highlighting the party's continuous growth, she stated that the BJP gains strength after every election, attributing its electoral successes in various states to the grassroots efforts of dedicated party workers.

Purandeswari clarified that the BJP only admits those who adhere to the party's ideology and guidelines. On the topic of sharing nomination posts, she mentioned that the three parties involved resolved the matter through negotiations.

## Collector flags off '3K Run'

PNS ■ ELURU

Collector K Vetri Selvi inaugurated a '3K Run' marathon on Thursday to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Dhyan Chand.

The Collector, accompanied by ZP Chairperson Ghanta Padmasri, launched the run at the indoor stadium. They paid homage to Dhyan Chand by garlanding his portrait. The 3K route included the new bus stand and a human chain was formed at the fire station.

In her address, Collector Vetri Selvi emphasised the importance of incorporating exercise into daily life and encouraged residents to ensure



that the Eluru district embraces the Fit India initiative.

She highlighted that the National Sports Festival was held in the district from 26 to 29 August. She urged everyone to dedicate at least 30 minutes a day to exercise to avoid health issues.

The Collector also advised that maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be achieved through yoga, meditation, walking, and participating in sports. Following the event, she distributed prizes to the winners of the sports competitions held from 26 to 29 August.



ACROSS THE STATES

FAIR PROCESS OF ARBITRATION

National interest vital: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said there was a vital national interest in ensuring that process of arbitration was fair and private sector has faith in the alternative dispute resolution mechanism for making investments in the country.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud observed that governmental interest was not only in getting favourable outcomes in arbitrations.

The bench, also comprising justices Hrishikesh Roy, P S Narasimha, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, is hearing arguments on the vexed legal question of whether a person ineligible to become an arbitrator can nominate another as one.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench that the government was interested in ensuring that arbitration as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism grows and whatever were the hindrances or what was preventing people from going into arbitration, especially the government agencies, was taken care of.

"One perspective which the government must also bear in mind is, if we are now today in an economy where we feel that private investment is crucial for the growth of the nation... there is a vital public interest or national interest in ensuring that the process of arbitration is



fair," the CJI observed.

"Equally the government, representing the nation, has to be concerned of the fact that you must have the faith of the private sector in the arbitration process to invest. It is not just foreign investors, but domestic investors also," the bench said.

At the outset, the solicitor general said arbitration has necessarily its roots in the contract and contract, by necessary definition, is an act of volition.

The bench observed there were some wonderful and amazing arbitrators "but we also have both ends of the spectrum today."

"Would you be therefore

contemplating a situation where the Government of India prepares a panel (of arbitrators) for all undertakings of the Government of India..." the bench observed.

Mehta responded, "My personal answer is yes. I will take instructions."

Giving example of public procurement, the solicitor general said the Centre makes the policy which was binding on all public sector undertakings (PSUs).

The day-long arguments in the matter remained inconclusive and would continue on Friday.

The apex court had on

Wednesday commenced hearing arguments on the legal issue.

It had heard submissions relating to provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, including the one on appointment of arbitrators.

Two references were made by three-judge apex court benches in 2021 for constitution of a larger bench to consider the issue.

The apex court had in 2017 and 2020 held that a person not eligible to become an arbitrator cannot nominate another person as one. However, in another matter in 2020, the top court had allowed the appointment made by a person who was ineligible to become an arbitrator.

The top court is now adjudicating the knotty issue.

The CJI had in June last year constituted a five-judge constitution bench to examine it.

On February 21, the Centre had told the apex court that an expert committee headed by former law secretary T K Vishwanathan has submitted its report on proposed reforms in the arbitration sector to the law ministry.

Amid a push for making India a hub of international arbitration, the government had set up an expert panel led by Vishwanathan to recommend reforms in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act in order to reduce the burden on courts.



'Taking hard stand to fight climate change not always practical'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Many initiatives to combat climate change rely heavily on public support and taking a hard stand may not always be very practical in a democratic country, Union minister Kirti Vardhan Singh said on Thursday.

Addressing ASSOCHAM's Environment and Carbon Conference here, Singh -- the minister of state for environment -- said a forward-thinking chief minister of Karnataka was promptly voted out after he decided to put a tax on "water usage for the farmers".

"A lot of initiatives to prevent climate change are heavily dependant on people and being a democracy, you know what it means... Sometimes, taking the right stand, taking

the hard stand may not be very practical in terms of being a democratic country," the minister said.

He said farmers in his home state of Uttar Pradesh were very happy because they had "all the power to pump out as much water as they want".

"In the recent elections, this was the topic to talk about in a positive way because you need votes. So, we would say we have so much irrigation resources today that our farmer just turns on the pump, goes home to sleep... and in the morning when he comes back to the farm, he has not only irrigated his fields but flooded the fields of his neighbours. And this was very appreciated when actually it's a sheer waste of our water resources," Singh said.



SC gets bigger creche facility for children of staff

The Supreme Court on Thursday unveiled a bigger creche facility on its premises which can accommodate around 100 children of the apex court staff and lawyers. As soon as a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud assembled to hear an arbitration related matter, he informed the advocates about the facility. "Today, we dedicated the new creche. The earlier creche was about 200 square metre and it could accommodate about 30 children. Now, we have a 450 square metre creche which accommodates close to 100 children for our staff and for the members of the bar," he said.

The CJI suggested the members of the bar to visit the creche in the administrative building complex of the top court. "It is a beautiful creche facility," he said. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was present in the court, said the bar members can contribute by donating toys and other such things to the creche. The CJI said the creche has a play area and sleeping area for children, bathrooms have been redesigned for the kids.



Days after joining BJP, Delhi councillor returns to AAP

One of the five Delhi councillors who quit the Aam Aadmi Party earlier this week to join the BJP returned to the AAP fold on Thursday, saying it was a mistake and he wanted to rectify it. Ramchandra, councillor from ward number 28, is a former MLA from the Bawana assembly constituency. In an official statement, the councillor said that he realised he took a wrong decision and met with senior leaders of AAP, including former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and Members of Parliament Sanjay Singh and Sandeep Pathak. Ramchandra said that joining the BJP was a big mistake, but now he wants to return to his family and rectify the error. In a post in Hindi on X, Sisodia said, "I met Aam Aadmi Party colleague and former Bawana Vidhan Sabha MLA Ramchandra. Today, he has returned to his Aam Aadmi family."

Part of Delhi BJP calls for 'CM face' for upcoming polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the February assembly election, a section of the Delhi BJP has been advocating for putting up a party face to challenge the Aam Aadmi Party led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

In the 2020 assembly election, the BJP contested against AAP without a leader as the CM face of the party.

In the election, the BJP was routed by the AAP, which emerged victorious on 62 of the 70 seats in the assembly.

"The debate over the issue has already begun with several senior leaders thinking that the BJP will benefit if it goes to poll with a face to challenge Kejriwal and AAP. They have already conveyed their sentiments to the national leaders in this regard," said a top leader of Delhi BJP.

Other leaders proposed several names who could be flag-bearers of the party's agenda.

"It could be anyone of the prominent leaders of the party like the MPs Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Bansuri Swaraj or



Manoj Tiwari, or state president Virendra Sachdeva, former MP Parvesh Verma or Leader of

"The debate over the issue has already begun with several senior leaders thinking that the BJP will benefit if it goes to poll with a face to challenge Kejriwal and AAP. They have already conveyed their sentiments to the national leaders in this regard," said a top leader of Delhi BJP.

Opposition in the Assembly Vijender Gupta," said another senior Delhi BJP leader.

The entire party rallying behind one leader will give a message of "unity" and also

streamline campaigning for the polls, he claimed.

The BJP fought the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls with Kiran Bedi as its Chief Ministerial candidate but failed miserably, a Delhi BJP leader opposed to the idea pointed out. Not only Bedi lost from Krishna Nagar seat, but the party also was "crushed" by the AAP, which won 67 of 70 seats.

According to the section, the debate is still open and the national leadership will take a decision on later on.

Danish court rejects extradition to India of an arms smuggling suspect

PNS ■ COPENHAGEN

A Danish court on Thursday rejected the extradition request from India of a Danish national accused of being involved in an arms smuggling case 29 years ago, going against Denmark's top prosecuting authority which had given the green light to sending Niels Holck abroad.

Holck admitted taking part in dropping assault rifles, rocket launchers and missiles from a cargo plane at Purulia in West Bengal in 1995. Indian police said they were meant for a revolutionary group in the country.

The Hilleroed District Court said that despite "the additional diplomatic guarantees" given by India "there is a real risk" that Holck will face torture or other inhumane treatment in India.

Holck, 62, said he feared for his life, if extradited.

"I would like to be held accountable in front of a judge because I believe it is a justified emergency, but I would rather not die from it," Holck told Danish radio DR



Thursday morning before the ruling was announced.

While a British citizen and five Latvians were arrested by Indian authorities after they dropped arms, Holck -- previously known as Niels Christian Nielsen -- escaped.

India first asked Denmark to extradite Holck in 2002. The government agreed, but two Danish courts rejected his extradition, saying he would risk torture or other inhumane treatment in India. That led to tense diplomatic relations between the countries.

In June 2023, Denmark again looked into a 2016 Indian extradition request, saying that the requirements in the extradition act had been met.

Kerala govt has invested Rs 1,000 cr to develop Ayush infra in state: CM

PNS ■ KOCHI (KERALA)

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the government has invested Rs 1,000 crore in the past three years to develop the Ayush infrastructure in the state, including an International Institute of Ayurveda Research and a new Ayurveda medical college in Idukki district.

The CM inaugurated a two-day Global Ayurveda Summit and Kerala Healthcare Tourism



here and set the tone for the deliberations by focusing on the policy initiatives of the state government to facilitate a holistic

healthcare environment. The summit is spearheaded by the Confederation of Indian Industry with support from the Ministry of Ayush and Central and State governments.

"Our strength lies in seamlessly blending traditional ayurvedic practice with cutting-edge modern medicine," Vijayan was quoted in a release issued by the organisers.

The speakers at the summit called for promoting Kerala as God's own healing destina-

tion by focusing on the unique strengths of the state in modern medicine, ayurveda, and tourism.

Addressing the various sessions of the event, they stressed the importance of a holistic and integrated approach in healthcare management by combining the latest developments in medical sciences and the indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, the organisers said in the release.

SIT for in-camera hearing of Prajwal's bail pleas

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Thursday requested the Karnataka High Court to conduct an in-camera hearing for the bail and anticipatory bail applications of former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who faces accusations of rape and sexual assault of several women. During the hearing, Special Public Prosecutor Ravivarman Kumar, representing the SIT, sought in-camera proceedings to protect the identity of the prosecutrix. Justice M Nagaprasanna said a decision on the plea must be taken by the Chief Justice. Prajwal's legal counsel also sought more time. Consequently, the court adjourned the hearing to September 5, while observing that this was not a case where leniency could be granted. Prajwal Revanna is in judicial custody since May 31 on charges of sexual assault following his return from Germany. Recently the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Criminal Investigation Department filed a charge sheet against former MP Prajwal Revanna for rape and his father and MLA H D Revanna for sexual harassment.

SHIVAJI STATUE COLLAPSE Ready to apologise 100 times: CM



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Under fire over the collapse of a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday asserted he would not hesitate to touch the feet of the warrior king 100 times and apologise for the incident if required.

Talking to reporters here, Shinde said the opposition has other issues to do politics on but Shivaji Maharaj, a revered figure in Maharashtra, should be kept out of it. As the collapse of the statue four days ago in Sindhadurg district continued to generate heat, the state government set up a technical committee to find out the reasons for the crash.

Mamata debunks allegations of 'threat' to agitating doctors

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday asserted that she did not threaten junior doctors at state-run hospitals, who have been continuing cease-work for 21 days now to protest against the alleged rape and murder of a woman medic.

Banerjee said accusations that have come from certain quarters of her threatening the agitating junior doctors are "completely false" and part of a "malicious disinformation campaign".

"Let me most emphatically clarify that I have not uttered a single word against the (medical etc.) students or their movements. I totally support their movement. Their movement is genuine. I never threatened them, as some people are accusing me of doing. This allegation is completely false," she wrote on X.

Addressing a rally organised by the Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad, Banerjee had on Wednesday urged the agitating junior doctors of Bengal to urgently consider returning to duty and said she doesn't want to lodge FIRs against the striking doctors in consideration of their future careers.



Agitating doctors interpreted the chief minister's remark as a "veiled threat" and rejected her appeal to join work.

Banerjee also wrote, "I have spoken against BJP. I have spoken against them because, with the support of the Government of India, they are threatening the democracy in our state and trying to create anarchy.

MEDICO RAPE AND MURDER

Audio clips to victim's parents surface, spark fresh controversy

KOLKATA: Three purported audio recordings of phone calls, allegedly made by RG Kar Medical College authorities on August 9 morning to the parents of the rape-murder victim asking them to report to the hospital, hit the public domain on Thursday and sparked a fresh controversy over "insensitivity" and "disinformation" of the institute's management in breaking bad news. The changes in statements on the status of the victim made by an official in those phone calls, whose authenticity PTI has not individually verified, raise questions on whether the hospital was initially trying to

cover up the ghastly crime. The caller, a woman who identified herself as the assistant superintendent of the hospital, reportedly dialed the parents of the victim from the same number thrice within a span of around 30 minutes asking their urgent presence at the facility. "I am calling from RG Kar hospital. Can you come over immediately?" the caller could be heard telling the victim's father when he picked his phone the first time around 10.53 that morning. The father responded, "Why? What has happened?" To this, the caller replied, "Your daughter has fallen a little ill.

Cong gave Rahul Rs 70 lakh each to contest from Wayanad, Rae Bareli

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress gave its leader Rahul Gandhi Rs 70 lakh each for fighting the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Wayanad and Rae Bareli, the party has disclosed to the Election Commission.

The only Congress candidate to get a higher amount was Vikramaditya Singh, who was given Rs 87 lakh from the party fund but he lost the election from Mandi seat in Himachal Pradesh to actor Kangana Ranaut of the

BJP. Other leaders to get Rs 70 lakh included Kishori Lal Sharma, who defeated BJP's sitting MP Smriti Irani, K C Venugopal (Alappuzha in Kerala) and Manickam Tagore (Virudhunagar in Tamil Nadu).

Congress candidate from Gulbarga in Karnataka Radhakrishna and Vijay Inder Singla (Anandpur Sahib in Punjab) also got Rs 70 lakh each. Senior Congress leaders Anand Sharma and Digvijay Singh, both of whom lost the elections, got Rs 46 lakh and Rs



50 lakh, respectively. Gandhi had won from Rae Bareli as well as Wayanad, but he retained the Uttar Pradesh

seat. The party had won 99 seats in the parliamentary polls with Gandhi winning from the two seats.

While there is a ceiling on expenditure a candidate can incur on electioneering, there is no such limit for political parties. In January 2022, based on the recommendation of the EC, the government had hiked the election expenditure limit for candidates to Rs 95 lakh from Rs 70 lakh for Lok Sabha elections and to Rs 40 lakh from Rs 28 lakh for assembly elections.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A close contest!

The rural-urban divide and the Jat-non-Jat paradigm could be crucial in deciding the Haryana assembly elections

As Haryana gears up for its upcoming elections, the state's political landscape is rife with complexities that reflect broader societal divides. Central to this is the rural-urban divide and the Jat-non-Jat paradigm, both of which are poised to play a crucial role in determining the electoral outcome. The recent request by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to change the polling date has added another layer of intrigue to an already charged atmosphere. Haryana's political fabric is deeply influenced by the rural-urban divide, a reflection of the state's socio-economic disparities. The urban areas, particularly key centres like Gurugram, Faridabad, and Rohtak, have traditionally been BJP strongholds. These cities, with their high migrant populations, represent a significant voter base for the BJP. However, the upcoming election is complicated by the timing of the polling date. Scheduled for October 1, the date falls within a period that could easily be extended into a six-day holiday, thanks to overlapping weekends and public holidays. The BJP fears that urban voters, particularly those in the NCR, may choose to use this extended break to travel, thereby potentially lowering voter turnout in areas where the party has a stronghold. Historically, rural turnout in Haryana has been higher than urban turnout, which could tilt the scales against the BJP if urban voters are absent.



Another crucial factor in the upcoming elections is the Jat-non-Jat divide. Jats, who form a dominant social group in Haryana, have traditionally been aligned with the Congress, especially in rural areas. The BJP, on the other hand, has found support among the non-Jat communities, particularly in urban regions. This division was evident in the 2024 general elections, where the BJP won all five Lok Sabha seats in non-Jat dominated areas. The BJP's support base in rural areas has been eroded, particularly among Jats, who have been disillusioned by the central government's response to their protests. The Congress is working to capitalise on this discontent by consolidating a Jat-Dalit-Muslim alliance in rural areas, which could pose a significant challenge to the BJP. In light of these challenges, the BJP's request to change the polling date has sparked controversy. The party argues that the potential for a long weekend could lead to lower voter turnout, particularly in urban areas where it has a strong base. The Congress has dismissed the BJP's request for date change as a sign of nervousness. The Election Commission's decision on the date change will be crucial, as it could influence the electoral outcome in a state where every vote counts. With ten years of incumbency and a narrowing margin of victory, the BJP is leaving no stone unturned to secure a favourable result. Whether the ECI will accommodate the BJP's request remains to be seen, but the upcoming elections in Haryana are shaping up to be a closely contested battle.

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## PICTALK



Visitors at India Gate enjoy the rains in New Delhi

RANJAN DIMRI

## How media shapes public perception

In a world where sensationalism often trumps substance, it's time to rethink how we engage with the news and what it says about the society we've built.



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The last few weeks have seen some major convulsions at the basic level of the Indian society. The listing can be long, depending upon the predisposition and values of the person making a list, or indeed brief if this person wants to strike a judgmental posture on what he considers important. This debate can merit its own resolution but the common-sense approach would make it obvious that the NEET examination and the Kolkata rape and murder episode have touched a very large number of minds and people who are in touch with the media. This itself raises another basic question. That has to do with the role of the media in attributing to an episode both circulation and importance. The reach and mode of the media become critical in identifying an issue and formulating it. One of the farthest reach of a media is through the radio. By and large, the radio is controlled by governmental agencies. This is followed by television, which is controlled both by the government and by some powerful private media houses. Both clusters claim a popular following, and both are accused of biases. Hence, to a fairly complicated question on what constitutes much of the news, there is a plausible answer: that which the media of the day decides to project and sustain as news. Thus it is that the role of governance/ownership of the mode of the media, in the identification of news, and sustaining it becomes critical. This brings us to a basic question: what constitutes news and how is it maintained at the frontlines? What is projected in so-called news is impossible for a private citizen to verify. That raises the question of the credibility of a channel. The credibility of the channel is itself a matter of popular perception, and it is also nurtured by reputation and conviction. To understand the gravity and implications of the statements and exposures above, one has to realize that news is both essential and dependent



upon the larger intellectual culture of the community where the news circulates. If the community is mature, it has developed safe parameters of credibility and conviction, and therefore one can be reasonably sure that what is being circulated is true. By and large, globally, the media, also, has its methods of checks and balances, standards and credibility, of reach and sustenance. Hence, whereas it may be a worthwhile debate to consider what constitutes news: origin, sustenance, and dissemination of news has certain standards across the globe. These, are like many things in life, having largely acknowledged standards without much vagueness. These are considered givens of a civil society. Hence the conclusion that if the general media projects something, it must be the truth, or at least the truth in good faith. Reference has been made above to the NEET episode and the Kolkata murder and rape case. The jury is out on both cases, and a conclusions are awaited. The civil society is maintained on such pillars. However, two questions emerge: given the attention which both of these cases have received, is this the only news which affected



THE BASIC TRUTH IS ALSO THAT IT IS NOT SOME INTRANSIENT STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF THE MEDIA THAT SUSTAINS ITS LIFE BUT THE ECONOMIC FORCES WHICH NURTURE ITS EXISTENCE

the wellbeing of the people, and is there a question of the proportion and inter-se importance of news? To debate the importance of both of the two episodes mentioned above would be a pointless exercise. However, by the same token, it is true that there are other activities effecting every-day living and have been, in a manner of speaking, overlooked. Hence, after resolving the concerns related to credibility arises an issue of the relative importance of the items being reported. It would be a common place to say that sensational news spreads faster and catches more attention than routine news, no matter how important it may be. Good news travels slower and catches less attention. The healthiness of a society needs to be assessed against objective indicators of health, and clearly one of them would be how much mileage does a positive news get as compared to the mileage a negative news gets. The strength of a society comes not only from handling the unhappy episodes which lead to news but also from giving positive news the importance that it deserves. It is here again that the media need continuous help in introspection. The basic truth

is also that it is not some intransient strength and weakness of the media that sustains its life but the economic forces which nurture its existence. As indicated above, if the media disseminates sensational information, it is because that kind of information is read more widely and followed more avidly. The problem therefore originates not just with the media but with the people who use the media. Further, it becomes a question of mass contact and mobilization of mass opinion. The time has come when one needs to revisit what constitutes a civil society and how a civil society exercises its choices and preferences. The economic and financial flows merely run in the channels which have been created with such efforts. Essentially, therefore, a question is: what is the kind of society which one has given to oneself and how do its norms get modified and operated, also, through the media? As indicated above, this is merely the sub-structure to a much larger edifice that the society has built for itself. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## A STATUE OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY

Madam — The recently collapsed statue of Shivaji in Maharashtra, is a grim reflection of political expediency. That a statue of one of the most revered and respected figures of Maharashtra has collapsed barely nine months after its inauguration, speaks volumes about the malpractices that must have gone into the installation of a statue that was expected to last a good part of a century.

Instead of expressing remorse and regret, the political class is doing what it knows best — ducking responsibility and pointing fingers. The pedestal and all that remains of the statue ought to be cordoned off, and preserved as a reminder of the gross failure of the present day dispensation. Near it, a stone plaque should read — This site is an admission of the government's failure to do justice to the memory of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, whose statue collapsed just nine months after it was dedicated to the people of Maharashtra.

We promise that this will never happen again. We hope to be forgiven by the people of the state with whose money the statue project was commissioned. To atone for our grave mistake, another statue is being constructed nearby. We assure you that it will last many many years and be a fitting tribute to a historical figure who is so dear to our hearts. I know too well that the shameful episode will soon be forgotten by our netas as well as the public.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

## IMPLEMENT MISSION SHAKTI

Madam — Many people are prone to depression due to the harsh realities of life like low income, pollution, bad relationships, lack of education, etc. During this post-depression, if a person does not hope to become well, then it is a sign of mental illness. The consequences of inaction are dire. Without effective support systems, women in the country are left vulnerable to violence, harass-

## The logic of Changing election date



Haryana BJP's State Election Management Committee has logically put forward the view that there is a weekend holiday before the assembly election date on October

1 and there are some holidays after that. INLD has also agreed to postpone the assembly elections. Opposition parties are hell-bent on condemning every aspect of the ruling party. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has expressed concern over low voting percentage where people use long weekend holidays on the day of polling.

Shifting the election dates will definitely help in increasing the voting percentage. Earlier also, the dates of elections were changed in Rajasthan, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, the change of date is not important but the change of mind of voters will be more meaningful. The election Commission is a statutory independent body and should remain firm on its stand rather than bowing to the political pressure which often times is self serving than for the public good.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

ment and exploitation. Every day, stories emerge of women who have been failed by the very systems that were supposed to protect them. These are not just isolated incidents; they are symptoms of a much larger problem — a systemic failure to prioritise women's safety. It's time that the country wakes up to the harsh realities and takes a hard look at where we stand and acknowledge that we are failing our women. The outrage over the incident in Kolkata should serve as a wake-up call for the nation. We cannot afford to delay any longer. We need immediate action to fully implement Mission Shakti in a broader sense and the narrow minded approach of neglecting women must be a priority.

In conclusion, addressing the root causes of depression and systemic failures is crucial to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of women in our country. The recent incident in Kolkata is a stark reminder that we cannot continue to ignore the harsh realities faced by women daily. It's time for collective action to fully implement initiatives like

Mission Shakti and move beyond narrow-minded neglect. Only by prioritizing women's safety and mental health can we hope to create a society where every woman is protected, respected, and empowered. The time for change is now.

K Subramaniam | Mumbai

## REVIVAL OF VIVACITY

Madam — As an avid reader of The Pioneer, I am delighted to see that Vivacity is being published regularly for the past few months. I always enjoy reading Vivacity and Agenda, the reviews about art exhibitions, culture and movies being my personal favourites. Your past few features have been great, especially the Rakshbandhan one. Today, I read about the Heritage Walk and I will definitely visit Purana Qila now. The food review section is and has always been great!!!

Atharv Singh | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Emotional intelligence: The secret of outstanding leadership

As the next era of leadership unfolds, the demand for emotionally intelligent leaders has never been clearer—are you ready to rise to the challenge?

Today's corporate climate is fast-paced and continually evolving. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the secret weapon that distinguishes great pioneers from average ones; it is accompanied by a long list of excellent technical qualifications. But what precisely is this elusive talent, and why is it becoming a defining characteristic of outstanding leaders? It is the ability to control our emotions and understand and empathise with others. It forms a link between self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. To speak more specifically to leaders, emotional intelligence is not only desirable but even more crucial for leaders than the desire to influence others and inspire their teams to greatness. This is where EI comes into play, somewhat like the oil that keeps the motor of leadership running. Emotionally intelligent leaders express ideas with clarity and empathy, make judgements based on both logic and emotion and maintain strong team morale and productivity. They prefer to ride out the



storm rather than be tossed by it, and instead look to harness it for growth and innovation. But how do aspiring leaders cultivate this crucial ability? It begins with reflection. Frequent self-analytical practices, such as journaling or meditation, may promote insight. Encouraging feedback—even the difficult kind—and viewing failures as opportunities for improvement are also important components. The most critical aspect is empathy and listening to others rather than simply hearing them. This final trait will propel a good leader to new heights. Take, for example, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. Since the beginning of his term in 2014, he has been considered as the driving

force behind the company's cultural shift from fierce competitiveness to collaborative innovation. So, what's the magic? A leadership style relies mostly on emotional intelligence. Empathy-driven continuous learning and development mindset not only rebuilt Microsoft's reputation but also its financial performance to unprecedented heights. Another excellent example is Jacinda Ardern, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand. Ardern's leadership style, which includes speaking with compassion, making clear tough decisions, and uniting the country in the face of tragedy, highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in political leadership. Looking ahead, it is clear that one aspect of good lead-

ership will remain central: emotional intelligence. While the next wave of technology will undoubtedly replace occupations in the future, leaders in any area will need to possess increasingly humane qualities such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. The message is clear: to be an effective leader in the twenty-first century, we must continue to improve our emotional intelligence alongside our technical proficiency. Whether you aspire to be an established CEO or a team leader, investing in your emotional intelligence can pay you in terms of career success and personal fulfilment. Remember that developing emotional intelligence is a lifetime journey that promises to improve not only your leadership style but also your overall approach to life and relationships. As leaders, we commit to leaving a legacy based on how we make others feel and the relationships we build. The future of leadership is in emotional intelligence: isn't it time you took the initiative? (The author is a freelance writer, views are personal)

The author is a freelance writer, views are personal



RACHNA LAKHPATRI







## FIRST COLUMN

### UKRAINE: INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE

#### PM Modi's historic Ukraine visit signals new foreign policy approach



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Ukraine, last week, comes at an interesting churn of events on the geopolitical landscape. The visit, a first, by any Indian PM since Ukraine was first carved out as an independent sovereign nation, had many layers of interpretations regarding India's new foreign policy approach. The timing was significant as this trip came barely six weeks after PM Modi's state visit to Moscow. The Russia trip was widely criticised by India's strategic ally US, primarily due to the timing. Even as PM Modi was in Moscow, the NATO leaders were huddled together in Washington, discussing military aid for Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia bombed a children's hospital in Ukraine leading to the loss of lives for civilians and children. President Zelenskyy had condemned India's PM's first visit to Russia during his third term and the US State Department had also issued stern statements regarding the trip. Indian PM had also avoided participating in the Peace Summit organised in June, to find a political solution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The recent visit by PM Modi to Ukraine, even as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was in Washington DC was a statement regarding India's fine balance diplomacy in times of war. President Biden, called up the Indian PM soon after his visit to Ukraine to apprise him of the prevailing situation.

The readout released from the White House read "President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. spoke today with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India to discuss the Prime Minister's recent trip to Poland and Ukraine, as well as the United Nations General Assembly meetings in September. The



President commended the Prime Minister for his historic visits to Poland and Ukraine, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in decades, and for his message of peace and ongoing humanitarian support for Ukraine, including its energy sector. The Leaders affirmed their continued support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict by international law, on the basis of the UN Charter." Interestingly, the Indian PM also spoke to President Biden regarding the ongoing crisis in Bangladesh and expressed concern regarding the safety of minorities, especially Hindus, which was highlighted in the Indian statement after the telephone conversation. The Bangladesh situation omission from the White House readout did create some murmurs across Delhi corridors. India is now making efforts to have its own Europe policy, which is not curated with a Russia factor in mind. For several decades post-independence, the Cold War era, the block approach mostly guided India's foreign policy, especially where Russia was involved. Russia has been a long-standing ally of India and is also one of the biggest exporters of defence equipment. While maintaining silence on sensitive Russia-related topics has been India's long-standing approach, things began to change in the past few years. There is a growing sense of having an independent need-based foreign policy, amongst the top policymakers. PM Modi initiated the concept of "not a time for war" at multilateral platforms such as G20, which started finding global resonance when vocalising concerns regarding Ukraine and Russia. He used the narrative with his clear message to Russia during his Moscow visit that permanent solutions could not be found on the battlefield. The joint statement issued post PM Modi's meeting with President Zelenskyy read "The Indian side reiterated its principled position and focus on peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy. Prime Minister Modi reiterated the need for sincere and practical engagement between all stakeholders to develop innovative solutions that will have broad acceptability and contribute towards early restoration of peace." The message to global leaders, particularly the US and Russia that the recent PM Modi visit highlighted was that India is willing to engage with any nation, even if they may be in opposite camps, to find the best possible outcomes for itself.

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

# Prospects of privatisation of PSUs are bleak



UTTAM GUPTA

### As the Modi government shifts its strategy towards 'prudent public wealth management' the prospect of privatising PSBs are increasingly unlikely.



Announcing Modi - government's policy on disinvestment of central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) in her Budget speech for FY 2021-22 the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman had talked of privatizing two public sector banks (PSBs) and one insurance company.

A CPSU is an undertaking in which the Central government has majority share holding of more than 50 percent. Disinvestment refers to sale of its shares to private investors. When, such sale results in reduction of the government's shareholding in the CPSU to below 50 percent and concomitant transfer of ownership and management control to private entity, this is termed as privatization. The disinvestment plans have met with disappointing results so far.

During 2021-22, against a target of Rs 175,000 crore, the actual proceeds from share sale of CPSUs were a meager Rs 15,440 crore. During 2022-23, against a target of Rs 65,000 crore, the actual was Rs 31,059 crore. For 2023-24, the actual was Rs 14,564 crore against a target of Rs 30,000 crore which itself was watered down from the budget estimate (BE) of Rs 51,000 crore. As for privatization, except for the sale of Air India to the Tata Group during 2021-22, the government has little to show. Apart from offloading 3.5 percent of its shareholding in the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), it is selling its stake in the IDBI Bank. The process of selling the latter that started in May 2021 is likely to get consummated during the current FY.

However, it can't be termed as privatization as already the bank was operating as a private lender even as the Centre became its passive shareholder consequent to capital infusions to manage former's bad debt losses. Currently, the government and the LIC collectively own 94.72 per cent of IDBI Bank with shareholding of 45.48 percent and 49.24 percent respectively (the remaining 5.28 percent is with Public shareholders). Of this, the Centre plans to sell a 60.7 percent stake, comprising 30.5 per cent of its own and 30.2 percent of LIC's.

Will the Centre take up selling of PSBs and an insurance company - as promised in the 2021-22 budget?

It seems unlikely. If, that were to be the case,

the government ought to have set a target for receipts from disinvestment in its budget for 2024-25. But, it hasn't even as the FM has made a provision for Rs 50,000 crore under the head "miscellaneous capital receipts". This has happened for the first time in a decade.

Second, Team Modi is reviewing its strategy to shift its focus from selling CPSUs to what it euphemistically describes as 'prudent public wealth management (PWM), supporting not-for-profit enterprises, and ensuring strong presence of state-run firms in strategic sectors'. Banking, insurance and financial services (BIFS) were one of the four strategic sectors mentioned by Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech for 2021-22.

BIFS also qualifies for not-for-profit enterprises categorization especially when it comes to PSBs which are expected to contribute to realizing social objectives such as reaching out banking services to remote and inaccessible areas; making concessional credit available to small and marginal farmers and other vulnerable/deprived sections of the society; funding infrastructure development particularly in areas (for instance, rural roads, housing for the poor etc) where private banks may not be so keen to come.

Modi - government's commitment to a strong presence of state-run firms in strategic sectors juxtaposed with support for not-for-profit enterprises clearly signals that it has lost interest in privatizing PSBs and insurance companies.

Third, unlike the previous two terms when BJP had an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha on its own, in the third term, it depends on the support from its major allies namely TDP and JD (U) for implementing far reaching decisions such as privatization. Moreover, in the current political environment wherein even a small move such as 'lateral entry' of specialists from the private sector (the sole intent

behind this step was to deliver more effective governance in sync with contemporary challenges) is opposed by the opposition parties forcing the government to retreat, it wouldn't be inclined to make a big move such as privatization of PSBs.

About a decade back, many of PSBs were on the brink. The present dispensation has made a lot of efforts to them pull back. These included amongst others capital infusion, enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) for expeditious resolution of non-performing assets (NPAs), banks consolidation into fewer entities for achieving scale and greater efficiencies, computerization of bank branches and so on. Today, they are robust and healthy even as the performance of some of them is even better than private banks.

But, we shouldn't miss the big picture. Fundamentally, most of the ills associated with the functioning of CPSUs including PSBs have a lot to do with their continued majority ownership (share holding of more than 50 percent) and control by the government. This brings them under a plethora of controls and monitoring/surveillance/vigilance and has the effect of shackling its management.

Armed with it, the political establishment makes all board level appointments viz. CMD/MD etc and deposes bureaucrats on a bank's board to represent its overwhelming ownership. In other words, the entire board is geared to listen to his master's voice (read the political bosses) when it comes to taking policy decisions or even in its day-to-day running. In the past, meddling in the affairs of PSBs took the form of what came to be known as the cult of 'crony capitalism'.

The businessmen patronized by the ruling class managed loans on considerations other than merit and got them ever-greened (taking

a new loan to payback the earlier one). Neither, the banks insisted on repayment, nor the defaulters had any sense of fear as those who were expected to take action, chose not to.

In the past, the political brass also rode piggy back on PSBs for absorbing losses/liabilities created by populist policies such as supplying power to farmers and households at subsidized rates, (or even free in some states). Be it a spate of bail-outs given to power distribution companies (discoms) or loan waivers given to farmers etc, these inflicted heavy loss on PSBs.

The idea of disinvesting PSBs should be seen as a befitting response to the dire need for reducing bureaucratic interference and granting autonomy to their management for speedy decisions and improved functioning. It was first mooted by the NDA - dispensation under the then, prime minister Vajpayee (1999-2004). It had proposed reduction in government's shareholding in PSBs to less than 50 percent initially and eventually to 33 percent.

In 2015, a RBI committee headed by P Nayak recommended setting up of a bank investment company (BIC) where all government shares in PSBs will be vested and divestment of its shareholding in all PSBs to below 50 percent. It also proposed setting up of an autonomous Bank Boards Bureau (BBB) to select their top management.

In 2020, the RBI recommended reduction in the shareholding of the government in six top PSBs to 51 percent. In a follow up meeting, it went a step further to recommend reduction in government's stake to 26 percent. The 2021-22 budget announcement to privatize two PSBs was a good step forward, though belated. To put it on the backburner now doesn't bode well for banks' health in the long-term.

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



AS FOR PRIVATISATION, EXCEPT FOR THE SALE OF AIR INDIA TO THE TATA GROUP DURING 2021-22, THE GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE TO SHOW. APART FROM OFFLOADING 3.5 PERCENT OF ITS SHAREHOLDING IN THE LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION (LIC), IT IS SELLING ITS STAKE IN THE IDBI BANK.

# Global interference and India's economic sovereignty

### As India rises to become a global superpower, it faces challenges not only from within but also from international entities that aim to disrupt its economic and political stability

The prosperity and progress of a nation hinge on the efficiency of its governance, particularly in upholding the rule of law by those in top constitutional, administrative, and judicial positions. This also involves the transparency and accountability of regulatory regimes across various sectors of law and economy. In our modern era, characterized by freedom, equality, and democracy, many developing countries have emerged from the shadows of colonialism. Despite independence, the remnants of colonialism persist in governance and social structures, and former colonial powers often carry a lingering sense of superiority. This is evident in their interventions in other countries, where they create



V K BAHUGUNA

political and economic crises under the guise of promoting cosmopolitan values. These interventions are particularly harmful to independent and dynamic leaders in Third World countries. A recent example is the destabilization of the Hasina Wazed government in Bangladesh, fueled by agitation with foreign backing. In recent years, such external forces have formed an international cartel, often

referred to as the "deep state." This group, supported by a segment of religious extremists and a political elite, acts against their own country's interests for selfish reasons.

This insidious influence is spreading to stable democracies like India. Direct military intervention is difficult in modern times, so these forces resort to destabilizing social, political, and economic fabrics with the help of internal collaborators.

They present themselves as the arbiters of morality, creating narratives to discredit certain groups, undermine social harmony, and ultimately destabilize economies. Their goal is to generate public unrest and overthrow democratically elected governments by eroding the state's capacity to man-

age public welfare. This is a fallout of globalization and an attempt to reassert hegemonic control.

One prominent example is the Hindenburg Research firm, which targeted Adani Enterprises last year, leading to a severe crash in the Indian stock market and a major political storm just before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress party seized the opportunity, and the Supreme Court ordered an inquiry, which eventually discredited Hindenburg's report. However, this month, Hindenburg targeted the SEBI Chairperson, accusing her of investing in Adani companies abroad. Both SEBI and Adani Group denied any wrongdoing, explaining that the investments were made before she took on her



role at SEBI. Similar uproar was seen when the Rafale aircraft deal was signed in 2015. When Hindenburg first targeted Adani, it made a profit of \$4 million, while Adani lost \$153 million in market value. However, this time, the public saw through the ruse, dismissing it as the tantrum of a disgruntled entity. It is common for companies to

establish subsidiaries abroad, and such activities are always under regulatory surveillance, operating within the law.

Historically, India lacked a robust private sector, with Tata being the only notable corporate entity during the era of the "license raj." However, thanks to economic liberalization under the Narsimha Rao government, the private sector has grown significantly and now contributes around 27% of the country's GDP. The Indian private sector is now a crucial engine for employment, service delivery, capital flow, and industrial growth. The public sector, on the other hand, focuses on activities serving the general public, funded by tax revenues. Gautam Adani's conglomerate plays a central role in India's ambition to

become the third-largest economy, with its involvement in key sectors like electricity, port management, mining, natural gas, and infrastructure.

Among the top taxpayers in 2022-2023, only the State Bank of India (SBI) was a public sector entity, with Reliance Industries leading the list, followed by SBI and HDFC. The GDP at constant prices in May 2024 was tentatively estimated by the Indian Statistical Office at Rs173.82 lakh crore, with real Gross Value Added at Rs158.74 lakh crore for 2023-24, marking an 8% increase over the previous year. Various private sector industries played a pivotal role in this growth. Adani Group dominated the list of top value gainers in 2022, adding Rs 8.42 lakh crore to investor wealth.

When any country challenges the supremacy of these foreign powers, they attempt to destroy it by spending vast sums of money. The 'Make in India' initiative is gradually positioning Adani as a global industrial leader, alongside other Indian giants like Ambani, Tata, and Mahindra. India's technological advancements and the societal contributions of companies like Tata are gaining recognition. This is precisely why foreign forces forge alliances with frustrated leaders and anti-national elements, funding them to gain control over governance. The current government must take stronger actions rather than merely offering rhetoric.

(The writer is a former civil servant; views are personal)



IN BRIEF



Gold slips Rs 100; silver plunges Rs 600

Gold prices slipped Rs 100 to Rs 74,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had ended at Rs 74,350 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also plunged by Rs 600 to Rs 87,200 per kilogram, extending the losses in the second straight session on Thursday from the previous close of Rs 87,800 per kg. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also declined Rs 100 to Rs 73,900 per 10 grams on Thursday. It had settled at Rs 74,000 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Traders attributed fall in the gold prices due to reduced demand by jewellers in the local markets. On the global front, comex gold is trading at USD 2,555.10 per ounce, higher by USD 17.30 per ounce or 0.68 per cent. "Gold prices rose on Thursday and traded within a range as traders remained cautious ahead of the release of key US macro data, including US unemployment claims and GDP data," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.



Retail inflation rates for farm, rural workers ease

Retail inflation rates for farm and rural workers eased to 6.17 per cent and 6.20 per cent, respectively, in July. The retail inflation rates for farm and rural workers were 7.02 per cent and 7.04 per cent, respectively, in June this year. The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and for rural labourers (CPI-RL) registered an increase of 10 points each in July, reaching 1,290 and 1,302, respectively, a labour ministry statement said. The CPI-AL and CPI-RL were 1,280 points and 1,292 points, respectively, a year ago. According to the statement, year-on-year inflation rates based on CPI-AL and CPI-RL for July were recorded at 6.17 per cent and 6.20 per cent, compared to 7.43 per cent and 7.26 per cent in July, 2023. The corresponding figures for June 2024 were 7.02 per cent for CPI-AL and 7.04 per cent for CPI-RL.



Eicher to incentivise customers scrapping old vehicles

Eicher Trucks and Buses, a business unit of VE Commercial Vehicles, on Thursday said it has launched a programme to incentivise customers for scrapping old vehicles to purchase new trucks and buses. Under the terms of the scheme, buyers of new vehicles holding a valid 'Certificate of Deposit' from any recognised scrappage centre can receive incentives ranging between 1.25 per cent to 3 per cent of the base vehicle cost of a vehicle with payload or seat capacity equivalent to the scrapped unit, the company said in a statement. In case equivalent vehicles are not available, it would be possible for customers to purchase trucks or buses with immediate higher or lower tonnage or seating capacity, it added. The programme is valid from September 1, 2024, and will run for a period of 2 years or until further notice, the company stated. "The forward-looking Vehicle Scrappage Policy by the government represents a transformative step towards promoting a circular economy."

Moody's ups India's GDP growth forecast to 7.2 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Ratings on Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for 2024 and 2025 calendar year to 7.2 per cent and 6.6 per cent, respectively, on strong broad-based growth.

The ratings agency said that the growth could be higher if the cyclical momentum, especially for private consumption, gains more traction.

"From a macroeconomic perspective, the Indian economy is in a sweet spot, with the mix of solid growth and moderating inflation," Moody's Ratings said in its August update of Global Macro Outlook 2024-25.

As per the projections, India's GDP growth would be 7.2 per cent in 2024, up from 6.8 per cent previously. In 2025, the growth is estimated at 6.6 per cent versus our earlier estimate of 6.4 per cent.

"We have raised our real GDP growth projections for the Indian economy for 2024 and 2025... These forecast changes assume strong broad-based growth," Moody's said.

The economy expanded 7.8 per cent year-over-year in the first quarter of 2024 despite the



Fitch retains India rating

Global rating agency Fitch on Thursday affirmed India's 'BBB-' rating with a stable outlook on strong growth outlook and fiscal credibility. Fitch said India is set to remain among the fastest-growing sovereigns globally with GDP growth of 7.2 per cent in the current fiscal year and 6.5 per cent in FY26, down from 8.2 per cent in FY24. "Fitch Ratings has affirmed India's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default

Rating (IDR) at 'BBB-' with a Stable Outlook," the global rating agency said in a statement. Fitch has kept India's sovereign rating unchanged at 'BBB-', the lowest investment grade, since August 2006. Earlier in May, US-based S&P Global Ratings upped India's rating outlook to positive from stable, while affirming the 'BBB-' rating on improved quality of government expenditure and robust GDP growth.

persistence of tight monetary policy and demonstrated progress on fiscal consolidation.

Moody's said signs of a revival in rural demand are already emerging, on the back of improving prospects for agricultural output amid above-normal rainfall during the monsoon season.

Non-financial corporate and bank balance sheets are significantly healthier than before the pandemic, and firms are increasingly tapping equity and bond markets to raise capital. Moody's said a recent paper by the RBI also projects a 54 per cent jump in private capex in the current financial year.

The capex cycle should continue to gain steam amid rising capacity utilisation, upbeat business sentiment and the government's continued thrust on infrastructure spending.

Supporting the growth dynamics is rapid and widespread digitalisation of the economy, driven by the government's investments to build digital public infrastructure (a trid of identity, payments and data management solutions), growing telecom and internet penetration and low data usage costs.

Reliance not built on largesse; not hoarding wealth: Mukesh Ambani

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man, on Thursday said each of his sprawling conglomerate's businesses was built from scratch and were not received as largesse, as he laid out growth plans at India's most valuable company.



Ambani, 67, also said his Reliance Industries, which has interests in oil refining, oil and gas production, petrochemicals, telecom, retail, and media, was not pursuing short-term profits or hoarding wealth but instead is creating wealth and working to provide energy security to the nation.

He went on to add that personal or family wealth holds no importance to him and is working to pass on the baton at Reliance to the next generation.

Ambani, whose three children are on board of Reliance and look after different verticals - Isha, 32, for retail, twin brother Akash for telecom and youngest Anant, 29, for new energy - has most of his net worth of USD 112 billion com-

ing from his 42 per cent stake in Reliance.

He took over Reliance after the death of his father and legendary industrialist Dhirubhai and transformed what was a textile and petrochemical company into a USD 250 billion conglomerate that also owns the world's largest single-location oil refinery.

After a split with younger brother Anil, he grew its petroleum operations and branched into new areas, such as retail, telecom and media.

"We have built each of our businesses from scratch and grown them to a global scale. We did not receive them as largesse," Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd, said at the company's annual shareholder meeting.

The richest man in Asia and, for a brief time in 2008, a contender for the title of the wealthiest man in the world, said Reliance stood for wealth creation and not short-term profiteering.

Cos with potential to move goods fast can set up e-comm export hubs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A company with the potential to aggregate fast moving goods like textiles, handloom, handicrafts, gems, jewellery and ship those items on demand can set up e-commerce export hubs in the country, an official said.

The official said that companies having a good sourcing network, logistics backup and good warehousing new port of exit can also set up these hubs.

The directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT), under the commerce ministry, will soon meet companies that are interested in setting up e-commerce export hubs (ECEH) in the country, the official said.

The DGFT has invited proposals from the industry to set up these hubs for examination, support and hand-holding.

Based on the proposal, further details, including software requirements for ECEH, to facilitate seamless and expeditious export clearances will be firmed up.

RALLY IN RELIANCE, TATA MOTORS SHARES

Sensex, Nifty hit all-time high levels

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit their all-time high levels on Thursday, driven by a fag-end rally in index majors Reliance Industries and Tata Motors.

Robust buying in energy and FMCG stocks also supported the domestic equities, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 349.05 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,134.61,

extending its winning momentum to the eighth day in a row. During the day, it soared 500.27 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a lifetime intra-day peak of 82,285.83.

The BSE gauge has surged 1,709.93 points or 2.12 per cent in eight straight trading sessions.

Rallying for the 11th straight session, the NSE Nifty surged 99.60 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,151.95. During the

trade, the benchmark climbed 140.55 points or 0.56 per cent to hit a fresh record intra-day peak of 25,192.90.

In 11 trading days, the NSE Nifty has jumped 1,012.95 points or 4.19 per cent.

"Nifty ended on a strong note on Thursday aided by buying across frontline stocks in the last hour of trade," said

Deepak J a s a n i , Head of Retail Research, H D F C Securities.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Motors jumped over 4 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, HCL Technologies, ITC, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Maruti and State Bank of India.

Final guidelines on project loans likely in 2-3 months: RBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The final project loan guidelines are likely to be announced in the next two to three months, a senior RBI official said on Thursday. The norms regarding the Expected Credit Loss (ECL)-based provisioning are in an advanced stage of discussion, the official told reporters here.

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed to set aside 5 per cent of the total exposure to a project till the construction of the project is on.

Fearing a hit to profits, banks have been asking for a relook into it, as per reports.

The RBI official said up to 60 responses have been received on the project loans draft, and the central bank is going through all the suggestions.

When asked about the timelines by when the final guidelines will come in, the

official said it will take "at least 2-3 months", but did not give a specific answer on whether the guidelines will be implemented from April 1 next year onwards.

To a question on the ECL framework, the official said the norms are in the 'advance stages' of discussion.

The official admitted that there is an "overlap" on both the ECL and project finance norms, but seemed non-committal on whether both the guidelines will come in together.

RBI permits foreign investors in IFSC to invest in sovereign green bonds

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Thursday introduced a scheme to permit foreign investors in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) to invest in sovereign green bonds to facilitate wider non-resident participation in such instruments. The government issued sovereign green bonds (SGRBs) in January 2023.

SGRBs were also issued as part of the government borrowing calendar in FY2023-24. At present, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) registered with Sebi are permitted to invest in SGRBs under the different routes available for investment by FPIs in government securities.

Earlier in April, the Reserve Bank announced the plan -- Scheme for Trading and Settlement of Sovereign Green Bonds in the International Financial Services Centre in India -- to facilitate wider non-resident participation in SGRBs.

On Thursday, the RBI issued a circular permitting eligible foreign investors in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) to invest in such bonds.

Govt identifies 38 priority rail projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday said it has identified 38 priority rail projects under the coal logistics plan that will be fast-tracked in close coordination with the Ministry of Railways.

These projects are important for improving rail connectivity, ensuring timely coal supply and reducing logistics costs, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency of coal transporta-

tion across the country. Among these projects, the government has recently approved two significant rail projects in Odisha - the Sardega-Bhalumuda double line and the Bargarh Road-Nawapara Road single line -- the coal ministry said in a statement.

The 37.24-km Sardega-Bhalumuda new double line, passing through various coal blocks of the IB Valley and Mand-Raigarh Coalfield, will help in the evacuation of coal from mines operated by Coal India arm M a h a n a d i Coalfields Ltd and several private mines.



The project is strategic as it reduces the transportation distance to power plants in the northern part of the country from Sardega,

thereby enhancing efficiency. Similarly, the 138.32-km long Bargarh Road-Nawapara Road new single line will significantly improve coal evacuation from the Talcher Coalfield, providing a direct and shorter route towards Nagpur and the western regions.

This project is likely to substantially reduce logistics costs and improve the overall efficiency of coal transportation from the Talcher region.

Reliance aims to enter luxury jewellery segment

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The country's leading retailer, Reliance Retail, which crossed the Rs 3 lakh crore-revenue mark in FY24, is aiming to double its business in the next 3-4 years, Reliance Industries Director Isha Ambani said on Thursday while addressing the company's AGM.

Now, three of Reliance Retail's private labels have crossed Rs 2,000 crore in annual sales, and a few are lined up above Rs 1,000 crore, Isha said, adding that its registered customer base crossed a milestone of 300 million.

Reliance Retail, which crossed a valuation of USD 100 billion, has plans to enter the "luxury jewellery segment with a curated, design-led experience and is exploring the fashion jewellery and accessories segment", she said. "With strong foundation we have built, I am confident that we will achieve our goal of doubling our retail business in the next 3-4 years," Isha said.

Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani said Reliance Retail, which operates over 18,836 stores, has become among the top-5 global retailers in terms of the number of stores.

UPCOMING FESTIVE SEASON

Two-wheeler industry expects robust growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The two-wheeler industry is expected to witness robust sales in the upcoming festive season, riding on the back of strong revival in rural demand and bountiful monsoon so far, according to TVS Motor Company Senior Vice President - Head Commuter Business Aniruddha Haldar. In an interaction with PTI, he noted that the growth in the two-wheeler industry is also being driven by rising acceptance of scooters in the rural areas. "In the first few months of this fiscal, we have seen the

two-wheeler industry growing at 13 per cent, which is higher than what we have seen in the recent years. "Even more heartening is the fact that in recent times we are seeing the rural demand starting to outstrip urban areas," Haldar said. When rural demand starts outstripping urban demand it is a very good sign for the two-wheeler industry as a whole, Haldar noted.

"Given these indicators and the fact that monsoon this year, while it has given us excessive blessings in some areas, on the whole it has been bountiful. We are confident that the overall two-



wheeler industry going into the festive season will exceed the current growth rates," he said. TVS is confident of outperforming the industry growth

and becoming relatively stronger, he added.

Elaborating on the factors helping the two-wheeler segment revive after years of muted growth, Haldar said:

"What we see happening is that the acceptance of scooters has increased even among rural markets".

The scooter segment now accounts for 32 per cent of the total two-wheeler industry and it is set to grow further, he said.

"I think moving forward, there will be a greater share of the market that will move towards scooters. And you see that because there was a time when the cost of switching between a motorcycle and a scooter meant a reasonable amount of loss in terms of mileage, which, thanks to technology, that gap has narrowed considerably," Haldar said.

Rooftop solar capacity growth in India rises 26 pc to 1.1 GW

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country added 1.1 GW of rooftop solar capacity in January-June, up 26 per cent year-on-year over 873 MW in the year-ago period, according to a report.

In the second quarter of the 2024 calendar year, 731 MW of rooftop solar systems were installed, an increase of 89 per cent from 388 MW in April-June last year, US-based research firm Mercom Capital said in report released on Thursday.

As of June 2024, India had a cumulative installed rooftop solar capacity of 11.6 GW, the



India Rooftop Solar Market Report" said.

The industrial segment accounted for over 23 per cent of the quarterly installations, while commercial and government segments accounted for 4 per cent and 0.7 per cent of capacity additions, respective-

ly, it said. "The rooftop solar sector in India is finally taking off, largely due to the Prime Minister's rooftop solar initiative (PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana), which has sparked unprecedented consumer interest," said Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group.

"We anticipate consistently higher installation rates in the residential segment moving forward. However, if issues like module availability, component shortages, and escalating costs are not resolved, it can pose a challenge," Prabhu said.



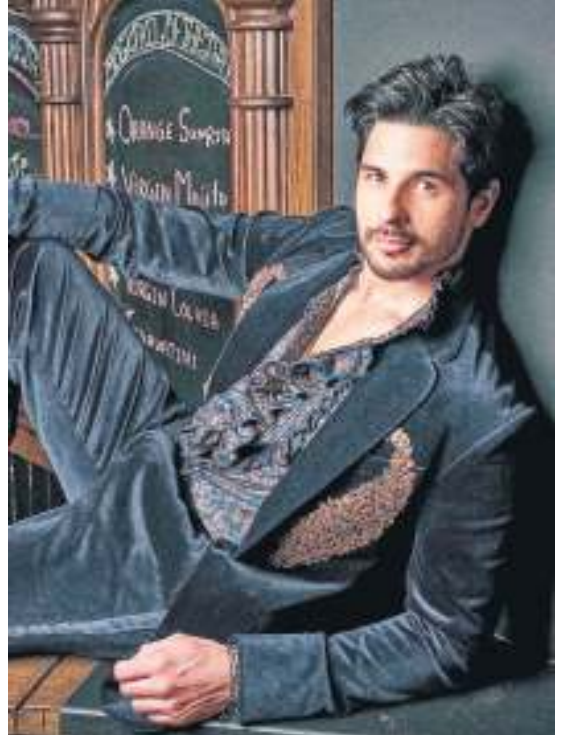


## Gwyneth Paltrow joins Timothee Chalamet in *Marty Supreme*

Hollywood star Gwyneth Paltrow will feature alongside Timothee Chalamet in filmmaker Josh Safdie's upcoming film with studio A24. Titled *Marty Supreme*, the film will see Chalamet playing the role of the ping pong player Marty Reisman. It is written by Safdie and Ronald Bronstein, who are also producing the film alongside Eli Bush and Anthony Katagas. According to reports, the upcoming movie will mark Paltrow's first on-screen role since 2019's *Avengers: Endgame*. Marty Reisman was an American table tennis player and author. He was the 1958 and 1960 US Men's singles champion and also had bat champion in the 1997 US. He died in December 2012. The project reunites Safdie with A24, the banner that produced his earlier movies *Uncut Gems* and *Good Time*, which he co-directed with brother Benny. Paltrow is best known for her Academy Award-winning role in *Shakespeare in Love* as well as movies such as *Sliding Doors*, *Emma*, *Se7en*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Proof* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. She played the role of Pepper Potts in multiple Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), starting from *Iron Man* in 2008.

## SIDHARTH MALHOTRA RETURNS TO ROMANCE FOR DINESH VIJAN'S FILM

Bollywood star Sidharth Malhotra is getting ready to reignite his love for acting in movies. Following a string of thrill-filled movies such as *Mission Majnu* and *Yodha*, along with the web series *Indian Police Force*, Malhotra is excited to go back to the genre that initially made him famous. According to the latest buzz around his next project, Sidharth Malhotra is slated to star in a new romance film produced by Dinesh Vijan. The actor has been in talks with Vijan's production company for a while and was instantly captivated by the script. The upcoming project, which remains untitled, will be helmed by Tushar Jalota, acclaimed for his direction in the movie *Dasvi*. A source revealed, "Sidharth has been in talks with Dinesh's production house for some time. He loved the script and is excited to team up with a banner that is known for bringing modern romances to the screen." Malhotra will be returning to the genre that he first pursued in his early career with this new film. He made his first movie appearance in *Student of the Year*, a college romantic story and later appeared in various other romantic comedies like *Hasee Toh Phasee* and *Baar Baar Dekho*. Malhotra is convinced that his fans appreciate watching him perform in romantic roles. Nevertheless, he was committed to steering clear of the cliché and went in search of a love story with a distinct and rejuvenating vibe. This new project appears to have aligned perfectly with his vision. If all goes as expected, filming for this romantic project will start later in the year. Expect to see Sidharth Malhotra returning to the genre soon, showcasing his charm and talent in a fresh love tale for his fans to enjoy.



## 'I approached Phir Aayi Haseen Dillruba with much more confidence'

Following the release of *Khel Mein* in theatres and *Phir Aayi Haseen Dillruba* on OTT back-to-back, Taapsee Pannu is quickly establishing herself as the queen of alternate box office. From her intense performances in films like *Thappad* and *Badla* to her more light-hearted roles in *Manmarziyaan* and *Shabaash Mithu*, she has consistently proven her ability to navigate different genres and characters with ease. In an interview, Taapsee opened up about her role Rani in both the parts of the *Haseen Dillruba* franchise. Taapsee said, "For me as an actor, I was more confident about part 2 than part 1. Part 1 was like me being a fish out of water, because no one had ever given me the role of a seductress, who's going to use her femininity to her advantage. I've always been chosen for parts like head strong ones, who is just going to fight it out for the right and all of that. So for this kind of a role, my casting wasn't obvious. I was very picky way in the first part. But as the second part came in, I knew what the audiences had liked and not. I kind of was like now I'm getting confident, I'm going to now amp it up. I used all the feedback and everything that I learnt from part 1 and approached part 2 with much more confidence. That is why Rani of *Phir Aayi Haseen Dillruba* will look far more in control and far more clear about what she wants, and how she wants and what she is going to do for it than part 1." Taapsee Pannu's recent success with *Phir Aayi Haseen Dillruba* on OTT further highlights her versatility and enduring appeal in alternate box office.



## Kriti Sanon divulges her excitement on reuniting with Kajol

Kriti Sanon has been on a tear this year with back-to-back box office hits, as both her films *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* and *The Crew* crossed the Rs. 100 crore mark. The actress is set to debut as a producer with her production house, Blue Butterfly Films, in the upcoming film *Do Patti*, where she will also be starring alongside Kajol. This project marks a significant reunion for Kriti and Kajol, who last shared the screen nearly nine years ago in the blockbuster *Divyaale*, where they were portrayed as sisters in a memorable on-screen dynamic. Reflecting on her past experiences and the upcoming reunion, Kriti shared, "The energy and the vibe on the set were so chill and so cool that we had to be fierce and strong. We were bursting into laughing. Of course, because Kajol ma'am was there." As they prepare to reunite for the making of *Do Patti*, she added, "I am



shooting with her after so long. I remember shooting with her in *Divyaale* and that was my second film. I was such a baby. I didn't know anything. I was suddenly in front of these big stars. And, to now shoot after so long, you know where I am sure that I have evolved, grown, become a better version of myself... And, she [Kajol] is the same vibrant, looking even better with every passing year and every passing day. Her energy is infectious." With a National Award for Best Actor under her belt for her portrayal of Mimi Rathod in the film *Mimi*, Kriti Sanon is now set to showcase her versatility as an actress once again, this time in the thriller genre with *Do Patti*. This captivating mystery, which marks her production house's first project, set in the hills of North India. The film is slated to release on Netflix later this year.

## Jeff Goldblum brings Zeus to life in dark comedy *Kaos*

Jeff Goldblum has stepped into the role of Zeus, the all-powerful king of the Greek gods, in Netflix's upcoming show *Kaos*, a modern-day reimagining of ancient myths. Just before the release on Thursday, the actor gave fans a taste of what to expect from his portrayal of the mighty, yet flawed god. "My character is complicated and charismatic, not to mention cruel," he shared, revealing that Zeus's vanity and paranoia come to the surface when he notices a wrinkle on his forehead—an omen of his impending downfall. "Charlie Covell's writing hit me like a bolt of lightning," added the *Jurassic Park* star, calling it "spectacularly smart, surprising and deeply moving." *Kaos*, created by Charlie Covell, who also brought the critically acclaimed *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* to Netflix, blends elements of Greek mythology with a contemporary twist. The trailer that was released a few days back, gives a sneak peek into this darkly comedic series, where Zeus, desperate to maintain his status, will stop at nothing—even if it means ruthless decisions that scar everyone around him. Co-star Janet McTeer, who plays Zeus's wife, Hera, hinted at the chilling evolution of his character throughout the show, saying, "As the story unfolds, audiences will find themselves increasingly unsettled by him." Despite its dark undertones, *Kaos* remains true to Covell's knack for black comedy. The title itself, a play on the word "chaos," suggests a story filled with turmoil and disorder, but Covell hints that there's more to it than meets the eye. "We think the word chaos is bad, but actually, chaos can be good, possibly," she teased, indicating a deeper meaning behind the show's name. Notably, Goldblum was brought on board to replace Hugh Grant, who had to exit the project due to scheduling conflicts.



### FUN

#### ARCHIE

#### CALVIN AND HOBBS

#### GARFIELD

#### REALITY CHECK

#### SPEED BUMP

#### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6		7		8
9	10	11		
12		13	14	
16	17		18	
		19		

#### SUDOKU

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

#### NANCY

#### GINGER MEGGS

#### ACROSS

- A happy sound
- This supports your head
- Goes rotten
- Tiny mark
- A liquid measure
- A house made of hard snow
- This makes dough rise
- Follows seventh
- Final
- A long strip of paper used as a decoration

#### DOWN

- Avalanche
- A male relation
- Neat
- Take delivery of

5 Purchase  
8 Someone watching a game or show  
10 You wear these  
14 A type of clock that makes a noise to wake you up  
15 Blacken with heat  
17 Frozen water

SOLUTION 833

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D	N	N	E	T
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# Wijayawada



AARTI SREENATH

## 'Austria's less crowded streets offer a peaceful retreat'

The talented actor Anushka Sen, who celebrated her 22nd birthday travelling through the scenic beauty of Amsterdam, Munich, Prague and Austria, takes *The Pioneer* through her travel diaries from the trip



"Mumbai is a city that never truly sleeps. Landing back after an international trip felt like stepping into a city alive with activity, even at 2 a.m. The relentless enthusiasm and dreams of its people make Mumbai special. Living here, I appreciate the city's vibrant spirit and drive." Hotels are more than just a place to rest for the *Dil Dosti Dilemma* fame as they add a unique touch to the journey. She further explains, "From the Renaissance hotel in Amsterdam to the Hilton stays in Prague, I value accommodations that reflect local culture and aesthetics, transforming a simple stay into an integral part of her adventure."

Travelling serves as her ultimate escape from stress. Exploring a new place, she says, is invigorating. "While Italy's beauty and tranquility are special, the excitement of discovering a new culture recharges me. Goa offers a quick respite, where I can unwind at a luxurious resort and enjoy the beach."

One of her most exhilarating experiences was skydiving in America. "It wasn't on my itinerary, but I decided to go for it," she recalls with excitement adding, "It was terrifying yet thrilling. My time on *Khatron Ke Khiladi* gave me the courage for such daring feats. The feeling of freefalling was liberating and I'd love to repeat it in another country." For her, travelling is not just a passion but a dream come true. "Travelling has always been at the top of my wish list," she reveals. "Being an actor has allowed me to pursue a career I love and share these experiences with my family." Her diverse palate reflects her love for various cuisines. "I adore pasta and biryani, but Korean cuisine, with its depth and unique dishes like *tteokbokki*, had surprised me," she says. Her travels are also filled with memorable adventures, from walking 16,000 steps a day to trying skydiving and range shooting. Anushka's travels have also left her with a collection of cherished souvenirs, including tote bags from over 20 countries and a special Henri Willig cheese. Her packing strategy includes using mini products for efficiency and organisation. Her playlist, a vibrant reflection of her musical tastes, features songs by KK, Mohit Chauhan and The Weeknd. Enrique music plays a significant role in her travels, with playlists created to match her characters and destinations. "I also switch to punjabi songs, regional music sometimes spanish too" she said. Anushka's musical preferences are as dynamic as her travels. "Whenever I get a new character role, I create a playlist that reflects what that character would listen to," she explains. "Music plays such an important role in my life; it's like a soundtrack to my journey. I'm listening to music 24/7 and it really impacts and enriches my experiences." Her travel experiences have even led to amusing cultural misunderstandings, such as a humorous moment in Korea involving a gesture she initially misunderstood. Her travels are a treasure trove of memories, each journey enriching her life and broadening her outlook. "I was shopping and came across this elderly lady who seemed to be trying to communicate with me," recalls the actor adding, "I didn't understand what she was saying and before my translator could kick in, she started making a fist and holding it up towards me. I thought, 'Oh no, is she about to punch me? Is she angry?' I was genuinely scared!" It wasn't until later that Anushka learned the true meaning behind the gesture. "In Korea, making a fist and showing it is actually a big compliment," she explains with a laugh. "It means that your face is as small as a fist, which is a way of saying you're cute or pretty. The whole situation was a hilarious and enlightening moment, reminding me just how important it is to understand and embrace different cultural nuances."

She has cultivated a remarkable collection of souvenirs from her global adventures, reflecting her deep appreciation for the unique and extraordinary. Her travels have yielded an impressive array of keepsakes, from tote bags collected in Paris, Korea and Amsterdam to miniature landmarks like the Eiffel Tower and Burj Khalifa.

TEJAL SINHA

Following a series of heartfelt songs, singer Prateeksha

Srivastava has been grabbing attention with her latest track *Galtiyan*. This track is a welcomed change from her typical style, as she adopts a lively, hyper-pop sound, presenting a fun anthem that delves into the sometimes ignored perspective of a woman in love. Hailing from a musical familial background, she had her Indian classical training ever since her childhood. What really began with Kathak and Tabla, eventually turned into playback singing. The Lucknow-native later shifted to Mumbai to try out her luck, during which she began composing her own songs.

"Ironically, I never won prizes in singing," recalls the *Jogi Ho Gaya* singer in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*. "I always used to win prizes in Tabla or in Kathak dancing. However, I think when I was in high school, it was then that I started singing a lot of Bollywood songs. Before that, trust me, I never even listened to Bollywood songs and listened only to Indian classical music. When I actually started singing that, I realised this is something that I think I am good at and I can take it further professionally as well." For the unversed, Prateeksha was into the top 5 finalists in *Zee Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs* in 2009, which turned out to be a good exposure and experience for the studious person that she was. However, the decision-making of getting into playback singing was only after her high-school.

Coming to her latest track, *Galtiyan*, the *Tumse Dil Lagakar* singer says that she was tired of making sad songs. "I used to love making sad songs, I still do. But I realised that I was only manifesting sadness in my life. My friends used to tell me 'you should make something fun so that something good starts happening in your life'. So I'm this single kind of a person. No dating, nothing, whatever heartbreaks I had was years back. Thus, this time I was like why not let's do something fun."

Until then, she did not know this side of her and as she started writing *Galtiyan*, she realised she has a lot of fun things to write about. "I definitely wanted to explore this. I am extremely drawn to hyperpop, which is not that popular in India but it is very popular in the West and everywhere. I really wanted someone to be on board for this hyperpop soundscape and I just met Asad on Instagram. It just happened very naturally. So *Galtiyan* is like one of the most natural songwriting processes that happened and shaped."

With this song, she had a certain loop in mind and as she went live on Instagram, she made the first half tune of *Galtiyan* and sent it over to Asad. Later, he produced some music around it and that's when she started writing the lyrics. "I wanted it to be a melodic rap kind of a song. So that's when I started using a lot of easygoing words in the song, a lot more than what a regular song has. I started experimenting and then I posted a video on Instagram singing that and the response was really nice. People still go back to that even now after the release of the song. It was then that I completed the second half of the song and sent it to Asad again, we met and rapped the song," enthuses the *Naina* singer, who further goes on to recall the story behind the video was different behind the scenes altogether. "I've never danced or done any of these pop piece stuff in the video. However, I was like I have learnt Kathak so why not? I got my friend Suneha Chauhan on board. She's a choreographer and she did the job beautifully. The videographer put this entire thought into action. I'm a relatively shy person, so I was really uncomfortable with the thought that I can make and write lyrics around flirting but can't really flirt in real life or in the music video. So they made me dance and now the song is out for you all to watch."

Talking of the emotions that we get to see in the song, she brings a whole new world with it. "It's all about how a girl is attracted to a guy and how she has that craving to chase that guy, flirt with him and follow-up with him, tease him and embarrass him. I really want to make a lot of songs about this, about a woman's perspective." So what's more on the plate with Prateeksha is definitely a lot of songs, in the space of a woman's perspective and love, starting from flirting to going up till maybe a proposal, fights, ups and downs and a lot more. "I would like to explore different genres because I don't confine myself based on a genre. I'm looking forward to exploring more of hyperpop and dance beats," signs off the adroit singer on a concluding note.

Heading towards the end of this interesting Travelogue with the popular star, we get to hear, "I love picking up interesting items that capture the essence of each place I visit. My collection of tote bags now spans over 20 countries and I have a variety of magnets that are a staple for any traveller. But this time, I stumbled upon something truly exceptional—Henri Willig cheese. It's not just any cheese; it's a special variety that can stay fresh for up to 30 days, if stored correctly. I was so excited to bring it back because it's one of my favourite cheeses. It's a rare and delightful souvenir that brings a taste of my travels right to my home."

## 'GALTIYAN IS A MELODIC RAP WITH A PLAYFUL ROMANCE'

SINGER PRATEEKSHA SRIVASTAVA, WHO IS CURRENTLY ENJOYING THE RESPONSE SHE HAS BEEN RECEIVING FOR HER LATEST TRACK GALTIYAN, SPEAKS TO *THE PIONEER* ABOUT THE SONG AND ALSO TAKES US THROUGH THE MAKING OF IT.



## BUSTING MYTHS AROUND CHOLESTROL

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 32 percent of deaths annually, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Among these, 85 percent CSD related deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes. Risk factors such as obesity and high cholesterol contribute to heart-related conditions, which require lifestyle modifications and proper diet plans. However, there are misconceptions about cholesterol, which need to be busted to help people adopt healthier practices to tackle it. Dr. Ravishankar Polisetty, the pioneer in Polyscientific Ayurveda (PSA), emphasises the importance of understanding the differences between HDL and LDL cholesterol. He decodes misconceptions surrounding good and bad cholesterol, which combine traditional wisdom with modern technology.

**Myth 1: Only bad cholesterol causes heart attack**  
 There are good and bad types of ghee, depending on your choice and the same applies to cholesterol. Though High-density Lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol is often referred to as 'good' cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) as 'bad' cholesterol, variations in both can be reasons for cardiovascular diseases. Scientific studies suggest that having very high levels of HDL and very low levels of LDL can also increase the risk of heart attacks. This means that the impact of cholesterol on heart health depends on an individual's body condition.



**Myth 2: Allopathy can only address LDL levels**  
 In allopathy, statin-based drugs are among the most commonly used treatments for lowering LDL cholesterol. However, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is equally important for managing cholesterol levels. This can be achieved by integrating traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with modern technologies. Ayurveda focuses on disease prevention and addresses the root causes rather than just treating symptoms. Since Ayurvedic methods require individuals to actively commit to their health through lifestyle modifications, dietary changes and fitness regimens, they

complement allopathic treatments for lifestyle diseases effectively.

**Myth 3: Avoiding certain food items will lower LDL**  
 It is your body that decides which fats are beneficial for it. Therefore, depending on your body type, you need to choose your diet appropriately. Ayurvedic texts state that the three doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—are responsible for a person's physiological, mental, and emotional health. For example, if you are predominantly Pitta-dominant, you should select cow ghee. Conversely, if you are a *Vata* type, then buffalo ghee is more suitable. An experienced Ayurvedic practitioner can assess your doshas with the help of modern PSA techniques and recommend the types of fats that will be best for you. He can also suggest a diet plan suitable for your physical constitution.

**Myth 4: Medicinal intake alone lowers cholesterol levels**  
 Medicinal intake, along with a tailor-made fitness regimen, will help achieve the desired results. Physical exercise to balance doshas based on an individual's unique constitution and requirements can ensure optimal health. The recommended activities include walking, running, cycling, and swimming. Often, these exercises can also help raise a person's HDL cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, practices like Yoga can help lower stress levels, which in turn contributes to better heart health.

## 'The Diary of West Bengal explores stories that many shy away from'

The film industry is set to be rocked by the release of *The Diary of West Bengal*, a daring and unflinching portrayal of one of India's most contentious and polarizing issues. Produced by Jitendra Narayan Singh (Waseem Rizvi) and crafted by the fearless Writer and Director Sanoj Mishra, this film promises to be an unmissable event that will ignite discussions and challenge perceptions. *The Diary of West Bengal* delves deep into the heart of darkness, presenting a raw and unvarnished look at the plight of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and the rampant illegal infiltration from Bangladesh. Central to the narrative is the incendiary issue of *love jihad*, a topic that has sparked fierce debates and widespread media coverage. This film offers a gripping and provocative exploration of how interfaith relationships can become battlegrounds in a larger socio-political conflict. The formidable cast, including Yajur Marwah, Arshin Mehta, Ramendra Chakarwari, Gauri Shankar,

Avadh Ashwini and Ashish Kumar, Neet Mahal, delivers performances that are nothing short of explosive. Each actor imbues their role with a depth and intensity that brings this charged narrative to life, ensuring that audiences are both captivated and challenged. Producer Jitendra Narayan Singh (Waseem Rizvi) dares to tell the stories that many shy away from, shining a light on the harsh realities and complex dynamics of our society. Meanwhile, Writer and Director Sanoj Mishra goes on to add, "This film is a bold examination of the forces shaping West Bengal today. It is meant to provoke thought, spark debate, and inspire change. We are not here to offer easy answers, but to ask the difficult questions." The film also has G.S. Kishore, Marcelina DCosta Garikapati, Santosh Fernandes, Sanjay Gupta as the associate producers while, Chhatrapal Suryavanshi, Sanjay Kumar, Arjun Singh are the co-producers.



# INDIA'S CHANCES OF WINNING IN AUSTRALIA WILL DEPEND ON BATTERS: JOHN BUCHANAN

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Australia coach John Buchanan believes India's chances of completing a hat-trick of Test series wins Down Under will hinge on how the visiting batters, including "ageing" stars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, tackle the hosts' battery of pace bowlers.

For the first time since 1991-92, India will tour Australia for a five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with the opening game scheduled to be played at Perth from November 22.

Buchanan, who presided over Australia's golden run in all forms in the first decade of this millennium as head coach, said both India and Australia have plenty of ageing players at disposal but that will not be a deterrent to the competition between the sides.

"Australia (has), since losing to India in the last series, the pace bowling attack with (off-spinner Nathan) Lyon, backed up now by Cameron Green or Mitch Marsh, is just a really, really powerful bowling lineup," Buchanan told PTI on Thursday after the launch of 'Ready Steady Go Kids' multi-sport program for the CP Goenka International School.

"India's top order, (Yashasvi) Jaiswal, (Rohit) Sharma himself, (Virat) Kohli, possibly Iyer... they've got to bat really well to establish totals and then the likes of (Jasprit) Bumrah, (Mohammed) Shami, (Mohammed) Siraj will come



into their own," he said. Buchanan said there won't be much of a psychological impact of India's wins in Australia on the previous two tours given that two of the mainstays then - Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane - are not likely to be a part of the touring squad for the upcoming series.

"The previous series that India won - important from both, Indian perspective and an Australian perspective - a little bit of the mind games will go into the pre-series," he said.

"But for all that, those games have passed, those players are gone and the current players we have both in the Australian side and the Indian side, they're at a stage of their careers where they all want to perform." "I looked at the ages and India

has got some aging players in that side notably Rohit who's 37 and Kohli is 35, (Ravichandran) Ashwin, if he tours, he's 37 and you look at the Australian side, there's only one or two players who are under 30.

"It'll be very much a battle again between the very good pace bowling attacks of both sides and how well the top order players of both sides can deal with the ball that will bounce, seam and probably swing a little bit more in the day-night game in Adelaide," he said.

**BATTING FOR LONGER PERIODS:** Buchanan said it will be key for India to bat for longer periods in Australia and tire out their bowling attack, something that Pujara executed to perfection in 2018-19 facing 1,258 balls. Two years

later, Pujara faced 928 balls as India once again won the series 2-1.

"Why Australia plays well at home is they do bat well, they understand their conditions, but that lineup of (Pat) Cummins, (Mitchell) Starc, (Josh) Hazlewood, backed up by Lyon, is just one of the all-time best all-round attacks that world cricket has seen," he said. "Albeit that, Starc is (nearly) 35, Hazlewood is 33, and Cummins is 31 - it's a five-Test series - so if India can not only bat well, but bat for long periods of time, then it will test the physical capacities of that Australian bowling attack and therein potentially lies a little bit of a key to how India can look at winning the series," he said.

Buchanan said the lack of preparation among travelling

teams will be a hindrance that India will face as well.

India will play a two-day pink-ball match against the Prime Minister's XI on November 30 and December 1 ahead of the day-night Test.

"Australia is favourite going into the series right at this stage. When you look around world cricket these days - and it has been (the case) for some time - it's very difficult to tour other countries," he told reporters later.

"(The) travelling teams no longer have that preparation in a country. They don't play two or three games prior to playing the first Test match to adjust to a country, because nobody wants to tour for that long.

"That makes it very difficult when you go to Perth, when it's fast and bouncy, for a side that's coming from, they will have played Bangladesh (and New Zealand) obviously, but Bangladesh at home isn't it? "The wickets are going to be completely different, albeit it's fantastic lead-in that they're playing some Test cricket, but it's going to be quite difficult to go to Perth to start with," he said. Buchanan added that he was also not in favour of Steve Smith continuing as Australia's opener.

"Not personally. He's made his mark at No 4. But I'm not a selector, and I'm not the captain, and I'm not Steve Smith and so those three people will end up making the decision that they think best fits the make-up of that side," he said.



# Paralympic Games opening ceremony starts the final chapter on a long summer of sport in Paris

AP ■ PARIS

Just weeks after hosting the Olympics, Paris inaugurated the 2024 Paralympics on Wednesday with a nearly four-hour-long opening ceremony in the heart of the city.

Against the backdrop of a setting sun, thousands of athletes paraded down the famed Champs-Élysées avenue to Place de la Concorde in central Paris where French President Emmanuel Macron officially declared the Paralympic Games open.

About 50,000 people watched the ceremony in stands built around the iconic square, which is the biggest in Paris and is visible from afar because of its ancient Egyptian Obelisk. Accessibility for athletes in wheelchairs was facilitated with strips of asphalt laid along the avenue and placed over the squares. More than 4,000 athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments will compete in 22 sports from Thursday until Sept. 8. Organizers say more than 2 million of the 2.8 million tickets have been sold for the various Paralympic events. The opening ceremony was

held outside the confines of a stadium, just like when the Olympics opened in the city on July 26. Fighter planes flew overhead, leaving red-white and blue vapors in the colors of the French national flag, before the delegations entered the square in alphabetical order.

Some delegations were huge - more than 250 athletes from Brazil - and some were tiny - less than a handful from Barbados and just three from Myanmar. Ukraine's delegation got a loud cheer and some of the crowd stood to applaud them.

Flag bearers Steve Serio and Nicky Nieves led the U.S. Team's delegation. The French arrived last and to roars from the crowd, which then sang along to popular French songs, including "Que Je T'aime" by late rocker Johnny Hallyday.

Throughout the show, directed by Thomas Jolly who also led the Olympic opening ceremony, singers, dancers and musicians with and without disabilities performed on stage together seamlessly, projecting a theme of inclusion and overcoming physical differences. Lucky Love, a French singer who lost his left

arm at birth, was joined by performers in wheelchairs. Other acts featured dancers with crutches.

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons said he hoped the Paris Paralympics would start an "inclusion revolution" beyond the field of sport.

"The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games will show what persons with disabilities can achieve at the highest level when the barriers to succeed are removed," he said in a speech. "The fact these opportunities largely exist only in sport in the year 2024 is shocking. It is proof we can and must do more to advance disability inclusion - whether on the field of play, in the classroom, concert hall or in the boardroom."

As the ceremony concluded, the Paralympic torch was carried into the area by former Olympic wheelchair tennis gold medalist Michaël Jérémiasz, who was surrounded on stage by dozens of torchbearers. Five French Paralympians lit the Olympic cauldron, which is designed to look like a hot air balloon and glowed gold-like in the night.



# Nitish-Thulasimathi duo makes winning start in Paralympics

PTI ■ PARIS

India's Nitesh Kumar and Thulasimathi Murugesan had little difficulty overcoming country-mates Suhas Yathiraj and Palak Kohli in the opening group stage match of badminton mixed doubles (SL3-SU5) at the Paralympic Games here on Thursday.

However, mixed doubles duo of Sivarajan Solaimalai and Nithya Sre, seeded second, lost their SH6 group play stage match in straight games to the American pair of Miles Krajewski and Jayci Simon.

The Nitesh-Thulasimathi duo won the Group A contest 21-14, 21-17 in 31 minutes.

Nitesh, 29, who hails from Karnal district in Haryana, and young Thulasimathi, a veterinary science student from Tamil Nadu who had won the mixed bronze at the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, encountered little challenge in the first game and at one stage they were leading by seven points. Unable to counter the pair's net play and deep tosses, Suhas and Palak quickly

found themselves trailing, losing the game in just 14 minutes.

The second game too went on similar lines with Palak clearly not able to match the prowess of her senior partner on court and giving away points.

SL3 players have moderate impairment on one side of the body, affecting either both legs or the absence of limbs, while SU5 players have significant impairments in their upper limbs. In Group B, Sivarajan and Nithya gave a tough challenge to the American pair before going down 21-23, 11-21 in 35 minutes in SH6 category. SH6 is for badminton players with short stature.

Sivarajan, who trains at the Pullala Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad, and partner Nithya were equal to the task in the opening game and also took a slender one-point lead but the young American pair, who are both in their late teens, were too agile on court and fought for every point.

The second game turned out to be one-sided with the tiring Indians losing in just 14 minutes.

# Wimbledon champion Krejckikova out of US Open

AP ■ NEW YORK

Frances Tiafoe is getting the rematch he wants, a second shot at Ben Shelton at the U.S. Open. But there won't be a second straight Grand Slam title for Barbora Krejckikova.

The Wimbledon champion was knocked out of the U.S. Open in the second round on Wednesday, defeated by Elena-Gabriela Ruse 6-4, 7-5.

The No. 8-seeded Krejckikova won her second Grand Slam singles title this summer, but then she didn't play any matches after the Paris Olympics. She acknowledged last week not knowing where her level of play was.

Turns out, it wasn't good enough. "I mean, winning Wimbledon is amazing. It's a great, great, great result,

I'm very proud about it and how I was able to handle everything there," said Krejckikova, who hadn't played a tournament on hard courts since February.

"I think I was playing quite well, definitely better than in the first match. I think my game was improving, but it just wasn't enough." No woman has won Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in the same year since Serena Williams in 2012.

Tiafoe had short work on the steamiest day of the tournament thus far, with temperatures in New York surpassing 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius). Three men's matches ended when an opponent stopped playing, the last one sending defending champion Novak Djokovic to the third round when Laslo Djere retired early in the third set with what



appeared to be pain near his hip after they played for more than two hours across the first two sets.

"You know, in the end, not the kind of finish that we players or crowd wants to see, but I think it's probably due to that physical battle that we had in the opening two sets," the No. 2-seeded Djokovic said.

Tiafoe, the No. 20 seed, won the first two sets before his opponent, Alexander Shevchenko, retired after the first game of the third set.

Shelton, the No. 13 seed, later beat Roberto Bautista Agut 6-3, 6-4, 6-4. He ousted Tiafoe last year in the quarterfinals, stopping Tiafoe from what would have been a second straight trip to the U.S. Open semifinals.

"Obviously he's very much like me in how excited and energetic he is on the

court," Tiafoe said, "and has such a big game and big shots and serves big and gets the crowd going."

Well, maybe not quite as well as Tiafoe does.

"I know that the people love him here. Probably more than me. He's electric here, and his crowds are electric here," the 21-year-old Shelton said.

"It will be a battle. It will be a war just like the last two times we've played. Yeah, I'm more than excited to be out there with him again."

They were two of the four American men to reach the third round in the bottom half of the draw. No. 12 Taylor Fritz got there by beating Matteo Berrettini 6-3, 7-6 (1), 6-1, while Brandon Nakashima beat Arthur Cauxaux and will next play No. 18 Lorenzo Musetti, the bronze medalist at the Olympics.

# Novak Djokovic reaches US Open third round

AP ■ NEW YORK

A U.S. Open match that Novak Djokovic already expected to be difficult was threatening to become a toss-up as he struggled with his serve. Missing more than he made, Djokovic couldn't get many quick points Wednesday night. He acknowledged that he should have lost the second set, and if his opponent didn't get injured and have to stop, maybe he wouldn't even have won that match.

Once he had, the defending champion was only looking ahead.

"The matches are only going to get tougher from here. I know that, but I'm fine," Djokovic said. "I'll find my way, as I have done many times in my career."

Djokovic reached the third round when Laslo Djere had to retire with the No. 2 seed leading his Serbian countryman 6-4, 6-4, 2-0.

Djere was leading 4-2 in the second set when he appeared to be troubled by pain near his hip and was visited by a trainer later in the set. He finished that



set, which lasted 69 minutes after the first one went 60, but didn't last much longer.

"In the end, not the kind of finish that we players or crowd wants to see, but I think it's probably due to that physical battle that we had in the opening two sets," Djokovic said.

It was the 90th win at the U.S. Open for Djokovic, making him the first man to reach that total at all four Grand Slams. The 24-time major champion will play No. 28 seed Alexei Popyrin on Friday.

Djere was the only player to win a set against Djokovic at last year's U.S. Open, grabbing the first two in their

third-round encounter before Djokovic rallied.

"So I knew coming into the match that if I don't serve well, which was the case, I'm going to have to really grind and work for my points a lot," Djokovic said. "That's what I guess caused the two sets to be played over two hours."

Djokovic made only 47% of his first serves and appeared to be struggling physically himself earlier in the match, which was just his second since winning the gold medal in the Olympics. Djere had two chances to break Djokovic's serve for would have given him a 5-2 lead in the second set. Instead, he wouldn't win another game, with Djokovic breaking to win the set when Djere yanked a forehand out of bounds.

"All in all, of course, I have to be happy with the win," Djokovic said, "and happy that in important moments I managed to play one ball more than him over the net, I guess find the right shots or anticipate well as I did in the set point in the second set."



# Kush Maini completes second Formula 1 test at Imola

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kush Maini, India's sole representative in Formula 2 series, has completed his second Formula 1 test at Italy's Imola circuit as a member of Alpine's junior driver program.

Maini had driven Alpine's 2022 car for the first time at the Red Bull Ring in June.

The two-day test at Imola, a track renowned for its challenging layout and rich motorsport history, saw Maini behind the wheel of the Alpine A522, the 2022 season race car.

Maini was a part of a two-day testing event for the Alpine team alongside Jack Doohan, who recently secured a promotion to Formula 1.

This latest test comes at a crucial time, as the team's reserve driver spot opened up earlier last week, presenting a significant opportunity for Maini.

After 99 laps and close to 500 Km of high speed and adrenaline, the 23-year-old shared his thoughts.

"Can't thank Alpine enough for this opportunity. Very strong day, both qualification and race pace looked very good. Can't wait for the next one."

Representing Invicta in Formula 2, Maini will return to action at Monza over the weekend. In his second season in the F1 feeder series, Maini is ninth in the standings with 74 points. He bagged his first ever Formula 2 win by topping the sprint race at the Hungarian GP.

# Messi joins group training with Inter Miami

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (FLORIDA)

Lionel Messi returned to group training with Inter Miami on Wednesday, more than six weeks after the Argentina captain left the Copa America final with a badly sprained right ankle.

There is still no official timetable for when Messi, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner, will play again for Inter Miami - which has the best record in Major League Soccer so far this season. Inter Miami visits Chicago on Saturday, then doesn't return to MLS play until a Sept. 14 match with Philadelphia.

If Messi doesn't play this weekend, that means he'd have two more weeks to continue rehabbing before returning to game action. Messi was not selected by Argentina to play in World Cup

qualifiers in early September.

"To see him on the field is great," Inter Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender said after the Wednesday workout. "I know he's been getting treatment every single day, training every single day. He's dealt with things before. He's been there, done that and he's still doing it at the highest level. To see him recoup from the kind of injury we saw at Copa America and be available for us this season, it goes to show the quality of care we have here."

Messi has 12 goals and 13 assists in 12 MLS games with Inter Miami this season. He's missed 14 of the club's league matches, including each of the last eight either because he was playing for Argentina or recovering from the ankle injury. Also missed by Messi in that span: all four of Inter



ANOTHER STEP TOWARD HIS RETURN AFTER ANKLE INJURY



**REVIEW**

# SARIPODHA SANIVAARAM

## Nani's film is a bit lengthy, making it a one-time watch

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
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Nani has been one of the bankable actors in the Telugu cinema, who's much-awaited film *Saripodha Sanivaaram* has hit the theatres now. The film which is directed by Vivek Athreya stars Priyanka Arul Mohan as the female lead. Nani has extensively been promoting this film and also believes that this is going to be another super-hit film for him. In his previous interviews ahead of the release, the actor shared that this is an action film with a racy screenplay. The film has Tamil actor SJ Suryah playing another important role in it. Jakes Bejoy has provided the music and expectations have been high on this film.

**Story:**

Surya (played by Nani) works as an LIC agent and has got anger issues right from his childhood. Meanwhile, his mother, Chayadevi (played by Abhirami) takes a promise from him, before she dies that he would only show his expires on Saturday. So Surya writes down the names of the people who had got him pissed in a book and later, as Saturday arrives, he punishes them. Due to his anger issues, both his father (played by Sai

Kumar) and sister (played by Aditi Balan) are the ones, who suffer a lot. On the other hand, a police Circle Inspector Daya (played by SJ Suryah), who is the head of the Sokula Puram Police Station, beats the people of Sokula Puram, everytime that he gets angry, without any reason. Charulatha (played by Priyanka Mohan) a constable, who has newly joined the police station, works with Daya. Kurmanand (played Murali Sharma), a politician, who is also the brother of Daya, are rivals and fighting for their own properties. Why Daya's name has been added in Surya's book and what is Surya's connection to Sokula Puram? What is Charulatha's role between these people and what more has happened in the end is the crux of the story.

**Analysis**

Director Vivek has begun the story with the sentiments of a mother and Surya's anger issues. The beginning of the film has already justified the title. The initial story starts with introducing the characters, Surya's family, his father, sister and the bond between them. When Daya's character enters, the story picks up. The reason behind Daya's anger is his brother and whenever he gets angry, he beats up Sokula Puram people. Then comes the female lead Charulatha, who joins as



constable in Sokula Puram police station and her romantic scenes with Surya in the most adorable way. The *Eega* story between Surya and Charulatha is hilarious.

The chemistry between the lead pair is good. Up until the interval the story is interesting, especially when Surya wants to take up for the Sokula Puram people. Director

Vivek has created a curiosity about how Surya is going to fight against Daya. However, coming to the second half, there are a few scenes that seem to be heaving. Coming to the action scenes, they do not seem too realistic, especially the climax. Some scenes between Daya and Kurmanand has also prolonged a bit. But what's the good thing about the

film is that the director has given every character equal importance in the film.

Though the 'Sokula Puram' is a fictional place, some logical issues have certainly been there. When a cop is beating people in an entire village, no one is heard talking about it. Though there are a few hiccups in the film, if you look at the over-

all output, the director comes out with an interesting action drama.

**Performance:**

When it comes to the performance, Nani who played the role of an LIC agent has been perfect. In this film, we get to see two different shades of his character; one is a normal employee and on the other side is an angry person. He once again comes up with flying colours in his role. Tamil actor SJ Suryah has done a good job with his role as Daya. One can see the anger on his face, because of his performance. He's the perfect choice for Daya and steals the show. Priyanka gets an important role of Charulatha; she is cute and beautiful. The chemistry between her and Nani is just perfect. Murali Sharma as Kurmanand is just okay. Sai Kumar, Abhirami, Aditi, Harsha Vardhan, Ajay have also done a good job. Music is by Jakes Bejoy especially the background score is the highlight of the film. G Murali's cinematography is good. Some of the dialogues are good and entertaining.

Finally, *Saripodha Sanivaaram* showcases Nani in a mass avatar and he succeeded in it. There are few scenes which really come out well. Nani and SJ Suryah's performances are the highlight, but the length is a bit of a problem. When you look at it overall you can watch it once.

**Cast:** Nani, Priyanka Arul Mohan, SJ Suryah, Sai Kumar, Aditi Balan, Murali Sharma, Abhirami, Harsha Vardhan, Ajay, Ajay Ghosh, Subhalekha Sudhakar and others  
**Music:** Jakes Bejoy  
**Cinematographer:** G Murali  
**Producers:** DVV Danayya, Kalyan Dasari  
**Writer and director:** Vivek Athreya  
**Rating:** 3/5



## TFI's solidarity to Kolkata rape victim family

The horrifying incident of rape and murder of the Kolkata doctor has shook the nation. People from different corners condemn the way the young doctor was assaulted and murdered in Kolkata. Many medics expressed their solidarity. In this background, Telugu film celebrities held a walk on Wednesday evening and expressed solidarity with the victim's family.

Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC) President Bharat Bhushan, Secretary Damodar Prasad, Prasanna Kumar, Director Association President Veera Shankar, Producer SKN, director, actress Jeevita Rajasekhar, actress Kamakshi Bhaskarala, Ammiraju and many other personalities from industry participated in this event.

"Looking at the attacks on women in today's society, it seems that women do not get equal respect. We all have a responsibility to protect women. For that, instead of looking at the government, we should think about how to protect women in our organisations and around us," said Writer's Association Secretary Anu Radha.

TFCC President Damodar Prasad further said that he was speechless. "It is very painful to see the incident. Before we blame the government, we should think about how we are bringing up our children. We have decided to put a women protection cell in all unions. We will take appropriate measures to respect

women," he said Jeevita Rajasekhar said that she has been in the industry for 30 years and she gets a lot of respect. "However, it hurts to think about the girls. Many of them are excelling in all fields with the intention of running the family along with housework. If someone around us does not behave properly, the girls immediately sense it and stay at home. We have to be careful when such issues are happening. As a mother, it hurts to think what happened to that girl in Kolkata," said Jeevitha.

Directors Association President Veera Shankar said, parents should take proper care of their children. "Apart from holding meetings like this, all the industry people that include actors and directors should write letters and emails to the Prime Minister and the CBI about the careless attitude of the Mamata Banerjee government," said Veerashankar.

Movie Artists Association Vice President Madala Ravi said, keeping in mind the safety of the women members of their association, 'Women Security Cell' was established. Women members can contact that mobile number and register their complaints. He added that the details of the member will be kept confidential. "I urge all women to use existing technology, the police's She-Team apps," said Madala Ravi.

## Jana Sena leader threatens to boycott Allu's Pushpa 2

Earlier, Jana Sena Party MLA Bolisetty Srinivas criticised Allu Arjun saying that he doesn't have any fans of his own and there are only Mega Fans. He also criticised Allu Arjun for campaigning for his friend and YSRCP candidate at Nandyal. Though the MLA said that he did not wish to talk further about Allu Arjun, now another Jana Sena leader speaks against Allu Arjun! Ramesh Babu, a Jana Sena leader from Hanuman Junction near Vijayawada, has shared that they will boycott Allu Arjun's upcoming film. "We will not allow the screening of Allu Arjun's film *Pushpa 2* here and no flexi or poster of Allu Arjun will be put up in our region," said Ramesh Babu. *Pushpa 2* is releasing on December 6 and it is directed by Sukumar. The Jana Sena leader hails Chiranjeevi as the main pillar of Mega Family and also worked towards the betterment of the society. He added that many people from different corners of different places became fans of Chiranjeevi. He warned Allu Arjun stating that if he wouldn't apologise to Chiranjeevi and Pawan Kalyan, they will not allow the actor's film screening in their respective areas.



## Rao Ramesh now being approached for lead roles

Rao Ramesh, was seen as the lead character in the latest film *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*, which released last week and has received a good response. The film also did good business especially in the overseas market which has surprised all. The film doesn't have big stars and the only name people know is Rao Ramesh. This film's success allowed many directors and producers to make small films with Rao Ramesh.

According to a source, Rao Ramesh is now being approached by a few directors for their films as the lead actor. Lakshman Karya is the director and popular director Sukumar's wife Thabitha Sukumar has taken over the film. She has taken the film to another level with the support of her husband. The film's story revolves around Rs 10 lakh rupees credited to Subramanyam's account played by Rao Ramesh. The director was inspired from the

real incidents and wrote this story in a hilarious way. With this film many feel that an actor like Rao Ramesh has the prowess to pull the audience to theatres with his trademark performance and dialogues. Earlier he used to play character roles, but now he is in big demand for lengthy characters, added the source. The actor shared, "The film gave me great confidence and I am choosy about my roles in the coming days."

## Nag's stylish poster from Kubera on his birthday

National-award-winning director Sekhar Kammula is helming *Kubera* with Akkineni Nagarjuna and Dhanush in the lead actors. The film's shooting is in progress and on Thursday, on the occasion of Nag's birthday, the makers released a stylish poster of the actor. Generally, Sekhar Kammula's films have always been interesting and this film, creates even more curiosity because of the two lead actors. More than that the film is releasing in multi-languages, which is first of its kind for Sekhar Kammula.

The poster features Nagarjuna in a dashing new look, sporting a stylish beard and raising his hand in a warm greeting to someone across from him. Usually Nagarjuna looks handsome and in this poster he looks even more elegant. Jim Sarbh plays a pivotal role in the movie being mounted prestigiously on a grand scale with a high budget. This film is produced by Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao and releasing in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi.



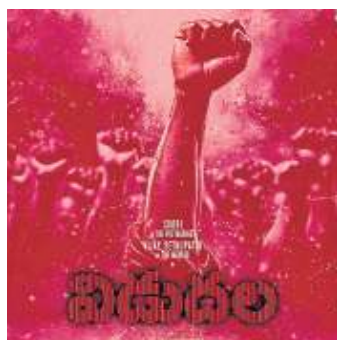
## Viduthalai part 2 in cinemas on Dec 20

The highly anticipated second installment *Viduthalai Part 2*, helmed by renowned director Vetri Maaran and featuring Vijay Sethupathi, will hit theaters on December 20, 2024. Supporters of the director and lead actor have been eagerly anticipating this declaration.

Vijay Sethupathi posted this announcement on X and wrote, "Mark your calendars! Maverick director #VetriMaaran's #ViduthalaiPart2 is coming to theatres on December 20, 2024 #ViduthalaiPart2FromDec20. An @ilaiyaraaja Musical (sic)."

Following the success of the initial installment, Vetri Maaran presents the second part of *Viduthalai* on the silver screen, showcasing his captivating storytelling and impactful narratives. The highly anticipated movie will showcase music created by the renowned Ilaiyaraaja, further building excitement for its premiere. Actor Soori will also be

featured in the film, alongside Vijay Sethupathi. With the release date nearing, fans and the film industry are getting increasingly excited for *Viduthalai Part 2*, which is anticipated to be a huge success at the box office. The movie's arrival on December 20 is expected to be one of the standout moments in cinema this year.



## PIC TALK ALLU ARJUN TO ATTEND BALAYYA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Celebrating Nandamuri Balakrishna's 50 years of entering the film industry, a grand celebration has been planned by the Telugu film industry at Hyderabad Hiltex Novotel Hotel on September 1. The Film Chamber of Commerce, along with its President Bharat Bhushan, Secretary Damodar Prasad, Producers Council Secretary Prasanna Kumar, among the other dignitaries, invited the National Award winner Icon Star Allu Arjun on behalf of the Telugu film industry. On this occasion, Allu Arjun has responded positively to the film personalities who came to invite him and shared his connection with Balakrishna.



## R Madhavan rejects huge offer of endorsing paan masala brand

It just seems of late that R Madhavan has the Midas touch, which is turning every project he takes on into a box office gold. But his popularity isn't limited to box office, his back-to-back successes have also made him a highly desirable figure in the world of endorsements. The actor was not long ago offered a huge amount of money to become brand ambassador of a paan masala brand. However, Madhavan rejected the offer, staying true to his personality and keeping in mind his responsibility towards the audiences.

According to sources, a big paan masala company is looking to cast a domestic face to increase reach of their brand. With Madhavan rejecting the offer, the brand is still on the look out for a new face. Previously, several celebrities such as Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Mahesh Babu and Ajay Devgn among others endorsed paan masala brands and were highly criticised by their respective audiences. With Madhavan rejecting the offer, he has proven how he is making sure to associate himself with brands he



believes in. On the work front, Madhavan kick-started 2024 with *Shaitaan*, which received immense love. Now, he is gearing up for several upcoming releases, including *Dhurandhar*, *De De Pyaar De 2* and *Shankaranam* among others. In Tamil, he has *Test* and *Adhirshatsaali* to his credit. The actor is currently shooting for a project titled *Bridge* in London.