



the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

No CM got an opportunity like Revanth Reddy in history as he is looking after the Education Ministry. So he should take a political decision to implement a Common School System in Telangana. The Common School System will free parents from spending unnecessarily on their children's education. The BRS admin destroyed the education system and it would crash if the Congress continues in the same manner



-Katipally Venkatramana Reddy, BJP's Kamareddy TG MLA P4

'India for fair framework on border issue with China'

'BANKS SHOULD ADOPT A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH FOR PREPARING CREDIT PLAN'

'You are an inspiration to all Telugu girls,' Allu Arjun to Kissik SENSATION SREELEELA!

DON'T MISS...

'Rescue workers trapped in Saudi'

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has appealed to the Indian government for urgent action to bring back 22 migrant workers from Srikakulam district, who are currently stranded in Saudi Arabia due to dishonest employers. In a meeting held in Delhi on Tuesday with Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Rammohan Naidu highlighted the difficult situation the workers are facing. "These workers, who moved to Saudi Arabia in search of better job opportunities, have not been paid for the last two ...

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900 new buses join APSRTC fleet

APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana announced on Tuesday that 900 new buses have been inducted into the corporation's fleet. Inaugurating new bus services to various stations in Vijayawada, Narayana informed the media that APSRTC had placed an order for 1,600 buses, of which 900 have already been delivered and added to the fleet. He expressed confidence in steering APSRTC towards profitability. "We are formulating an action plan in collaboration with zonal chairpersons and "

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'They need empathy, not sympathy'

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday emphasized the need for empathy, inclusivity and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (Divyangjan), and asserted that their empowerment is a collective responsibility of society and the government. Speaking at the National Awards ceremony for individuals and organisations working for the welfare of Divyangjan, Murmu called for a shift in societal attitudes. "They need empathy, not sympathy. They deserve natural affection, not special ...

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Oz batters can take on Bumrah: Carey

Alex Carey on Tuesday maintained Australia are a "united group", confident that their "world-class" batters will come up with better plans to counter India's pace threat Jasprit Bumrah in the upcoming pink-ball Test here. With their backs against the wall, India came out all guns blazing in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series opener at Perth to win by a massive 295 runs with Bumrah (5/30 and 3/42) ripping apart Australia's batting in each innings. The heavy margin of defeat left Australia looking for answers as their batters ...

-SPORTS



Cabinet nod for Amaravati works

Project costs rise due to neglect by the previous govt



I & PR Minister K Parthasarathy and MA & UD Minister P Narayana briefing the media about the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State Cabinet on Tuesday approved works worth Rs 11,471 crore to be undertaken in Amaravati, which had already been cleared by the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) on Monday. The meeting, chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the State Secretariat, gave its consent to cancel the old tenders for these works in the Amaravati capital area and issue

- New policies for IT, textiles, and maritime sectors aim to boost growth and employment.
- New tourism and electric mobility policies aim to attract investment and create jobs.
- Andhra Pradesh plans to become a global maritime leader.
- A proposal for Real-Time Governance was cleared to improve public services.
- Adjustments approved for water supply projects in Uddanam, Pulivendula, and Done.
- December 15 will be observed as Self-Dedication Day in memory of Potti Sriramulu.

fresh tenders. Briefing the media on the Cabinet's decisions, Information and Public Relations Minister Kollusu Parthasarathi and Municipal Administration Minister P Narayana stated that the estimated cost for the works had increased significantly due to the previous government's neglect, requiring fresh tenders. Narayana said that the cost for constructing the 360 km-long trunk roads had increased by Rs 460 crore. He added that the works in Amaravati

would include the construction of administrative towers, the Assembly building, and the High Court complex, for which tenders will be called by the end of this month. The initial budget for these structures was Rs 41,000 crore, but this has now risen by 30 per cent. Parthasarathi further shared that the Cabinet had approved several policies aimed at improving the State's economic condition.

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SETBACK TO DWARAMPUDI Closure order issued for prawn processing unit

PNS ■ KAKINADA

YSRCP senior leader and former MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy has faced another setback as orders have been issued for the closure of the prawn processing unit owned by his family. The Veerabhadra Export prawn processing unit, located at Lampakalova village in Prathipadu Mandal, Kakinada district, has been shut down by the Pollution Control Board (PCB) of Visakhapatnam Zone due to its high pollution levels. According to official sources, the unit was found to be emitting effluents exceeding the prescribed limits, prompting the PCB authorities to order its closure. Sources revealed that the PCB had previously issued a notice to the unit, urging it to take measures to reduce pollution. However, since the necessary steps were not taken, the board decided to take strict

action and shut down the facility. Interestingly, another prawn processing unit owned by Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy's family, located at Gurajanapalli village in Karapa Mandal, was also closed on August 6 after its permission was revoked for similar pollution-related reasons. The Veerabhadra Export unit has a capacity of 25 tonnes and employs over 300 workers. Despite having a 1.5-tonne ammonia storage tank, the unit lacks equipment to detect or alert about ammonia leaks. Although it has machinery to treat effluents, it was not functioning continuously, sources added. Furthermore, the unit operates a 20-tonne capacity ice factory without taking adequate measures to control pollution. Despite a PCB notice on July 3, the company management failed to respond, leading to the closure order.



AP Samagra Shiksha bags national award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's Samagra Shiksha has been honoured with the National Award for being the 'Best State in Implementing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and Other Schemes for Persons with Disabilities.' President Droupadi Murmu presented the award to Samagra Shiksha State Project Director B Srinivasa Rao at a ceremony in Delhi, marking the World Day of Persons with Disabilities. The award, part of the 'National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities 2024,' recognises the state's exemplary efforts in inclusive education and digital tools for students with disabilities.

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Mid-day meals for Inter students in govt Jr colleges: Lokesh



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant move aimed at improving attendance and educational standards in government colleges, Minister Nara Lokesh has announced the provision of mid-day meals for Intermediate students. This decision was made during a review meeting at Undavalli on Monday, attended by senior officials from the Departments of School Education and Intermediate Education. During the meeting, Minister Lokesh highlighted the high dropout rates among economically disadvantaged students after completing Class 10. He suggested that the introduction of mid-day meals in government Intermediate colleges could help reduce these dropout rates. Additionally, he proposed the creation of a question bank for underperforming Intermediate students. As part of the initiative, the Minister proposed identifying slow learners through assessments under the Sankalp programme and assigning college lecturers and staff as "caretakers" for these students.

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Customs dept clarifies it has no role in verifying rice export sources



Commissioner of Customs (Preventive), Sadhu Narasimha Reddy, addressing a meeting in Kakinada on Tuesday

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Commissioner of Customs (Preventive), Sadhu Narasimha Reddy, visited the Kakinada Custom House on Tuesday to address concerns raised by local stakeholders. The discussion primarily focused on the challenges related to the newly implemented Sea Cargo Manifest and Transhipment Regulations (SCMTR) and technical issues with the CBLMS Portal. Commissioner Reddy assured traders that a training session on SCMTR would be organised soon, and the technical issues with the CBLMS Portal would be referred to the technical team for quick resolution. The export of Public Distribution System (PDS) rice was also dis-

cussed. Commissioner Reddy clarified that Customs' involvement begins only once the rice enters the Customs-notified area at the Anchorage Port (J Ghatty). He emphasised that verifying the origin or source of procurement of rice for export is outside Customs' jurisdiction. BV Krishna Rao, President of the Rice Exporters Association, assured that their association follows the law and will cooperate with enforcement agencies to prevent any diversion of PDS rice for export. G Chandrasekhar, President of the Stvedores Association, announced that they would temporarily halt the handling of white rice exports until clearer guidelines are issued.

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WUA polls deferred again

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has postponed the elections for the Water Users Associations (WUAs) for the second time, attributing the decision to heavy rains across several districts caused by Cyclone Fengal. As per the revised schedule, the election notification, originally set to be issued on December 5, was deferred, with fresh dates yet to be announced. Initially, the elections were planned for November 20 but were rescheduled to December 8 due to the Assembly Budget sessions. Now, citing the impact of the cyclone, the

Initially, the elections were planned for November 20 but were rescheduled to December 8 due to the Assembly Budget sessions. Now, citing the impact of the cyclone, the government has further delayed the process. A confidential communication was sent to district collectors on Tuesday, instructing them not to issue the election notification. According to official sources, the

state government will soon release a new schedule for the elections. Cyclone Fengal has brought heavy rainfall to several districts, further complicating the situation. The Water Resources Department (WRD) is tasked with conducting elections for the members of Territorial Constituencies (TCs), followed by elections for Presidents and Vice Presidents. Subsequently, elections will be held for the Distributory Committees (DCs) and Project Committees (PCs). Currently, 71.11 lakh acres of ayacut in the state are managed through 49,020 TCs.

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Cyclone Fengal weakens further

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The well-marked low pressure area, which is the remnant of cyclonic storm Fengal over North Interior Tamil Nadu, has weakened further into a low pressure system. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported on Tuesday that the system moved west-northwestwards and is now a low pressure area over North Interior Tamil Nadu, bordering South Interior Karnataka. At 5:30 AM on Tuesday, the system was located as a well-marked low pressure area over Coastal Karnataka and the adjoining east-central Arabian Sea. By 8:30 AM, it remained in the same region. The associated cyclonic circulation extends up to mid-tropospheric



levels. The system is expected to move west-northwestwards over the east-central Arabian Sea in the next two days, according to the Meteorological Centre.



Jagan to hold meet with key YSRCP leaders today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chief minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will convene an important meeting on Wednesday at the party's central office. The meeting will be attended by district presidents, regional coordinators, general secretaries, and secretaries to discuss key party strategies and public issues. The discussions will focus on strengthening the party, forming and filling committees, and addressing grievances arising under the current coalition government. Key topics will include the rising burden of electricity charges, broken promises by the ruling coalition, irregularities in paddy procurement, and the exploitation of farmers by millers and middlemen. The meeting will also address issues faced by students due to the non-implementation of fee reimbursement, concerns with Aarogyasri, and policies negatively affecting the poor. YS Jagan will offer strategic direction and finalise an action plan to tackle these issues effectively.

CM to attend Navy's Operation Demo in Vizag



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will be the chief guest at the Indian Navy's Operation Demonstration, scheduled for January 4, 2024, at Ramakrishna Beach in Visakhapatnam. Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of

the Eastern Naval Command (ENC), announced this during a media interaction, highlighting the Navy's three-dimensional operational capabilities. "The Chief Minister has agreed to be the chief guest," he said at ENC headquarters. Before the Visakhapatnam event, the Navy Day operational demonstration will take place off Puri Beach in Odisha on December 4, with President Droupadi Murmu as the chief guest. The event will showcase the Navy's operational prowess, involving ships, submarines, and aircraft. In Visakhapatnam, several activities are planned to commemorate Navy Day, including a Navy Band concert, ship visits for schoolchildren, and a Navy Marathon on December 15, aimed at raising public awareness and fostering engagement.

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HISTORIC MOMENT FOR TELUGUS

Rammohan granted front-row seat in LS

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a historic moment for Telugu-speaking people across the country, Srikakulam MP Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has made a remarkable achievement in the 18th Lok Sabha. At just 36, Rammohan Naidu has been granted a front-row seat in Parliament, a privilege usually reserved for national leaders and Union Cabinet ministers. His seat places him alongside top leaders such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi. The announcement, made by Speaker Om Birla's office on Tuesday, highlights the significance of this honour, reflecting his political prominence and leadership stature.



At 36, the Srikakulam MP becomes the youngest NDA Member to achieve this Honor, standing among India's top political leaders

Rammohan Naidu, the youngest among the six NDA members granted this distinction, is quickly rising in national politics. Describing the occasion as "momentous," Rammohan Naidu thanked everyone who has supported him throughout his career. "This is not just an honour for me but a reflection of the aspirations of Telugu people. I am deeply grateful to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their encouragement and guidance," he said. This milestone strengthens Rammohan Naidu's place among the great Telugu leaders, such as former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and his father, Kinjarapu Erram Naidu, who served as Union Minister for Rural Development and Employment.

While Andhra Pradesh has produced many leaders for the Union Cabinet, only a few have been granted the distinction of front-row seating in Parliament. Reflecting on the personal and family significance, Rammohan Naidu said, "Following in my father's footsteps is both a privilege and a responsibility. I dedicate this achievement to the people of Srikakulam and Telugus everywhere who have placed their trust in me." This achievement not only highlights the legacy of the Kinjarapu family but also signals the growing influence of young leaders in shaping India's political future. For Telugu-speaking communities across India, this moment stands as a proud reminder of their critical role in the country's democratic and legislative framework.

Jagan's confidence in YSRCP's return to power is surprising

Relying on God for one's own individual benefits is one thing and praying to God while interceding on behalf of others is quite another thing. But Andhra Pradesh former chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, by declaring his confidence in God that He would decimate the Telugu Desam Party (which is leading the NDA government in the state) has introduced a surprising element in politics quite religiously. Even if he has put his trust and the entire responsibility on God for his party's return to power, the larger question is whether voters will buy his line of thinking. Jagan seems to be just coming out of the rude shock that he received in the 2024 Assembly elections, which yielded for YSRCP a tally that



was disproportionate to the Rs. 2.70 lakh crore he had distributed to various segments of voters in the name of welfare schemes. His father and undivided AP's former chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy had experienced a similar situation in the past when he was in the Opposition. But that experience drove him to victory with redoubled efforts. As the head of the opposition Congress, YSR faced the 1999 elections and subsequently lost due to strong political equations knitted at the national level. Because of the alliance between then chief minister & Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), YSR had to face defeat as victory of the Indian army in the

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Kargil War against Pakistan had turned the tide in favour of the alliance. Then Congress headed by YSR had emerged as the biggest ever opposition party in the history of combined Andhra Pradesh by bagging 91 seats out of 294 in the Legislative Assembly. As the head of a strong opposition party, YSR could register an impressive win in the 2004 elections and eventually

became the chief minister of the state. These results made YSR's dreams of becoming chief minister come true, considering that he had been waiting patiently for his turn for 23 years. Today Jagan, unlike his father YSR, is in a peculiar situation of failing to get for YSRCP the status of even principal opposition party in the Assembly. That apart, he is



struggling to keep his flock together amid desertions by party's senior leaders. It is clear that these turncoat leaders do not see good prospects for themselves in YSRCP. Even those leaders who had been enjoying plum posts or serving as Rajya Sabha members

have left the party, cutting short their tenure. YSRCP leaders and RS members Mopidevi Venkataramana Rao, Beeda Mastan Rao and R. Krishnaiah have resigned from the party. Now Jagan is firm to hit the roads again from the first month of the New Year to lend a patient hearing to party workers, for whom he understandably had no time during his stint as chief minister. He is planning to reach out to the cadre. He will be covering all districts of Andhra Pradesh by camping two days in each district. He has decided to elicit the opinions of grassroots level workers by having meetings in all the Assembly segments, besides addressing mandal and village-level committees. Ultimately Jagan would mould those committees to raise voice against the 'misdeeds' of the

National Democratic Alliance government and highlighting the alleged non-implementation of 'Super Six' poll promises made by the NDA alliance, comprising TDP, Jana Sena and BJP. Social media will also be a weapon in the hands of the cadre of YSRCP. This broad-based plan of YSRCP in the state's political arena suggests that it is preparing quite early the 2029 Assembly polls. This time Jagan has changed his tack. Instead of targeting 175 seats in the state Legislative Assembly for the next elections, he wants to confine TDP's tally in the House to a single digit! One can construe it as a wreaking vengeance against TDP as YSRCP got only 11 seats against its target of winning all seats in the House in the last Assembly elections. Jagan has expressed his confidence that God would

make YSRCP marginalize TDP like that. He seems to have firm belief in God, though people would expect him to make his party a viable force to fight in the elections. For people, the issues that count include complete ban on liquor consumption, assurance on comprehensive pension scheme for employees, revision of power tariff in favour of people and stopping of privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. But YSRCP was never sympathetic towards these issues when it was in power. This apparently proved costly for YSRCP. Instead, YSRCP has been blaming its poor show on EVMS. Regardless of the 'confessions' that Jagan is expected to make during his upcoming road shows, YSRCP would do well to adopt a constructive approach to return to power.

CM hints at CID probe into land encroachment at Kakinada Port

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has suggested that a CID inquiry be conducted into the encroachment of Kakinada Port and the Special Economic Zone (SEZ). After the Cabinet meeting, the CM discussed various issues with the ministers, during which the issue of illegal activities concerning the export of ration rice from Kakinada Port came up for discussion.

Sources said that CM Chandrababu remarked, "They forcibly grabbed Kakinada Port and Kakinada SEZ. The port was handed over with 41 per cent to KV Rao and 59 per cent to Aurobindo. Grabbing assets has become a new trend in the state. We have never seen anything like this before. The YSRCP government has severely damaged the systems. Let us conduct a CID inquiry into all this," he told the ministers.

The CM also discussed with the ministers the State's long coastline and how to make better use of it. He expressed frustration over the delay in the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in the state, criticising officials for not progressing beyond the Detailed Project Report (DPR) stage. On this occasion, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan mentioned that there is a campaign in Delhi accusing the state of not properly utilising the project.

CM Naidu expressed dissatisfaction over the bureaucratic delays hindering the effective utilisation of the scheme. Minister Lokesh stated that the JJM is a major project that should benefit everyone, adding that if executed in mission mode, it could yield excellent results. The CM directed officials to ensure the proper and timely implementation of the schemes. CM Naidu also ordered a performance report to mark

the completion of six months since the formation of the government. He requested a detailed report on the progress made, particularly focusing on who was responsible for what. The CM highlighted that the liquor, sand, and ration mafias had been curbed. He also stated that the rice and land encroachment mafias were challenging the government, but assured that these would be stopped and restrained.

Guv asks students to take part in 'Viksit Bharat' dialogue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer has called upon all young students in the State to participate in the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue', which offers a unique opportunity to present their ideas and vision directly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Governor Abdul Nazeer explained that the Viksit Bharat Challenge programme has been launched on the My Bharat Platform, with a Digital Quiz starting on November 25. The Government of India has introduced this new platform to engage the youth, which will be a part of the National Youth Festival in 2025.

The "Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue" will be held during the National Youth Festival at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on 11th and 12th January 2025. The event is in line with the Prime Minister's vision of increasing youth participation in national development. The dialogue will feature an interaction between Prime Minister



This year's Youth Festival is centred around two key goals: to bring new youth leaders into politics and to ensure meaningful youth contributions towards a developed India, or Viksit Bharat, through a transparent, democratic, merit-based selection process

Narendra Modi and 3,000 youth leaders selected from across the country. The Viksit Bharat Challenge is a four-stage competition designed for young people to contribute their ideas and

vision. The challenge began with an all-India digital quiz competition, running from 25th November to 5th December 2024, and is open to individuals aged 15 to 29.

Coalition govt vindictive: Jupudi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) spokesperson Jupudi Prabhakar Rao has accused the coalition government of vindictively targeting SC and ST colonies by disconnecting power connections. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, he alleged that power supply was cut off in nearly 20 lakh houses over unpaid bills, even though the consumption was below the prescribed units.

He criticised the government for issuing bills with arrears to SC and ST colonies, despite YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's earlier promise of free power for up to 200 units. Jupudi claimed that the current government has been indiscriminately disconnecting power without proper notification, citing examples of exorbitant bills. In Buntarygudem, Eluru district, a household was billed Rs 22,000, while another in Annamayya



district received a bill of Rs 35,000. Entire villages, such as E Mallavaram in East Godavari, faced disconnections, allegedly for not supporting the coalition. Accusations of data tracking in a separate press conference, YSRCP spokesperson Putta Siva Shankar accused the government of tracking private citizens using advanced surveillance technology. He alleged that the coalition government, which had purchased spying software during its 2014-19 term, was continuing similar practices.

Andhra govt extends crop insurance to mango farmers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has granted administrative approval to include mango crops under the Restructured Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) for the agricultural years 2024-25 and 2025-26. This follows the earlier implementation of RWBCIS for seven crops during the Kharif and two crops during the Rabi seasons.

Dr S. Dilli Rao, Director of the Agriculture Department, recently requested the government to extend the scheme to mango crops during the Rabi season. After reviewing the proposal, the government approved the request and issued G.O.Rt.No.750 through



Agriculture and Cooperation Department Special Chief Secretary B. Rajasekhara. The Agriculture Insurance

Company of India Limited (AIC) has been selected to implement the scheme in 15 districts at the approved premium rates.

The initiative aims to protect mango farmers from weather-related risks such as unseasonal rains, droughts, and temperature variations, which can significantly impact yields. By providing this coverage, the government seeks to ensure stability and financial support for mango cultivators, who are a vital part of the state's horticultural sector.

This move underscores the government's commitment to safeguarding farmers' livelihoods and strengthening agricultural resilience against climate challenges.

WUA polls deferred ...

Continued from Page 1

The state has 6,149 WUAs, 245 DCs, and 53 PCs, distributed across Major, Medium, and Minor Irrigation projects. Of these, Major Irrigation includes 1,755 WUAs and 21,060 TCs, while Medium Irrigation comprises 266

WUAs and 3,192 TCs. Minor Irrigation encompasses 4,128 WUAs with 24,768 TCs. Additionally, there are 18 PCs under Major Irrigation and 35 PCs under Medium Irrigation. Officials are expected to announce a revised timeline for the elections once the situation stabilises.

AP Samagra Shiksha ...

Continued from Page 1

Education Minister Nara Lokesh praised the achievement as a testament to Andhra Pradesh's commitment to equitable education. He commended the Department of School Education, Samagra Shiksha, and the Inclusive Education division for their contributions, calling the "Andhra Model" a benchmark for the nation. This recognition highlights the state's dedication to empowering persons with disabilities.

Cyclone Fengal ...

Continued from Page 1

The IMD also forecast heavy rain at isolated places in Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours. Thunderstorms with lightning are likely in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next 48 hours. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at many places or at isolated locations in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Cabinet nod for Amaravati ...

Continued from Page 1

These include policies on Andhra Pradesh's Information Technology and Global Capability Centres, the AP Textile, Apparel and Garments Policy, and the AP Maritime Policy. The IT and GCC policy aims to transform the state into a global hub for the knowledge economy.

The Minister also emphasised that the government is committed to the 'One Family, One Industrialist' initiative. He stated that large-scale encouragement would be given for co-working spaces and neighbouring working spaces to create basic amenities urgently. "We are ready to offer substantial incentives to those who come forward for this," he added. Parthasarathi reiterated that the new policies aim to

provide employment to youth and improve the state's economy. This would also help every graduate achieve global-level skills and earn high salaries.

On the Maritime Policy, Parthasarathi noted that Andhra Pradesh, with its 975 km coastline, aims to become a globally renowned state. He expressed confidence that the state would soon overtake Gujarat to become the top maritime state, as per Chief Minister Naidu's goal. The policy also aims to encourage the shipbuilding industry, with discussions underway to establish a mega shipyard in the state.

The Cabinet also approved the Water Resources Department's proposals to adjust the costs of water supply projects in Uddanam (Srikakulam district),

Pulivendula (YSR district), and Done (Kurnool district), which will resolve water issues in these areas permanently.

Additionally, the Cabinet endorsed the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Awas Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan schemes with the existing unit cost. It also approved the proposal to amend the name of the Andhra Pradesh Ayurveda and Homeo Medical Practitioners Act-1956 to align it with the provisions of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Act-2020.

A new tourism policy was also approved to position Andhra Pradesh as a leader in the tourism sector, attracting large-scale investments.

Mid-day meals for Inter students...

Continued from Page 1

He also recommended necessary repairs to severely damaged government junior colleges across the state.

Minister Lokesh further emphasised the importance of holding Mega Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) on December 7 in government schools across the state. He instructed that no political party flags, banners, or symbols should be displayed at the meetings to ensure neutrality. Ministers, legislators, and other representatives from their constituencies will attend the meetings. Minister Lokesh confirmed that both Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and he would participate in the Mega PTM at Bapatla Government High School.

The review meeting also focused on enhancing the quality of education and infrastructure in government schools. A

star-rating system will be introduced, with 18 standardized criteria for evaluation. To improve the pass rate of Class 10 students, a 100-day action plan will be implemented. The curriculum overhaul for the next academic year will place a focus on life skills, social responsibility, moral values, gender equality, and civic sense from an early age. The Minister emphasised incorporating the Japanese model of life skills into the curriculum.

Minister Lokesh also announced the cancellation of the controversial GO 117 introduced by the previous government, which aimed at restructuring the school education system. He stressed the need to gather feedback at the grassroots level for better policy implementation, including inviting School Management Committees (SMCs) to participate in discussions.

Customs dept...

Continued from Page 1

The meeting also noted the operation of an integrated check post at the port area since August 5, 2024. The check post, ordered by the District Collector of Kakinada, is manned 24x7 by officials from Police, Civil Supplies, Revenue, and Port Staff, conducting random checks on incoming vehicles. Exporters are required to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Civil Supplies Department to allow rice-loaded vehicles into the port.

Commissioner Reddy instructed Customs officials to assist the Civil Supplies Department and reiterated that Customs' role is to verify whether the rice matches the details in the shipping

documents before granting export permission.

The Commissioner also announced that the Chief Commissioner of Customs & Central Tax, Visakhapatnam Zone, would soon convene a meeting with stakeholders from all Customs formations across Andhra Pradesh. The date for the meeting will be communicated soon.

The meeting was attended by senior Customs officials, including Additional Commissioner G. Ramakrishna Raju Yadav, Assistant Commissioners N Ravi Kumar, GSR Naidu, B Mahesh Babu, and Port Officer Capt Dharma Sastha, along with representatives from the Rice Exporters Association, Steamer Agents Association, and other stakeholders.

Ensure success of Mega PTM on Dec 7, Collector tells officials

● Meeting expected to be useful for overall development of students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmi has advised the officials concerned to ensure the success of the upcoming Mega Parent-Teacher Meeting (Mega PTM), which will take place in all schools across the district on December 7. He emphasised that officials from the School Education Department should play a key role in coordinating with allied departments to make the event a success. He described the Mega PTM as a significant festival for the Education Department.

NTR District School Educational Officer (DSDO) UV Subba Rao conducted a meeting with Mandal Educational Officers (MESOs) and all district-level officers of allied departments at the Pingali Venkaiah Meeting Hall at the collectorate on Tuesday. He spoke to the officials about the arrangements for the Mega Parent Teacher Meeting.

The Collector said that the proposed Mega PTM will be



helpful to strengthen the schools, besides resolving many issues. Also, it will be useful for the overall development of the students in all government and management schools. The meeting will build an intimate relationship between parents and

teachers, he opined. He added that apart from parents, many other people including donors, old students, and elected representatives will attend the meeting. Through this meeting, the parents can learn about their children's progress in studies.

He asked the officials to beautify the school premises and maintain sanitation in view of the mega event which, he said, should be conducted irrespective of politics. He asked people's representatives and political leaders not to come display their party flags

or scarves during the event. Uninterrupted power supply, holistic progress cards distribution, health bulletin and other issues will be discussed, he said. NTR DSDO UV Subba Rao, M DCP M Krishna Murthy Naidu, VMC Additional Commissioner Dr D Chandrasekhar, DM & HO Dr M Suhagini, Samagra Siksha Additional Project Coordinator G Uma Maheswara Rao, RDOs K Balakrishna, K Madhuri, DRDA PD K Srinivasa Rao, DPO P Lavanya Kumar, and others were present.

Later, Collector Lakshmi released the SSC Physical Science question booklet prepared by the NTR District Physical Science Teachers Forum. He lauded the Physical Science teachers for preparing the study material aimed at 100 per cent results in government schools. DSDO UV Subba Rao, District Science Officer M Hussain, Physical Science Teachers Forum general secretary P Nageswara Rao, among others, were present.

Rammohan urges Centre to rescue 22 migrant workers from Saudi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has appealed to the Indian government for urgent action to bring back 22 migrant workers from Saudi Arabia due to dishonest employers. In a meeting held in Delhi on Tuesday with Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Rammohan Naidu highlighted the difficult situation the workers are facing.

"These workers, who moved to Saudi Arabia in search of better job opportunities, have not been paid for the last two months. They are living in severe conditions, without enough food or basic necessities," said Rammohan Naidu. "Their families in Srikakulam are extremely worried about their safety."

Rammohan Naidu emphasised the urgent need for the government to intervene and help the workers return home. "We cannot allow our people to suffer like this. I urge the government to take quick action to bring them back and provide them with the support they need," he added.

The Union Minister also called for the Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia to offer immediate assistance.



"The Embassy must act quickly to ensure their safety, provide shelter, and help with their return," he said. In response, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar assured Rammohan Naidu that the government would take swift steps to resolve the issue. "We understand the seriousness of the situation,

and we will make sure the necessary actions are taken immediately," Jaishankar said. The situation has sparked deep concern in Srikakulam, with many residents anxiously awaiting news about their loved ones. The government's quick intervention is expected to bring relief to both the workers and their families.

ECI announces schedule for EG-WG Teachers' MLC by-poll

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the schedule for the by-election to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council from the East-West Godavari Teachers' Constituency, which includes six districts: East Godavari, West Godavari, Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema, Kakinada, Eluru, and Alluri Sita Ramaraju. The polling will be held on December 5 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vivek Yadav directed private management and authorities in these districts to extend necessary support and facilities to employees and workers registered as voters in the constituency.

'Govt to release schedule for resuming Polavaram works soon'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources, Dr Nimmala Ramanaidu, has announced that the State government will finalise and release the schedule for resuming work on the Polavaram Irrigation Project in the second week of December. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is expected to visit the project soon and will make the official announcement.

In a media briefing at the Secretariat on Tuesday, Minister Ramanaidu stated that all obstacles to the project's progress have been cleared, and the government is ready to restart work. National and international experts have evaluated the project, and the Central Water Commission has approved the designs for the diaphragm wall and the Earth Cum Rockfill Dam (ECRF), enabling construction to resume.

Following a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naidu, the government has decided to begin work on the diaphragm wall in January next year. Subsequently, CM Naidu will launch the ECRF works, with both projects scheduled to proceed concurrently. Technical approval for these constructions has been granted, and ground improvement works at the ECRF site are expected to be completed this month.

Additionally, Minister Ramanaidu mentioned that, following directives from Chief



Minister Naidu, the government has allocated Rs 996 crore for rehabilitation and the construction of colonies, funds that had been pending for several years. He stressed that, as per the CM's instructions, no time should be wasted in advancing the project.

Furthermore, he noted that the tender process for the Hundri-Neeva Project, which aims to provide drinking and irrigation water facilities to the Rayalaseema region, is underway. The government is also actively working to restart the Chintalapudi Lift Irrigation Scheme and resolve any remaining obstacles.

Funds, responsibilities allocated to BC Corporations: Savitha

● Lauds TDP's commitment to empower BC community

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC, EWS, Handlooms, and Textiles S Savitha has stated that funds, along with responsibilities, have been allocated to the BC Corporations in the State. The Minister made these remarks during a meeting with MLA Aravind Babu, Agnikula Kshatriya Welfare and Development Corporation Chairman Chilakalapudi Paparao, Gouda Corporation Chairman Venkata Gurumurthy and other BC association leaders at the Secretariat on Tuesday.

Chilakalapudi Paparao invited Minister Savitha to attend his felicitation ceremony scheduled for December 6, at the Degree College Grounds in Avanigadda, Krishna district. Savitha congratulated



Paparao on his appointment as the Chairman of the State Agnikula Kshatriya Welfare and Development Corporation.

The Minister praised the TDP's commitment to empower the BC community since its inception. She credited late NT Rama Rao and TDP chief

Chandrababu Naidu for providing political representation to the underprivileged and backward classes. She criticised the previous YSRCP regime, stating that BC Corporations have become ineffective under their rule. Savitha alleged that former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy appoint-

ed governing boards for BC Corporations merely to provide political positions for YSRCP leaders without allocating funds.

Highlighting the TDP's initiatives, the Minister said that Chandrababu Naidu implemented numerous welfare schemes for BCs during his tenure. Recently, the TDP-led NDA government allocated over ₹39,000 crore in the budget for BC welfare, showcasing their commitment to the uplift of backward classes. She urged the chairpersons of BC Corporations including Paparao and Venkata Gurumurthy to actively promote government programmes and schemes among the public.

BC leaders D Murali and K Shankar Rao, and TDP members were present.

Vijayawada Book Fest from Jan 2

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The 35th Vijayawada Book Festival will be held at the Government Polytechnic grounds from January 2 to 12, organised by the Vijayawada Book Festival Society. The festival will feature a variety of activities, including numerous stalls and a foot march by book lovers. The event's poster was unveiled by Society president K. Lakshmaiah, Secretary T. Manohara Naidu, and others in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Lakshmaiah and Manohara Naidu announced that the festival's premises will be named after Pidikiti Rama Koteswara Rao (Sahithi Navajivan Book Links), and the student programme platform will be named after industrialist Ratan Tata. They also shared that the festival will open at 5 pm on January 2.

This year's festival will highlight centenary celebrations of renowned writers, including Arudra, Dasarathi Krishnamacharya, and others. A book lovers' walk will be held on January 6, and conferences will focus on the 75th anniversary of Sri Sri Mahaprasthanam and the revival of libraries. More than 200 stalls will be set up, showcasing national and international publishers.

TTD Vigilance team wins medals at national tennis tourney

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD vigilance officers have demonstrated their skill at the National-level Tennis Championship recently held in Karnataka. TTD Executive Officer J Syamala Rao praised Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (CVSO) J. Sridhar, who formally met the EO at her chamber in the TTD Administrative Building in Tirupati on Tuesday and briefed her about the medals won by the TTD officers. The 25th All India Police Lawn Tennis Championship-2024, organised by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), was held at the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Stadium (KSLTS) in Cubbon Park, Bengaluru, from November 26 to 30. A total of 20 police teams from various states, along with paramilitary forces including CISF, CRPF, BSF, ITBP, and NSG, participated in the event.

TTD Vigilance Officers NTV Ramkumar



and A. Surendra, representing the Vigilance and Security wings respectively, took part in the championship and won medals. NTV Ramkumar secured a Silver medal in the Veteran Doubles category, while A. Surendra won two Silver medals in the Open Tennis Singles and Doubles categories.

Both officers also met Additional Executive Officer Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary at Tirumala on Tuesday, who congratulated them for their achievements.

VIGILANCE OFFICIALS RAID VIZAG SWEET SHOPS

● Substandard ingredients, poor hygiene found during inspections

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a city-wide crackdown, officials of the Vigilance & Enforcement (V&E) Department, in coordination with the Food Safety Department, conducted surprise raids on several renowned sweet shops to ensure compliance with food safety and business standards.

The inspections, led by Regional Vigilance and Enforcement Officer (RVEO) K. Srinivasa Rao as per the direction of Deputy Superintendent of Police (V&E) N. Murali Krishna, targeted shops in areas like Isukathota, Maddilapalem, and Ram Nagar. The focus was on evaluating product quality, hygiene in kitchens, and adherence to legal norms.

Authorities reported severe lapses during the raids. "In one shop, we discovered non-branded ghee being used in the preparation of sweets. This is a clear violation of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. A case has been booked, the ghee has been seized, and a notice has been issued to the owner," said RVEO K. Srinivasa Rao. The inspections revealed that staff in many outlets were not following basic hygiene practices. Samples of food products have been collected from several shops for laboratory testing.

The RVEO warned that inspections will not stop at sweet shops. "We will expand the crackdown to include restaurants and cloud kitchens in the city."

Call for inclusion, leadership opportunities for differently-abled

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has emphasised the need for greater inclusion and leadership opportunities for differently-abled individuals in both the government and private sectors. Speaking at the International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebration held at the VUDA Children's Arena, Prasad highlighted the theme of the event, "Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future". He praised the determination and achievements of differently-abled individuals, calling them "true inspirations".

"Their courage and strength are evident in their achievements," Prasad said. "Their contributions to society showcase their unique abilities, and we must ensure that they are given opportunities to thrive."



cultural performances by disabled students. "Their energy and enthusiasm on stage were nothing short of mesmerising. If given the right support and encouragement, these

young talents will continue to rise to even greater heights."

Prasad acknowledged the efforts of both the Central and State governments in providing assistance to dif-



ferently-abled individuals, particularly highlighting the recent increase in disability pensions. He also mentioned the district administration's ongoing efforts to organise camps

and provide opportunities for employment and further support.

MV Seshamma, Senior Civil Judge and secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, emphasised the

importance of awareness about the legal rights of differently-abled individuals. She highlighted the 2016/2017 legislation that provides detailed protections for them and ensures their access to constitutional benefits. "It is crucial that differently-abled individuals, along with their families and guardians, are aware of their rights in education, healthcare, and other key areas," Seshamma said. "We encourage them to take advantage of these benefits whenever necessary."

The event included various activities, such as exhibitions showcasing products and services for differently-abled individuals, prize distributions, and recognition of volunteers. The Collector and Seshamma visited the exhibition halls and congratulated the cultural performers.

Officials from various government departments, representatives from NGOs, and a large gathering of students attended the programme.

REVENUE SADASSULU

EXPEDITE ARRANGEMENTS: DC TO OFFICIALS

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Collector J Venkata Murali has instructed officials to expedite arrangements for organising Revenue Sadassulu, scheduled to be held from December 9 to January 5 across the district.

During a video conference on Tuesday with tahsildars and other revenue officials, the Collector reviewed the preparations for the event. He emphasised the need for sincere efforts and field-level visits to ensure the success of the seminars. He stressed that coordinated efforts are crucial to achieving the government's objectives.

The Collector urged officials to address public grievances promptly, ensuring that no one is sent back without due attention. He also directed tahsildars to re-examine lands removed from the list of prohib-

ited lands and submit detailed reports within a week.

"Applications in the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) must be thoroughly examined to provide justice to affected individuals," he said, noting that 3,868 petitions have already been received and must be resolved quickly.

Additionally, arrangements for Legislative Council elections were discussed, with 5,843 petitions for voter list amendments requiring immediate action. The Collector also ordered the issuance of notifications for elections to water body associations. District Joint Collector Prakhar Jain directed officials to upload details of 3,900 acres of lands removed from the prohibited list online, prioritising accuracy. DRO G. Gangadhar Goud, RDOs, and other officials attended the meeting.



900 new buses Inducted into APSRTC fleet: Chairman

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana announced on Tuesday that 900 new buses have been inducted into the corporation's fleet. Inaugurating new bus services to various stations in Vijayawada, Narayana informed the media that APSRTC had placed an order for 1,600 buses, of which 900 have already been delivered and added to the fleet. He expressed confidence in steering APSRTC towards profitability. "We are formulating an action plan in collaboration with zonal chairpersons and other officials to transform APSRTC into a turnaround organisation. Damaged bus stations will also be developed," he asserted.

Highlighting the adoption of electric buses, Narayana said plans are being prepared for large-scale induction of electric buses. He added that a study is underway to explore a 'free bus travel scheme for women,' with details to be announced soon by the government. The chairman assured passengers of improved services, promising facilities on par with private bus operators.

Addressing employee concerns, he pledged to resolve issues through discussions with union leaders, prioritising their grievances. Narayana criticised the previous YSRCP government for its handling of APSRTC, stating that the organisation suffered significantly under its five-year rule, leaving many critical issues unresolved.



We are formulating an action plan in collaboration with zonal chairpersons and other officials to transform APSRTC into a turnaround organisation. Damaged bus stations will also be developed

KONAKALLA NARAYANA
APSRTC Chairman

Kuppam hub for agricultural innovation: MLC Srikanth

■ TRAINING PROGRAMME AIMED AT ENHANCING SCIENTIFIC CULTIVATION PRACTICES BEGINS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MLC Kancharla Srikanth said that Kuppam has become a hub for agricultural innovation with the establishment of the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in collaboration with Israel's advanced technology.

Speaking at the inauguration of a three-day training programme on Tuesday, organised at the Horticulture Hub in Kuppam, MLC Srikanth highlighted the significance of the initiative. The programme, a joint effort of the State government, Horticulture Mission and the Embassy of Israel in New Delhi, aims to enhance scientific cultivation practices. Topics such as mulching, drip irrigation, advanced nursery techniques, polyhouse crop management and pest control are being covered.

The training programme scheduled from December 3-5 is being attended by 40 government horticulture officials from 12 States. Expert trainers are conducting the sessions through PowerPoint presentations.

The inaugural event was attended by Indo-Israel Embassy representative and Agriculture



Attaché Uri Rubinstein, Project Officer Brahmadev, District Horticulture Officer Madhusudan Reddy, District AP Micro Irrigation Project Officer Balasubramaniam, and Horticulture Assistant Director Koteswar Rao, among others. MLC Srikanth stated that hosting international representatives at the Horticulture Hub in Kuppam is a significant achievement. He credited the Chief Minister's visionary leadership in establishing the hub in a remote region with advanced foreign technology.

Highlighting the hub's contri-

butions, he mentioned the development of innovative cultivation methods, which have positioned Kuppam as a national leader in horticulture. Srikanth noted that farmers who previously practised traditional farming methods are now cultivating multiple crops and achieving better incomes. He assured that the government is prepared to support various agricultural experiments for farmers' benefit.

MLC expressed amazement at the grafting techniques demonstrated at the CoE, where multiple plants are grown on a single plant. He emphasised the government's commitment to supporting farmers through the establishment of food processing units and a knowledge centre in Kuppam for the development of innovative agricultural practices.

MP discusses AP's economic growth with Union Minister

● Proposals include expediting establishment of IIFT Kakinada, strengthening NID Amaravati

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

MP M Sriharat met with Union Minister for Industry and Commerce Piyush Goyal here on Tuesday to discuss initiatives aimed at driving economic growth in Andhra Pradesh. The meeting focused on strengthening the State's industrial and trade capabilities through infrastructure development, education, and innovation.

Sriharat presented several key recommendations, including expediting the establishment of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) in Kakinada. "The institute has the potential to enhance education in international trade and commerce, enabling local businesses to expand their global footprint."

Discussions also centred on bolstering the National Institute of Design (NID) in Amaravati. Sriharat advocated for enhanced infrastructure and operational support, highlighting the institute's critical role in fostering industrial innovation and creative design. Another significant



proposal aimed to position Andhra Pradesh as a global hub for footwear manufacturing and innovation. Sriharat recommended establishing dedicated research and development (R&D) facilities to attract investments, create jobs, and elevate the State's status in the global footwear industry.

Recognising the growing influence of e-commerce, Sriharat stressed the importance of empowering small businesses and local industries through digital transformation. "Targeted government support is crucial to strengthening the State's e-commerce ecosystem and unlocking new economic opportunities," he said.

SPA-V launches web-portal for AMRUT

● Portal displays upcoming projects and capacity building programmes for coming days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The School of Planning and Architecture-Vijayawada (SPA-V) launched its web-portal for 'AMRUT' funded by the Centre of Urban Planning for Capacity Building on Tuesday in the presence of Lanka Dinakar, chairman of the 20-Point Programme of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, Amogh Kumar Gupta, chairperson of BoG of SPA Vijayawada, and Prof Dr Ramesh Srikonda, Director SPA Vijayawada. The web-portal displays the upcoming projects and capacity building programmes for the coming days, which covers a wide range of pertinent issues in the region.

The AMRUT Division of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA, Government of India) has recognised SPA Vijayawada as one of the few centres in the country, that shall undertake top-notch, cutting-edge research, projects, and training in the field of urban planning and climate sensitive development.

While launching the centre and the portal, Lanka Dinakar mentioned that in the pursuit



of the vision of Vikshit Bharat by the Prime Minister and the dream of Swarna Andhra Pradesh of the AP CM to take the State to the highest pedestal of development, SPA-V can play a titular role. He mentioned that in order to integrate SDGs with infrastructure progress and access to green and smart amenities for the coming generations, it is important that think-tanks like the SPA Vijayawada and the AMRUT Centre collaborate with the government to come out with latest solutions that are people and climate friendly.

Amogh Kumar Gupta mentioned the need for integrating high-end research based out-

comes of SPAV with the practical needs of urban local bodies in the region, and this centre can be one of the best examples of industry-government-academic interface.

Dr Ramesh Srikonda stated that this centre is a hallmark of SPAV's capability, resources and potential in leading the path of research and advocacy in the domain of Urban Planning in India and that already the centre is in touch with local government of Tirupati, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Machilipatnam, and Capital Region of AP to initiate projects that touch upon elements of sustainable development with simple workable solutions.

House panel to visit Visakha Dairy on Dec 9

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Special House Committee, led by senior MLA Jyothula Venkata Appa Rao alias Nehru, has decided to visit the Visakha Dairy Plant to investigate allegations of corruption and irregularities at the dairy. The Special House Committee meeting was chaired by Nehru on the Assembly premises at Velagapudi on Tuesday.

Speaker Chintakayala Ayyannapatrudu constituted the Special House Committee under the chairmanship of Jyothula Nehru, with MLAs Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao,

Velagapudi Rama Krishna Babu, Palla Srinivasa Rao, Gouthu Sirisha, RVSK Ranga Rao, and Datla Subba Raju as members.

The meeting decided to visit the Visakha Dairy Plant on December 9 and to interact with employees, dairy farmers and officials. Also, the committee passed a resolution to seek the permission of the Speaker to engage the services of experts in dealing with the technical issues during the inquiry. The Committee further decided to invite representations and complaints from people, dairy farmers, and others.

BOY DIES OF SNAKE BITE

PNS ■ NANDYALA



A boy died of a snake bite at Burugupalli village in Giddalur mandal on Tuesday. Officials said that the deceased Manoj (8) was studying in Class 3 at the ZP School. A snake bit him on the cheek when he was asleep in his house in the wee hours of Tuesday. He was immediately taken to the Government General Hospital where he died while undergoing treatment. The family members suspect that the viper bit him when he was asleep on the cot. The officials consoled the family and assured them of all help.

TTD chief inspects queue complexes in Tirumala

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman BR Naidu conducted a surprise inspection of the darshan queue lines in Tirumala on Tuesday. He first checked the slotted Sarva Darshan queue lines at the ATGH and then proceeded to the Narayangiri sheds. Later, he inspected the Footpath Hall (Divya Darshan) and gathered feedback from devotees about the services provided in the Rs. 300 special entrance darshan queue line. During the inspection, some devo-

tees expressed satisfaction with the improved taste of the Laddus and the increased quality of Annaprasadam. However, others requested the Chairman to arrange quicker darshan for Rs. 300 ticket holders.

The Chairman assured that a review would be held with officials to address concerns regarding the queue lines and darshan timings, and appropriate measures would be taken. TTD Board member Bhanu Prakash Reddy and other officials were present during the inspection.

BJP MLA appeals to CM to introduce common school system

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP MLA from Kamareddy constituency Katipally Venkataramana Reddy addressed a letter on Tuesday to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy appealing the latter to implement common school system in the State.

In his letter, Venkataramana Reddy said that the economic development and human development depends on the education system and hence there is a need to reform the education system comprehensively in the State.

He opined that the quality education only prepares the persons useful resource to the nation. However, the previous BRS government

destroyed the education system in the last 10 years in the State. Venkataramana Reddy said that the education system in Telangana would fall to a low level if the Congress government continued the education system in the same manner. He suggested the Congress government to do justice to the coming generations.

Venkataramana Reddy said that as per the UDISC report, the students pursuing education in private schools are more in Telangana when compared with other South India states - Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It is not good for the State education system and for the comprehensive development of children, he lamented.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh, under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led NDA government, has completed 175 days of governance. During this period, the administration has focused on transformative policies, infrastructure development, and addressing systemic inefficiencies.

TDP MLA from Gannavaram constituency, Yarlagadda Venkata Rao, provided an overview of the key initiatives and achievements in these 175 days.

Venkata Rao highlighted that the TDP-led government continues to balance rapid development with effective governance, aiming to address challenges and achieve the long-term vision of a prosperous and sustainable



"Swarnandhra Pradesh." Chief Minister Naidu has reiterated his commitment to transforming Andhra Pradesh into a globally recognised State, with a focus on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The administration has introduced new policies in the IT, textile, and maritime sectors. Amendments to tourism and sports policies aim to further economic growth and social development. The pro-

The administration has introduced new policies in the IT, textile, and maritime sectors. Amendments to tourism and sports policies aim to further economic growth and social development. The proposal for an airport in Kuppam, which is set to enhance agricultural exports and regional connectivity, aligns with the state's broader vision of infrastructure development to support economic activities.

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In an effort to promote transparency, the government has intensified measures to combat the liquor, sand, and ration mafias. Additionally, the Land Grabbing (Prevention) Act has been actively used to resolve land disputes, restoring public trust and reducing conflicts.

Venkata Rao added that Chief Minister Naidu has directed officials and ministers to conduct regular field visits and submit detailed performance reports, ensuring better implementation of projects and accountability in governance. In collaboration with Israel, the State has established a Centre of Excellence in Horticulture in Kuppam, promoting advanced agricultural techniques such as grafting, polyhouse farming, and drip irrigation, empowering local farmers with modern tools.

The government has also prioritised the completion of essential drinking water projects in Pulivendula, Uddanam, and Dhone, addressing the acute water needs of rural communities. Policies aimed at attracting investments in the IT and textile sectors are expected to generate employment and stimulate economic growth.

Venkatrao further mentioned that Chief Minister Naidu has criticised bureaucratic delays, calling for greater efficiency in project implementation. He emphasised the need for regular monitoring and timely delivery of initiatives. The government continues to leverage central schemes and ensure the optimal utilisation of allocated funds to drive development across the state, the MLA added.

ACROSS THE STATES



4.4 per cent women in CAPF and Assam Rifles: Govt

There are nearly 4.4 per cent women in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and Assam Rifles in total posted strength of 9.48 lakh personnel, Lok Sabha was informed Tuesday. In response to a question, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said 4,138 women personnel are likely to be recruited in the CAPFs and Assam Rifles in 2025. "It is a constant endeavour of the ministry to increase the number of women in CAPF. It is noteworthy that number of women in CAPF has gone up from 15,499 in 2014 to 42,190 in 2024," the reply said. In terms of percentage, CISF has the highest representation of women at 7.02 per cent in total force strength of around 1.51 lakh followed by 4.43 per cent in SSB, 4.41 per cent in BSF, 4.05 per cent ITBP, 4.01 per cent in Assam Rifles and 3.38 per cent in CRPF, it said. The minister said 835 women personnel have been recruited in CAPF and Assam Rifles in 2024 while 5,469 are in the process of recruitment.



7 newly elected MLAs of Rajasthan take oath

Seven newly elected MLAs of Rajasthan were sworn in on Tuesday, with Assembly Speaker Vasudev Devani administering the oath of office in his chamber. Devani congratulated the MLAs and urged them to uphold the traditions, dignity and decorum of the House. The newly elected MLAs are DC Bairwa from Dausa, Revantram Danga from Khinvsar, Shanta Devi Meena from Salumbar and Rajendra Gurjar from Deol-Uniara, Rajendra Bhambu from Jhunjhunu, Sukhwant Singh from Ramgarh and Anil Katara from Chaurasi. Government Chief Whip Jogeshwar Garg and Chief Whip of the Opposition Rafiq Khan were also present on the occasion. Revantram Danga, MLA from Khinvsar arrived at the Assembly riding a tractor with supporters. Supporters of the MLAs, were also seen in large numbers outside the Assembly premises in traditional attire.



Kolkata to host Hamfest India convention

Hundreds of amateur ham radio operators from across the country will gather for the annual Hamfest India convention in Kolkata from December 14. The two-day convention will also see participation of delegates from Dubai, the US, Nepal, Oman and Germany, Sayani Dey, one of the organisers of the event, said in a statement. Bengal is the pioneer in the history of India's amateur radio and home to the country's first licensed HAM Amarendra Chandra Gooptu, who obtained his licence in 1921. Hamfest India convener Milkantha Chatterjee said. He said it was a fitting tribute that the celebration of 103 years of ham radio practice was taking place in West Bengal, from where the journey began. Official representatives from the National Disaster Management Authority, National Disaster Response Force, India Meteorological Department, and the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority are also participating in the convention. Dey said the Ministry of Communications issued a special call sign - AT24HF1 -- for the event, which would also witness participation of leading companies and R&D organisations.

Modi assures all possible help to Tamil Nadu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Tuesday to enquire about the flood situation in parts of the state and assured him of all possible support from the Centre. Official sources said Modi called up Stalin regarding the flood situation. Villupuram district in north Tamil Nadu continued to reel under unprecedented flooding on Monday following extremely heavy rainfall, virtually blocking access to villages and residential colonies as bridges and roads were submerged and inundating huge acreage of standing crops. In Tiruvannamalai, tragedy unfolded as five bodies were recovered from a house crushed by a boulder that rolled down a hilltop following a mud slip on the night of December 1 during rains.

'India for fair framework on border issue with China'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India remains committed to engaging with China to arrive at a fair and mutually acceptable framework for boundary settlement, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Tuesday, noting that India-China relations cannot be normal in the absence of a clearly articulated approach. Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, the minister said India-China ties have been abnormal since 2020 when peace and tranquillity in border areas were disturbed due to Chinese actions.

"The amassing of troops by China in eastern Ladakh in April-May 2020 resulted in face-offs at a number of points. After the Galwan Valley clashes, we were addressing a situation that not only saw fatalities but events that needed heavy weaponry deployment," he said. The recent developments that reflect continuous diplomatic engagements have set India-China ties in the direction of "some improvement", he said. "We remain committed to engaging with China to arrive at a fair and mutually acceptable framework for boundary settlement... The government has maintained that India-China relations cannot be normal in the absence of peace and tranquillity in the border areas, the combination of a firm and principal stance on this situation and the border areas, as well as a clearly articulated approach to the totality of our ties," Jaishankar said. "We have been very clear that the restoration of peace and tranquillity will be the basis for the relationship to move forward," he added.



Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, the minister said India-China ties have been abnormal since 2020 when peace and tranquillity in border areas were disturbed due to Chinese actions

Jaishankar credited the Indian forces, saying that despite logistical challenges and the Covid pandemic, they countered the Chinese troops rapidly.



'They need empathy, not sympathy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday emphasized the need for empathy, inclusivity and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (Divyangjan), and asserted that their empowerment is a collective responsibility of society and the government. Speaking at the National Awards ceremony for individuals and organisations working for the welfare of Divyangjan, Murmu called for a shift in societal attitudes. "They need empathy, not sympathy. They deserve natural affection, not special attention. Above all, they should experience respect," President Murmu said, urging people to foster a society that treats Divyangjan with dignity and equality. The President highlighted that being differently

abled is not a limitation but a "special condition" that demands tailored support. "Special training, counselling and facilities must be provided for their needs. While the government is giving priority to their welfare, society must also step forward to prioritise their inclusion," she said. The President pointed to the remarkable achievements of Divyangjan in various fields, particularly sports. "In the 2012 Paralympics, India secured just one medal. However, in 2024, awareness and support for Divyangjan have resulted in our athletes winning 29 medals. This progress reflects our growing sensitivity and commitment to their empowerment," she said. President Murmu also stressed the importance of creating an inclusive environment.



INDIA bloc MPs demand JPC probe into Adani issue

Hold protest on Parl premises

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MPs of several INDIA bloc parties protested on the Parliament premises on Tuesday over the Adani issue and reiterated their demand for a probe by a joint parliamentary committee into the matter.

MPs of the Congress, AAP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT), DMK and the Left parties, among others, raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and demanded accountability. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, AAP's Sanjay Singh, RJD's Misa Bharti and Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant also participated in the protest on the steps leading to the Parliament's Makar Dwar. In a post on

Facebook, Gandhi said, "Protesting at Makar Dwar, Parliament complex, today, asking the real question: Who benefits from Adani's billions, Modi ji? The Prime Minister's silence speaks volumes."

The Congress and some other opposition parties have been demanding a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe following the indictment of Adani Group chairperson Gautam Adani and other company officials by US prosecutors on bribery and fraud charges. However, some other opposition parties, especially the TMC, have not attached the same priority to the Adani row and from the start wanted Parliament to discuss a host of different issues, including

unemployment, price rise and the Centre's alleged discrimination against opposition-ruled states in fund allocation.

The TMC has skipped opposition meetings on formulating the INDIA bloc's joint strategy during the session. The Samajwadi Party has been attaching the highest priority to the Sambhal violence issue, which it raised in Parliament on Tuesday.

The Congress has said that Adani's indictment in a US court on bribery and fraud charges "vindicates" its demand for a JPC investigation into the various "scams" involving the billionaire industrialist's conglomerate. Gandhi has sought Adani's immediate arrest. The Adani Group has dismissed all allegations as "baseless".

Bengal govt calls for 50 pc devolution of taxes to states

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Sixteenth Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya on Tuesday said the West Bengal government has urged the panel to increase the devolution of taxes to states from the current 41 per cent to 50 per cent, while proposing significant changes to the criteria for weightage in horizontal allocation.

Panagariya, who was in the city, said, most of the 13 states the commission has visited so far have demanded raising the devolution of taxes to 50 per cent, while several others asked the panel to increase it to 45 per cent from the existing 41 per cent.

In vertical devolution, the West Bengal government, in its plea, demanded that the devolution be increased to 50 per cent, "the commission's chairman said. Vertical devolution is the distribution of tax proceeds between the Centre and states in the country.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee met the commission and made several suggestions. She also raised the issue of "deprivation of the Centre".

Rahul to visit Sambhal today amid curbs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/SAMBHAL

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi along with the five other Congress MPs from Uttar Pradesh will visit violence-hit Sambhal on Wednesday, party's state unit chief Ajay Rai said. Newly-elected Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is also likely to accompany the delegation, he said.

The party's general secretary and UP in-charge Avinash Pande will be there too, Rai said. Curbs under section 163 (power to issue order in urgent

cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) were set to expire on Sunday in Sambhal and have now been extended till December 31.

When asked about Rahul Gandhi's visit to Sambhal, Superintendent of Police of Sambhal Krishan Kumar told PTI, "Section 163 of the BNSS is already imposed in Sambhal. No outsider is allowed (to enter Sambhal). If they come, then they will be served a notice." Sambhal District Magistrate Rajendra Pensa on Tuesday wrote a letter

to the police commissioners of Gautam Buddh Nagar and Ghaziabad and the superintendents of police of Amroha and Bulandshahr districts, urging them to stop Rahul Gandhi at the borders of their districts.

On the Sambhal DM's missive, UP Congress chief Rai said that this is "murder of democracy through blatant misuse of police". Sambhal has been in the eye of the storm since November 19, when a Mughal-era mosque was surveyed on court orders following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site.

Violence erupted during a second survey on November 24 as protesters gathered near Shahi Jama Masjid and clashed with security personnel. Four people died and several others were injured in the violence that ensued.

Meanwhile, UP Congress general secretary Sachin Chaudhary told PTI in Sambhal, "National secretary Pradeep Narwal, state vice-president Rizwan Qureshi and I met the family members of deceased Bilal and Noman, and helped them talk to Priyanka Gandhi ji. Priyanka ji enquired about their wellbeing."



'Death in severe COVID-19 could be due to cell damage'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Organ damage and death due to severe COVID-19 could be because of disruption to the mitochondria, or a cell's "energy-producing factory", which contributes to 'cytokine storm' or excessive inflammation commonly seen in these patients, a new study has found.

Researchers found that the damage or stress in mitochondria can trigger immune responses, specifically those that activate the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system, or 'RAAS', network of hormones, proteins and enzymes. The network is known to be essential for regulating blood pressure, but when overactivated, can trigger a string of



"This could explain the long-lasting immune dysregulation seen in survivors of COVID-19 and may contribute to long COVID," Beheshti said

processes causing organ damage, the researchers, including those at the University of Pittsburgh, US, said.

They explained that overactivation of the RAAS network and stress in mitochondria

intensify an "out-of-control" immune response, known as a 'cytokine storm' a common feature of severe COVID-19 and also considered a main contributor to long Covid.

The findings, published in

the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, shed light on the biological processes driving organ damage and death in severe COVID-19 and helps explain why survivors can experience

long-term complications. "Notably, we also found that activation of RAAS caused substantial damage to the lymph nodes (part of the immune system), which hasn't been shown in COVID-19 before," co-senior author Afshin Beheshti, a professor of surgery and computational and systems biology at the University of Pittsburgh, said. "This could explain the long-lasting immune dysregulation seen in survivors of COVID-19 and may contribute to long COVID," Beheshti said.

For the study, the researchers analysed genomes in autopsy samples obtained from 40 patients who died due to the viral infection. The samples were taken from multiple

organs, including nasal cavity (nose), lungs, heart and liver. The team observed an increased expression of about 50 genes involved in the functioning of one's immune system in the samples obtained from nasal swabs. Information on one's genes translate into observable behaviour and traits through the process of 'gene expression'. The authors wrote, "In total, these data suggest that overactivation of RAAS signalling and mitochondrially mediated inflammation activation holistically comprise the cytokine storm that causes lethal COVID-19." "Our study resolves some of the long-standing unanswered questions about how the SARS-CoV-2 virus impacts the body," Beheshti said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Junta under siege

Myanmar's Junta is losing grip as rebel gains mount, raising fears of a balkanised future

After years of oppressive rule, human rights abuses, and atrocities against its own people, Myanmar's military rulers are now on the defensive. Their grip on power appears increasingly fragile as armed rebels gain significant ground. A year-long offensive has allowed anti-junta forces to seize much of the 480-km National Highway 3, connecting Mandalay to China, a critical route cutting through northern Myanmar's rugged terrain. This victory denies the military lucrative taxes, threatens its strongholds in the central plains, and boosts rebel morale as the civil war enters its fourth year. Myanmar is teetering on the edge of disintegration as the military junta, which seized power in a 2021 coup, confronts increasingly severe attacks from armed rebel groups across the country. Over the past year, ethnic armed organisations and local militias have intensified their offensives, capturing key regions and heightening the risk of Myanmar splintering into fragmented zones of control. The most biggest challenge to the junta has



come from the alliance between the Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). Operating primarily in Shan State along the border with China, these groups have launched strategic, synchronised assaults, undermining the junta's control in this crucial region.

The Arakan Army's offensives in Rakhine and Chin States have yielded significant territorial gains, placing vast swathes of land and critical townships under their control. These advances threaten the junta's ability to project authority in regions vital for natural resources and strategic positioning. China, a key stakeholder with significant economic interests in Myanmar, has sought to balance its influence between the junta and rebel groups. As rebel forces secure near-total control over regions such as Rakhine and parts of Shan State, the junta's ability to govern the country as a unified entity is waning fast. This fragmentation could pave the way for the de facto partition of Myanmar into autonomous zones controlled by various factions. The war within has not been easy and the common people are paying the price. Entire communities have been displaced, particularly in the Rohingya-majority regions, where people face violence from multiple fronts. Basic services are scarce, and the humanitarian crisis is deepening. Prolonged conflict has devastated Myanmar's economy, deterring foreign investment and crippling key sectors. Infrastructure projects backed by China and other countries are at risk, compounding economic instability. The instability in Myanmar has broader implications for Southeast Asia, particularly for neighboring countries like Thailand and India. Cross-border violence, refugee flows, and the potential for illicit activities such as drug trafficking pose significant challenges for regional stability. The coming days will be critical in determining whether Myanmar can salvage its unity or succumb to a spiral of fragmentation and perpetual conflict.

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PICTALK



Bullock carts loaded with sugarcane head towards the Sugar Factory for crushing, in Karad

PTI

One nation one subscription as a catalyst for equitable education

Access to quality academic resources remains a significant challenge for students and researchers, especially in India's remote regions

Access to quality resource materials remains a critical challenge for students and research scholars, particularly in the remote corners of India. While the digital age has transformed the way information is disseminated, physical libraries continue to be the cornerstone of academic excellence.



Yet, these essential knowledge hubs are increasingly becoming relics of the past, accessible only to a privileged few associated with national institutions and selected universities. So far, every agency in the country has subscribed for their digital library resources, UGC have INFLIBNET, which is available in selected universities and colleges, CSIR and DST institutions have the National Knowledge Resource Consortium (NKRC); ICAR institutions have CeRA, etc, paying crores of rupees. In many cases, these e-resources are limited to the users of the host institute alone, though they are funded through public money. The ambitious One Nation One Subscription initiative, if implemented effectively, has the potential to

address this disparity and revitalize the educational landscape. Despite technological advancements, access to quality academic resources has not been democratised in India till now. Libraries in most colleges and universities face an alarming decline for various reasons. The lack of interest among younger generations in visiting libraries and shrinking funds has exacerbated this crisis. Unfortunately, in many public institutions, mainly libraries associated with national institutions, library staff often lack the enthusiasm and interpersonal skills to create a welcoming environment for readers. This, in turn, alienates even the most genuine readers who, despite the odds, make the effort to visit libraries. A

lack of support and an uninviting atmosphere can deter students and researchers from making libraries their go-to space for academic and intellectual pursuits, further eroding the library culture that is already under threat. The One Nation One Subscription initiative aims to address these challenges by providing nationwide access to high-quality academic resources through a centralised system. By negotiating bulk subscriptions to international and national journals, databases, and e-books, the initiative can ensure that every student has the same knowledge regardless of geographic or economic constraints. What a student or scholar gets in a national institute will be available to a student in a university situated in a remote corner of the country. It's democratising the knowledge resource. However, the success of this initiative depends on more than just access. India needs a parallel effort to rejuvenate its library ecosystem. Even in the digital age, physical libraries are irreplaceable as spaces for reflection and collaboration.

The Government should provide adequate funds to modernise the libraries and also take steps to recruit skilled, motivated librarians who understand the evolving needs of readers and can effectively manage digital and physical resources. To ensure inclusivity, The One Nation One Subscription must provide individual login credentials to every registered student and scholar, enabling direct access to resources anytime, anywhere. This would bypass traditional institutional gatekeeping and foster a more reader-friendly environment. Policymakers must ensure this ambitious plan does not falter due to a lack of implementation or neglect of complementary measures. Knowledge is the cornerstone of progress, and access to it must be recognised as a fundamental right, not a privilege. To fully realise the potential of this initiative, it is essential that the government ensures access to these resources for every student.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARAMPALAN

Access to quality academic resources remains a significant challenge for students and researchers, especially in India's remote regions

Access to quality resource materials remains a critical challenge for students and research scholars, particularly in the remote corners of India. While the digital age has transformed the way information is disseminated, physical libraries continue to be the cornerstone of academic excellence.

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How Nehru targeted his opponents

Nehru targeted Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Dr B R Ambedkar, leaders who had shaped India's Constitution but differed with his vision for the nation



ANIRBAN GANGULY

As the campaign for the first general elections in 1951-1952 played out, the Congress led by Nehru fiercely targeted two leaders. For the fledgling Jana Sangh and Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Nehru came out in open abuse, vowing to 'crush Jana Sangh'. For Dr Ambedkar and the Scheduled Caste Federation, the Congress adopted a ruse.

Nehru deputed his trusted communist friends to ensure Babasaheb's defeat. Jawaharlal was essentially a petty man when it came to his political and intellectual opponents. It did not matter to him that they were his colleagues in the Constituent Assembly till the other day and had contributed to erecting the constitutional edifice of free India. He wanted both Ambedkar and Syama Prasad defeated. He was allergic to their parliamentary skills and to their vocal advocacy of a new polity for India. He wanted a new Parliament shorn of opponents, except communists, who, in any case, were his ideological co-travellers. Nehru did not put up a candidate against A K Gopalan in Kannur. This camaraderie overflowed especially after Sardar Patel's death. Despite Nehru's flame-throwing blitzkrieg Dr Mookerjee won his Calcutta south seat, with his Jana Sangh just about managing to stay afloat as a national party.

Babasaheb lost from Bombay North seat, primarily because of the machinations of the communists who were outsourced by Nehru to carry out the hit-job against him.

It did not matter to Nehru that Dr Ambedkar's health was failing restricting his mobility. It did not matter to him that Dr Ambedkar had completely exhausted himself in the gargantuan task of putting together the Constitution and was therefore worthy of a noble gesture of support. Speaking of his defeat, Dr Ambedkar, one of his most authentic biographers Dhananjay Keer tells us, felt that it 'was due to the machinations of S.A.Dange.'

During the campaign Dange had given out a vicious slogan, he said, 'Spoil your votes but don't vote Dr Ambedkar.' To Dr Ambedkar,



Communism, was 'like a forest fire; it goes on burning and consuming anything and everything that comes in its way.' Nehru deftly fanned that forest fire. Dr Savita Ambedkar, in her reminiscences of her life with Dr Ambedkar, recalling this first election writes how Nehru was 'keeping a sharp eye on the constituency' and of how 'S K Patil (Mumbai boss of the Congress) and S A Dange of the Communist Party had agreed.'

It emerged, writes Savita Ambedkar, that 'Nehru, S K Patil and Dange had decided that they would do all that was required, use whatever strategy suited the occasion, but they were determined not to let Dr Ambedkar win.' The Congress-Communist conspiracy, as Savita Ambedkar describes it, left 'the Constitution-making Doctor Saheb defeated.' It was a terrible psychological blow for Saheb...

It was Congress's manipulation that caused the defeat of the maker of the Indian Constitution. This first defeat, deliberately inflicted on Dr Ambedkar, deeply disappointed him since he was looking forward to returning to Parliament. Parliament, he felt, was his natural arena of work, a forum standing on which he



NEHRU AND CONGRESS ENGINEERED A SECOND ELECTORAL DEFEAT WHEN BABASAHEB LOST THE BY-ELECTIONS TO LOK SABHA FROM THE BHANDARA SEAT

could give his best to his country's regeneration in his remaining years. 'This horrendous defeat in the elections,' writes Savita Ambedkar, 'had an extremely harmful impact on his already debilitated health, melancholy, disappointment, depression and disability returned.'

Nehru and Congress engineered a second electoral defeat when Babasaheb lost the by-elections to Lok Sabha from the Bhandara seat. For this election, Babasaheb chose a young RSS pracharak Dattopant Thengadi as his election convener.

Thengadi would closely work as Babasaheb's understudy for the next two years and would go on to found the world's largest trade union movement Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. The Bhandara by-elections were a chance for the Congress to make amends and to give up its pettiness, but Nehru stuck to his blind opposition to Babasaheb.

Dr Savita Ambedkar, ruefully writes that the Congress 'should have displayed the largeness of heart to re-invite [to Parliament] the sculptor of the Constitution with due honour. For the sake of the welfare of the nation, if not for anything else, Nehru should have left the way open for Saheb to be elected to the Lok

Sabha. But quite to the contrary, the Congress shook hands with a person like Dange and applied all its strength and got into all kinds of machinations to defeat Saheb, which proves that Congress cared more for the party than for the welfare of the country.'

During the Bhandara elections, Dr Ambedkar writes Keer, was scathing of Nehru and Congress. He was fighting the elections, he said, 'so that he might give the people the other point of view from the Opposition. It would not have been difficult, he said, for him to be in Parliament if he was prepared to make a compromise with the Congress.'

Babasaheb firmly chose not to compromise or succumb before Congress and thus faced political humiliation and insult in his last years. When Nehru's heirs, thus, comically wield the Constitution today, they must be greeted with loud guffaws. Their action needs to be dismissed as the irrelevant and desperate posturing of the managers of a defeated political cartel.

(The writer is chairman Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation and member National Executive Committee, BJP; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POPULATION GROWTH RATE DECLINES

Madam — The Rashtriya Swayamsevak (RSS) Sarsanghachalak (chief) Mohan Bhagwat raised concerns about declining birth rates, emphasising the importance of maintaining a birth rate of at least 2.1 to ensure the existence of social groups. He underscored unity despite differences and highlighted the inclusivity of Indian culture without caste discrimination. It is, however, true that birth rates are falling in every nation and in the developed West, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China.

Population is shrinking because of decreasing incidence of marriages among eligible young bachelors and spinsters and traditional marriages for life are fast getting replaced by live-ins, same-sex marriages, increasing rates of incidence of divorces, consensual/temporary affairs, and above all, spreading birth control measures irrespective of religious opposition to the same due to loosening of popular restraints or fear of religious tenets and prescriptions in all faiths. In India, Middle-class families are finding it difficult to provide better education for even two children and the value of rupees is decreasing and the purchasing power of rupees is going down. No educated person would like to have a third child. Just see how high the inflation is, GDP (gross domestic product) is down, the rupee is weak against the dollar, and we are having more children-who will feed them? Moreover, does Bhagwat have any solutions for real problems like poverty, jobs, and inflation? I feel this statement from Mohan Bhagwat is absurd and illogical.

Bidyt Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

CONTROVERSY OVER EVM

Madam — The growing controversy over the performance of EVM shows the dire need for a thorough study of its tamper-proof quality. Only when one loses, finds fault with EVMs is it acceptable? Definitely, it is the loser who seeks

Earth suffers from plastic pollution



Plastic has become the biggest headache for all living beings on the earth. Because of the chemicals present in it, this garbage is not only polluting the earth and water, but it is also causing problems for the animals in the sea. The talks held in the South Korean city of Busan to find a solution to plastic waste ended inconclusively on Monday. It has been said that all the countries will meet again next year i.e. in 2025. But the way the world has been divided into two parts on this subject in this meeting itself, it does

not seem that there is any scope for any kind of agreement after this. It is estimated that since 1950, more than eight billion tonnes of plastic have been produced worldwide, but less than 10 per cent has been recycled. Due to this, millions of tonnes of plastic have reached the oceans around the world, posing a serious threat to aquatic life and their environment.

While developed countries want a complete ban on its production. A group of 95 countries, including the UK, the European Union, the African Group and many South American countries, has emerged, calling for making Article 6 a legally binding pledge to reduce production levels. But a group of oil-producing countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait and Russia, strongly opposed it. India too has expressed its concern about including any commitment to cut plastic production, as it could impact its right to development.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

his doubts to be clarified. It is the responsibility of the Election Commission and the government to clear the doubts of anyone being the winner or the loser. Such doubts do arise because electronics are found to be the most vulnerable to manipulation.

After pushing in a big way for digitalisation, the Prime Minister himself expresses his concern over the mounting cyber crimes and digital arrests. Moreover, the persons in the helm of affairs also need to prove their integrity and their tamper-proof quality. The varying number of polling percentages from time to time instills, naturally, doubt in the minds of people. Above all, the pioneering countries in the field of electronics have not switched over to EVMs and are still sticking to the ballot papers. EVMs have not added anything as extra benefits in the process of conducting polling except in the process of counting votes. Ensuring the systems to be foolproof is as important as keeping democracy alive.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

COP29 FALLS SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS

Madam — The COP29 conference held at Baku was disappointing to say the least. It would be an understatement to say that it has delivered a deadly blow to international efforts to restrict global warming and put extra pressure on developing nations that are already struggling to emerge from the economic slowdown due to ongoing wars in West Asia and Europe.

How can they put developed nations and developing nations at par and expect the latter to do the heavy lifting? And to make matters worse, we have US President-elect Donald Trump, who has completely different ideas on this critical issue. With developed nations shying away from their responsibilities of helping developing nations to fight climate change, the future outlook for global climate mitigation looks grim. Developed nations will have to stop behaving like big brothers now and accept the reality and responsibility.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN THE ETERNAL JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

Life and death are interwoven in an eternal cycle of renewal, granting the soul opportunities for growth



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Very few humans know when death will come, how it will occur and where it will lead because death is inevitable and it keeps no calendar. Life may not be fair to all, but death deals equally with all, whether rich or poor, mighty or meek, deity or demon, saint or a sinner. Death has many shades to it. Dying for a noble cause such as for patriotism, or a social cause brings glory to the dead. Such deaths win over a lot of sympathy and goodwill for the soul. Then some die a silent death without suffering much illness or pain. Such deaths happen to fortunate souls who perform good actions. There are also violent deaths such as accidents, murders, suicides, executions etc. Such deaths are preceded by suffering and bitterness and followed by more agony for the soul. So! Are there any happy deaths or can death be a rewarding experience? Well!! To understand this, we have to first understand life. For this, we need to ask a few questions to ourselves as to what is it that lives when a human being is alive. What is it that ceases to exist when death occurs? On one hand, we say that a person has died and on the other hand, we talk of the body as the mortal remains. So what is mortal? The person or the body? In essence, life is a phenomenon that unfolds when a soul enters a body and death is simply a state when a soul leaves one body and enters a new one. Hence the person who passes away is the soul



that was living in the body. So, what is a soul? A soul is a sentient energy that manifests itself in three levels, the mind, intellect and sanskaras. A common saying goes that when you die the world is dead for you. Hence, what ends with death is the soul's connection or attachment to the limited world that it is related to whilst in the body, such as relationships, possessions, roles, etc. However, an amazing trait of the soul is that it carries over the karmic debts and sanskaras into the next life. We all know that everyone has to die one day yet we never think about our death. This may be because as souls, we have been living in different bodies birth after birth for ages. Our attachment to the body is so strong that even in old age people buy bigger and better properties and continue to invest for the future so that they can live in comfort. Death is not the end of everything but it marks a major turning point in the journey of the soul in the human world.

Death also means newness. It fills the soul with freshness and renewed zest for life and broadens the scope for the soul to enrich itself and evolve with new experiences with different souls in different roles, bodies and places. This renewal is what makes the concept of eternity meaningful. The cycle of life and world drama could not go on eternally if there were no death. For a spiritually enlightened soul, death means final liberation from earthly bondages; it's an ascension to a higher realm of existence where the soul can experience total freedom and bliss because an enlightened soul takes rebirth in a golden age where it will not suffer untimely or painful death.

So, how does one get over the fear of death? For that, we need to understand that the root cause of our fear that leads us to sin & suffering is the consciousness and attachment of the body. Hence the awareness that we are eternal souls is the key to conquering the fear of death. Immortality is the awareness of our eternity and mastery over the body. It does not imply that we will go on existing in the same body forever. NO. A spiritually empowered soul becomes immortal by practising soul consciousness whilst living in the body. On the other hand, for sinful souls life itself is a living death for they die every day out of fear, remorse and suffering but those who die alive i.e. those who live in the world with no attachment to worldly matters are indeed liberated even in life.

(Writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

Delhi's pollution crisis: A call for sustainable solutions



RAJDEEP PATHAK

A comprehensive approach to urban mobility, affordability and infrastructure is the need of the hour to reclaim Delhi's air and ensure a healthier, sustainable future



As India aspires to emerge as the world's third-largest economy, it continues to grapple with the challenge of crafting a robust policy framework to combat the persistent environmental crises (read pollution) in its capital city, Delhi. Thankfully, the stubble-burning season officially concluded on November 30, 2024, and it is perceived as the end of the annual apocalypse of Delhi's air pollution. But, it needs to be seen that although the practice was outlawed in 2015, it continues unabated, contributing to approximately 35 per cent of Delhi's pollution. However, the core issue extends far beyond stubble burning, encompassing broader atmospheric and industrial factors. Decisive action in addressing these deeper challenges – and not prolonged silence – is the need of the hour.

After weeks of smog and burning eyes and a high Air Quality Index (AQI), on December 2, 2024, Delhi's air quality showed marginal improvement for the second consecutive day, with the AQI that was recorded at 273 in the morning – though still within the 'poor' category. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the city's 24-hour average AQI on December 1 stood at 285, providing a modest reprieve after 32 consecutive days of 'very poor' and 'severe' air quality (AQI levels exceeding 400). However, despite these minor improvements, the Supreme Court on December 2, 2024, refused to ease emergency restrictions under Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for air pollution in Delhi.

The Court emphasised that any relaxation of measures would depend on a consistent and substantial downward trend in AQI levels. The schools have nevertheless opened giving a fresh breath to the students from the online or hybrid mode. Although experts caution that pollution levels could potentially worsen, the past three days have seen clear skies and sustained, stronger winds from the northwest, which have facilitated the dispersion of pollutants. One of the most contributing factors of pol-



THE STATE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN DELHI REMAINS DEEPLY INADEQUATE. ACCORDING TO A REPORT DELHI CURRENTLY HAS APPROXIMATELY 45 BUSES PER 100,000 RESIDENTS, BASED ON DATA FROM THE 2011 CENSUS

lution, according to the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), is 'vehicular pollution' which remains the most significant contributor to Delhi's air pollution, accounting for 51.1 per cent of emissions from all local sources, despite technical interventions aimed at reducing emissions. CSE's analysis highlights a persistent 'mobility crisis' in the city, characterised by systemic shortcomings in the public transport infrastructure despite years of investment. This crisis has driven a sharp increase in the number of private vehicles, which now play a substantial role in fuelling winter air pollution. Notably, even during periods of reduced stubble burning, Delhi's air quality frequently remains in the 'poor' or 'very poor' categories. CSE's report draws attention to several critical issues undermining public transportation, including its lack of reliability. For instance, instances of buses breaking down during transit rose significantly, from 781 in 2018-19 to 1,259 in 2022-23.

Furthermore, high waiting times at bus stops reveal a fundamental inefficiency in the system: less than 1 per cent of bus stops offer waiting times of less than 10 minutes, while approximately 50 per cent require passengers to wait over 15 minutes. The state of public transportation in Delhi remains deeply inadequate. According to a report Delhi currently has approximately 45 buses per 100,000 residents, based on data from the 2011 census.

This figure is significantly below the benchmark set by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, which recommends a ratio of 60 buses per lakh of the population. In comparison, major global cities such as London, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Seoul exhibit considerably higher ratios, ranging from 69 to 90 buses per 100,000

residents, highlighting a significant disparity in Delhi's public transportation infrastructure. While the Delhi Metro has been championed as a cornerstone of urban mobility, its impact remains constrained. With an average daily ridership of only 2,700 passengers per train, the Metro's limited capacity – that poor labourers aren't able to afford – and reach is evident, failing to address the broader needs of the city's commuters. According to The Economic Times, an unskilled daily-wage labourer in Delhi spend approximately 8 per cent of their income on travel via non-air-conditioned buses, 14 per cent on air-conditioned buses, and an alarming 22 per cent on the Metro.

These figures underscore the economic burden placed on vulnerable sections of the population. The challenge is addressing the issue of 'affordability'. Data from the 'Economic Survey of Delhi 2023-24' further paints a stark picture of the city's growing vehicle population. Delhi currently has 7.9 million registered vehicles, with an additional 650,000 vehicles added in 2023-24, a figure that surpasses the pre-pandemic (COVID) annual average of 610,000.

Moreover, the city experiences a daily influx and outflow of 1.1 million vehicles. The annual growth rate of two-wheelers and cars stands at 15 per cent, contributing significantly to transport-related pollution. Notably, according to the CSE, the transport sector accounts for 81 per cent of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions in the capital, further worsening its air quality challenges.

There is a reports that the number of vehicles in the capital doesn't correspond to the size of its population, showing how a small proportion of the population has an outsized contribution to the air pollution crisis.

According to data obtained in

the latest cycle of the National Family Health Survey, only a small proportion of families residing in Delhi own cars – 19 per cent in its rural areas and 28 per cent in its urban centers. Yet, Delhi streets are often congested by this small proportion of car-owners.' However, an equally concerning factor lies in the extensive proliferation of industries across Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), which persist as major and consistent sources of pollutants.

These industrial emissions subject the residents of Delhi to a form of 'slow violence (read poison)'. Therefore, enhancing public transportation systems is a pivotal strategy for addressing the challenges posed by urban mobility and environmental sustainability in Delhi. Key measures such as improving last-mile connectivity, reducing fares to ensure affordability for a broader demographic, and expanding the public transport fleet to accommodate the city's growing population are essential for reducing the dependence on private vehicles.

By prioritising these initiatives, it is believed that a significant decrease in traffic congestion and vehicular emissions can be achieved, contributing to a cleaner and healthier urban environment. Moreover, such measures would improve the inclusivity and accessibility of the city, enabling individuals without personal vehicles to navigate Delhi more efficiently. In the long term, a robust and affordable public transport network would not only promote environmental sustainability but also enhance the overall quality of life for all residents by fostering greater equity and mobility within the city.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

The impact of COVID-19 and lessons for preventing future pandemics

By strengthening healthcare systems and fostering global collaboration, we can minimise the risk of future pandemics write SUMER SINGH AHLUWALIA and SAISHA ANAND

COVID-19 has caused over 7,000,000 deaths worldwide, with countless others affected. These statistics barely begin to convey the immense impact of the pandemic, which brought loss to almost everyone. Wearing masks became the norm, schools transformed into virtual classrooms, and homes turned into makeshift workspaces. For a time, the world seemed to turn into a vast cemetery. Addressing and preventing future pandemics requires both personal behavioural changes and strict government regulations. These efforts can significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 and similar health crises in the future.

Origins and Ethical Considerations

The origin of COVID-19 remains controversial, though it is widely believed to have stemmed from an animal sold at the Huanan Seafood Market in China. The consumption of meat, normalised for centuries, has often been linked to the emergence of infectious diseases. Diseases arising from the butchering of animals highlight the need for dietary shifts. Vegetarianism, for instance, is a proactive step that could reduce the likelihood of zoonotic spillovers and the spread of diseases like COVID-19.

This also raises an ethical question: is it justifiable to kill animals merely to satisfy human taste preferences?

The Role of Vaccination Vaccination has long been a topic of debate, and the

COVID-19 vaccines faced significant backlash. Many were hesitant due to concerns about the intentions of pharmaceutical companies and the fact that the vaccines did not provide sterilising immunity. However, vaccinations remain essential to eradicating diseases. According to the National Center for Immunisation and Respiratory Diseases, individuals who received the COVID-19 vaccine were 54 per cent less likely to contract SARS-CoV-2. Achieving herd immunity is crucial, requiring the transmission rate (Rt) to fall below 1, meaning each infected individual transmits the virus to less than one other person.

The concept of the "socialism of the microbe" emphasises our responsibility to protect

others by safeguarding ourselves from infectious diseases. For instance, self-isolation, mask-wearing, and vaccination not only protect individuals but also shield vulnerable populations who cannot be vaccinated.

Preventative Measures Personal precautions, such as wearing masks, self-isolating, and following hygiene protocols, are critical in containing the spread of viruses like SARS-CoV-2. A study in Bangladesh revealed that mask usage significantly reduced COVID-19 infections. As an RNA virus, SARS-CoV-2 evolves quickly, facilitating asymptomatic transmission. Research by Wang and Tong, published in the 'National Library of Medicine', stresses the importance of strict quar-



antine measures for asymptomatic individuals to control the pandemic.

Government Interventions Not everyone maintains the same hygiene standards, underscoring the need for government intervention. Investments in research and healthcare infrastructure are essential for pandemic preparedness. Projects like the

Global Virome Project and DEEP VZM aim to identify high-risk regions, animals, and viruses, enabling better predictions and preventive measures.

India's 2021 healthcare crisis serves as a stark example of unpreparedness. A lack of oxygen, hospital beds, and essential facilities led to thousands of deaths daily. Despite this, the country still faces a deficit in healthcare infrastructure, highlighting the urgent need for increased healthcare budgets.

Economic barriers also prevent many from accessing necessary care. A study published in the 'National Library of Medicine' found that one in six adults avoids healthcare due to cost. Governments could address this by subsidising

basic health insurance, covering vaccines, health check-ups, and screenings. This would ensure equitable access to healthcare and encourage public participation in disease eradication efforts.

Education as a Tool for Change

Education plays a vital role in fostering behaviour change. Courses like "Global Change and Infectious Disease", offered at Wesleyan University, teach valuable skills for reducing infection risks. Such courses should be mandatory to instill a lifelong sense of personal and social responsibility. Teaching hygiene practices, such as proper handwashing, should start at a young age, while mass educational campaigns can raise awareness about infectious diseases across all age

groups. Social media can amplify these messages, encouraging responsible behaviors and helping curb the spread of future diseases.

Conclusion

Minimising the spread of COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics requires a combination of personal behavioural changes and robust government interventions. These pandemics are a wake-up call, reminding us of the harmful impacts of human activities on the planet. By promoting practices like vegetarianism, personal hygiene, and social responsibility, we can mitigate the dangers of pandemics and build a hopeful future.

(Ahluwalia & Saisha are studying economics at Wesleyan University; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold declines Rs 200 to Rs 79,000 per 10 gm

Gold prices extended losses for the second straight day after declining Rs 200 to Rs 79,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity on Monday settled at Rs 79,200 per 10 grams. However, silver prices surged Rs 2,400 to Rs 92,400 per kg against the previous close of Rs 90,000 per kg. The bullish sentiment in the silver market is primarily driven by industrial demand, traders said. Prices of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 200 to Rs 78,600 per 10 grams. It closed at Rs 78,800 per 10 grams on Monday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery rose Rs 146 or 0.19 per cent to trade at Rs 76,833 per 10 grams. Silver contracts for March delivery advanced Rs 1,251 or 1.38 per cent to Rs 92,061 per kg. Globally, Comex gold futures climbed USD 7.40 per ounce or 0.28 per cent to USD 2,665.90 per ounce. Gold and silver prices witnessed higher swings in the previous session, pressured by a firm dollar after US President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose steep tariffs on the BRICS group of countries to dissuade them from attempting to find alternatives to the dollar.



NMDC reports record 4.51 MnT output; 4 MnT sales

State-owned NMDC has reported a record 18 per cent rise in iron ore production at 4.51 million tonne (MnT) in November. The company had produced 3.83 MnT of iron ore in the same month last year, NMDC said in a statement. The company has also registered a 5.5 per cent rise in its sales to 4 MnT in the month under review, from 3.79 MnT in November 2023. "Achieving the best-ever production and sales figures for November is a momentous achievement for us. As we move forward, we remain focused on sustainable growth and delivering value to our stakeholders," said Amitava Mukherjee, Director (Finance), NMDC. Hyderabad-based NMDC, under the Ministry of Steel, is India's largest iron ore mining company. NMDC alone caters around 20 per cent to the country's demand for the key steel making raw material.



Fintech firm MODIFI targets to finance 5,000 SMEs

Amsterdam-headquartered fintech MODIFI on Tuesday said it aims to finance over 5,000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across India in the next two to three years. Having facilitated over USD 3 billion in global trade across over 1,800 trading partners in more than 55 countries since its inception, India remains pivotal to MODIFI's global expansion journey, a release said. The company, a global player in cross-border B2B trade finance and payments solutions, launched its India operations in 2019, making it the first international market outside Europe. In India, the release said, the company has provided trade financing to firms across key export sectors like renewables, automotive, chemicals, and textiles.

Govt not considering PSU bank merger: MoS Finance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is not considering merger of public sector banks, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Tuesday.

In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, he said several steps have been taken by the government to strengthen the financial condition of public sector banks (PSBs). Chaudhary said the reforms undertaken by the government in the banking sector have created systemic improvements and instituted checks and controls to minimise the risk of recurrence of excessive stress. To a question on whether the merger of public sector banks is being considered, Chaudhary replied: "No sir".

Chaudhary further said PSU banks have shown improvement in their capital adequacy ratio and gross non-performing assets position post-merger. "The merger has helped in improved synergies, economies

of scale, better technology integration and the same has resulted in uniform improvement across all key financial parameters," Chaudhary added.

In the biggest consolidation exercise in the banking space, the government in August 2019, had announced four major mergers of public sector banks, bringing down their total number to 12 from 27 in 2017, a move aimed at making state-owned lenders global-sized banks.

United Bank of India and Oriental Bank of Commerce were merged with Punjab National Bank; Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank; Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank; and Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with Union Bank of India, effective April 1, 2020. In 2019, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank were merged with the Bank of Baroda. Prior to this, the government had merged five associate banks of SBI and Bharatiya Mahila Bank with the State Bank of India.

'Banks should adopt a bottom-up approach for preparing credit plan'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Banks should adopt a "bottom-up" approach for preparing credit plans to fulfil fund requirements for different segments in districts, RBI Deputy Governor Swaminathan J has said.

Addressing a conference for lead district managers of Maharashtra last week, the Deputy Governor said the aspect of design and development starts with the credit plans, according to a RBI release.

The Lead Bank Scheme (LBS) was conceptualised in 1969 to coordinate the efforts of the credit institutions and the government.

"Credit planning should adopt a bottom-up approach to convey the needs of the centres and then designing a plan best suited to address those," he said.

It is also important to understand that, while the targets should strive to be aspirational in ideas, they



should be realistic enough to translate into execution and reflect the local credit needs, the senior Reserve Bank official said.

He further said that in this age of abundance of data and analytical models, a data-based empirical approach to designing of credit plan is essential. Such techniques provide the ease with which targeted strategies can be developed for intervention.

"Having said that, the primary step of data collection should be through field sur-

veys and not be substituted by just an academic understanding.

The field surveys also enable to identify those areas which are more in need of credit flow and have a better capability of servicing the loans.

This should be the premise on which you formulate bankable schemes," Swaminathan said.

The Deputy Governor also informed the gathering that statistics show that about half of the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are yet to be linked to

formal credit, and a large proportion of small and marginal farmers still lack access to bank financing.

Another class of potential borrowers which has remained underserved are the MSMEs and within that, those led by women.

"Therefore, when we adopt an empirical approach coupled with your on-ground experience for designing of a credit plan, the credit requirements of such segments can be effectively addressed through suitable Potential Linked Credit Plans as well as in block and district-level credit strategies," Swaminathan said.

Over the decades, LBS has evolved in alignment with India's developmental priorities.

At its core, the LBS framework facilitates coordinated efforts among banks, financial institutions, and government machinery, resulting in improved banking access and enhanced credit flow to vital sectors.

Mahindra, IndiGo slug it out over '6e' trademark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mahindra & Mahindra and InterGlobe Aviation, which owns IndiGo airlines, were on Tuesday locked in a tussle over infringement of the '6e' trademark, despite the automaker claiming it is in discussions to find an amicable solution.

The automaker, which introduced two electric brands -- BE 6e and XEV 9e -- earlier this month, said its trademark 'BE 6e' differs from IndiGo's '6E', eliminating any risk of confusion.

IndiGo, which uses 6E as the airline designator code, however refuted the claim by the Mumbai-based automaker. The 6E mark is an integral part of IndiGo's identity for the past 18 years and is a registered trademark that holds strong global recognition. The '6E' mark, whether standalone or in its variants and formative forms, is extensively used by IndiGo for its offerings.

'No blanket ban on Indian shrimp in US'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US has not imposed a blanket ban on shrimp imports from India, including Kerala, and the restrictions are targeted only at wild-caught shrimp, the government said on Tuesday.

In a written reply to Lok Sabha, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, said, "USA has not implemented a blanket ban on Indian shrimp imports including Kerala. The restrictions are specifically targeted at wild-caught shrimp, primarily due to concerns regarding sea turtle conservation."

While exports of wild-caught shrimp to the US are currently limited, shipment of wild-caught shrimp to other countries remain unaffected, he added.

The minister informed that the Department of Commerce, through Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), has been proactively taking up the matter with USA through the embassy of India in

Washington DC.

The department through MPEDA in consultation with both the US Department of State and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has tested several versions of the Turtle Excluder Device (TED) fabricated by ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT).

Further, Department of Commerce through MPEDA has organised state level workshops on popularization of the TED and is conducting awareness programmes among boat owners and fishers across all the major harbours and landing centres of the country.

"Department of Commerce has taken up the matter through various bilateral mechanisms between India and the US at both official and ministerial level.

Some of such recent interventions have been through the India-US Trade Policy Forum (TPF) held in New Delhi in January 2024 and the Trade Policy Forum Inter-session held in September 2024," Singh said.

'Sustainability playing key role in global trade talks'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New elements related to sustainability, inclusivity and security are now playing an important role in global trade discussions and they would dictate the future talks, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce L Satya Srinivas also emphasised on the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on the commercial significance of free trade agreements (FTAs) for the country.

"On the plate of trade, there are vast new dimensions getting added...How do we deal with those new dimensions...These new regulations and new focus areas of present will dictate our trajectory towards the future," he said at CII's Partnership Summit here.

Earlier in trade discussions, the main issues which used to figure included reduction or removal of customs duties and non-tariff barriers.

In addition to these, now



"new dimensions are coming into the trade play which is sustainability and security induced," he said, adding these issues like environment and labour are also bringing in regulatory as well as economic uncertainties.

Srinivas added that as the country is targeting to export USD 2 trillion worth of goods and services by 2030, FTAs are going to play an important role in that. "(In FTAs), we need to look at goods, investments and services all together," he said stating that besides these, the new elements have also

become important in terms of future.

India has so far implemented over a dozen trade agreements with countries including Singapore, Korea and Japan and is now negotiating trade pacts with the European Union, UK, Oman, and Peru. In the FTAs with UAE, Australia and EFTA (European Free Trade Association) bloc, new elements are there.

New rules such as EU's carbon tax and deforestation regulations are also impacting trade.

No shortage of DAP fertiliser in India: FAI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fertiliser industry body FAI has asserted that there is no shortage of Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) in the country despite fall in imports and production in the first seven months of this financial year.

Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) also demanded that the DAP should command the highest price among all non-urea fertilisers, because of its high nutritional value. It also stressed on the need to protect soil health.

"There is no shortage of DAP in the country," FAI Chairman N Suresh Krishnan told reporters here when asked about reports of non-availability of DAP in some parts of the country. He, however, said there could be a fall in the closing stock of DAP at the end of the current fiscal year.

According to FAI data, the production of DAP declined to 25.03 lakh tonnes during April-October this fiscal, from 27.01 lakh tonnes in the year-ago peri-



od. Import of DAP declined to 27.84 lakh tonnes from 39.68 lakh tonnes during the period under review.

Sales of DAP, too, fell to 56.92 lakh tonnes from 76.31 lakh tonnes. Krishnan, however, said the sales of DAP have improved in the last month.

He said the country requires around 10 million tonnes of DAP annually to meet domestic demand, of which around 60 per cent is imported. Imports from China has also declined so far this year. The FAI Chairman also highlighted that sales of NP/NPKs (other than DAP) fertilisers have increased, compensating for the drop in sales

of DAP.

Krishnan said the current MRP of the DAP is Rs 1,350 per bag and said the industry was not incurring losses at current subsidy offered by the Centre.

Among all non-urea fertilisers, he said DAP should command the maximum price because of its high nutrient value.

When asked about the ideal retail price of DAP, Krishnan did not specify any particular amount.

At present, the Muriate of Potash (MoP) is being sold at Rs 1,500-1,600 per bag, while the price of DAP is Rs 1,350 per bag. The government is providing a huge subsidy on DAP to ensure that farmers get this important nutrient at an affordable rate.

The FAI Chairman also talked about the huge volatility in the price of imported DAP during the last four years because of global conflicts. In view of the crisis in the Red Sea, the time duration for imports of fertilisers has also increased sharply.

Refund IPO funds of Rs 45 cr to investors: Sebi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday directed Trafiksol ITS Technologies to refund Rs 45 crore raised through its IPO, following material misstatements in the firm's prospectus and suspected collusion with a shell entity.

Trafiksol ITS is a Noida-based firm which provides intelligent transportation systems and automation solutions for traffic and toll management projects.

In October, BSE postponed the listing of Trafiksol ITS Technologies Ltd (TITL) on its SME platform after investor concerns. The Rs 45-crore IPO was oversubscribed by over 345 times, attracting bids worth more than Rs 10,000 crore.

Stock markets extend winning run to 3rd day

Sensex up 597 pts as RIL, HDFC Bank advance

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Extending the winning run to the third straight day, benchmark Sensex jumped 597 points on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip stocks like HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and firm trends in global markets.

The 30-share index jumped 597.67 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 80,845.75. During the day, it surged 701.02 points or 0.87 per cent to 80,949.10.

The broader NSE Nifty rose by 181.10 points or 0.75 per cent to 24,457.15. From the 30-share Sensex pack, Adani Ports surged nearly 6 per cent. NTPC, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were the other big gainers.

Bharti Airtel, ITC, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the laggards.

"Benchmark indices continued to demonstrate resilience amidst positive global sentiment. Investors are now focusing on potential growth drivers, assuming that weak economic

data has already been reflected in the recent lacklustre corporate earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Banking stocks gained the most ahead of the RBI Monetary Policy Committee meeting while metal stocks benefited from increased import duties and favourable manufacturing data from China.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.03 per cent and mid-cap index climbed 0.92 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, services rallied 2.13 per cent, followed by utilities (1.41 per cent), industrials (1.36 per cent), capital goods (1.23 per cent), power (1.20 per cent) and commodities (1.16 per cent).

Telecommunication and FMCG were the laggards. As many as 2,740 stocks advanced while 1,219 declined and 108 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher. European markets were trading in the green.

Additional duty on steel imports to hit exports: Exporters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MSME exporters from the engineering sector on Tuesday said that any move to impose additional duties on steel imports would make domestic products uncompetitive and impact the country's outbound shipments from the sector.

Hand Tool Association Chairman S C Ralhan said that the MSME engineering exporters are already facing problems on the liquidity front and high prices of steel in the domestic market.

"Increasing prices of steel by domestic steel makers are hurt-

ing us and now we have seen in the media reports that the government is planning to impose a 25 per cent safeguard duty. This will severely impact MSME exporters," Ralhan said.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said that if the government imposes additional duty, they should ensure that the domestic steel companies do not increase the prices of the inputs.

"Increase in input prices will impact exports of value-added steel products," Sahai said.



The steel ministry has proposed for a 25 per cent safeguard duty on import of certain steel items into the country. The proposal came at a

meeting between Union Minister of Steel H D Kumaraswamy and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal here on

December 2.

Domestic steel players are raising concerns over rising cheap steel imports from select nations like China.

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) in its report has claimed that thousands of containers carrying imported steel remain stranded at JNPT and other ports due to complex clearance procedures imposed by the Ministry of Steel (MOS).

"The Customs clearance delays have disrupted production lines and tarnished India's global reputation, with even countries like Japan for-

mally requesting the government to release stranded shipments," GTRI said.

India's steel imports are neither excessive nor unwarranted, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said, adding half of these imports are critical raw materials for domestic production, while 40 per cent consist of specialised items that India does not produce in sufficient quantities.

He said that steel imports are just 6 per cent of domestic production and an estimated over 70 per cent imports are done by large steel firms.



what's brewing?

SRK REVEALS WHY HE RELATES TO THE LION KING

Presenting the legendary superstar Shah Rukh Khan roaring as the ultimate king of the jungle, Mufasa, in his 'first ever poster' for Disney's much-anticipated family entertainer, *Mufasa: The Lion King!* As a fabulous treat for his fans, the special glimpse takes us into King Khan's world as he shares his personal connection to Mufasa, reminiscing about his childhood and an endearing reveal as to how he feels his own mane resembles that of the majestic king of the Pride Lands!! In the video, King Khan is heard saying, "Jawaan ke andar yeh line thi, 'Woh baap hai woh beta hai'. Suddenly Atlee ne kaha isse Mufasa aur Simba kareenge hum. Bahut saalon se padhte aare hai uske baare mai, phir dekhte bhi aare hai. So you relate to it because woh kind hai, strong hai, powerful hai, sweet hai, he's a very family oriented person. These are things we all want to be and I think Mufasa stands for all that. Having said that, when I was younger mere baap waise they and so I think I relate to Mufasa."

Disney's *Mufasa: The Lion King* will be released in Indian cinemas on December 20, 2024, in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.



Nargis's sister faces murder charges; actress remains tight-lipped

Actor Nargis Fakhri, whose sibling Aliya Fakhri faces murder charges linked to a fatal fire at her former boyfriend's residence in the USA, reportedly has 'nothing to explain' regarding the situation, as per a source.

An insider related to the *Rockstar* actor verified that she has not communicated with her sister in more than 20 years. The actor found out about the event through the news, just as everyone else did. Prosecutors assert that Aliya Fakhri, 43, intentionally ignited a detached garage in Queens on November 23, leading to the fatalities of her ex-boyfriend, Edward Jacobs, 35, and his friend, Anastasia Etienne, 33.

According to the claims, Fakhri turned to arson after Jacobs dismissed her attempts to restore their relationship.

Fakhri faces four charges of first-degree murder, four charges of second-degree murder, and one count of arson. Her upcoming court hearing is set for December 9, as reported by the Queens District Attorney's office.

The indictment indicates that Fakhri reached the location at approximately 6:20 a.m., yelling, "You're all going to die today," prior to igniting the fire.

Although Nargis Fakhri hasn't spoken on the issue, her mother has come to Aliya's defense. She remarked, "I don't believe she would be taking someone's life. She is someone who cared for everyone." Numerous news sources stated that she attempted to assist everyone.

Aliya's mother mentioned that her daughter has been struggling with opioid dependency after a dental incident, which she thinks might have led to Aliya's unpredictable behaviour.



Harvey Weinstein hospitalised after 'alarming blood test'

Disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein was hospitalised on Monday following an "alarming blood test," his attorney said, less than a week after he filed a legal claim alleging substandard medical care at New York City's jail complex. Weinstein, 72, was sent to Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan for an "emergent treatment due to an alarming blood test result that requires immediate medical attention," his attorney, Imran Ansari, said in a statement. "It is expected that he will remain there until his condition stabilises," the statement continues. "His deprivation of care is not only medical malpractice but a violation of his constitutional rights." A spokesperson for New York City's Department of Correction did not immediately respond to an email. The agency's inmate database confirmed that Weinstein had been transferred from Rikers Island to the Bellevue Hospital Prison Ward in Manhattan. Weinstein has been in city custody since earlier this year after the New York Court of Appeals overturned his 2020 rape conviction in the state. The case is set to be retried in 2025. Weinstein has denied any wrongdoing.

'Ben Affleck asks Jennifer Garner to play matchmaker': Sources

While Ben Affleck deals with the challenges of his divorce from Jennifer Lopez, he is already focusing on what lies ahead. Ben has allegedly contacted his ex-wife, Jennifer Garner, to seek assistance in locating his next romantic partner.

Radar Online states that *Globe Magazine* has disclosed that Ben Affleck has reached out to his ex-wife Jennifer Garner for assistance in finding love.

"He's ready for something real, and he feels like Jennifer is great at cutting through the BS and sniffing out genuine people... He is on the hunt for someone grounded and mature. He's had enough of the Hollywood divas and gold diggers," said a source. As per the insider, Jennifer Garner is on board with Ben's new plan. "She wants to see Ben happy and loves that she'll get to have a say because whoever he dates is going to be around her kids," the source added.



Shahid Kapoor defends his character Kabir Singh once again!

Shahid Kapoor is among the most renowned actors in the Indian cinema. He is an actor across various genres, having demonstrated his talent in romance, action, thriller and more. Kapoor, the child of Pankaj Kapur and Neelima Azeem, has received three Filmfare awards throughout his career. Throughout the years, he has demonstrated his adaptability in films like *Haider*, *Vivaah*, *Kaminey*, and others. Nevertheless, one film that entirely altered fans' views of him was *Kabir Singh*.

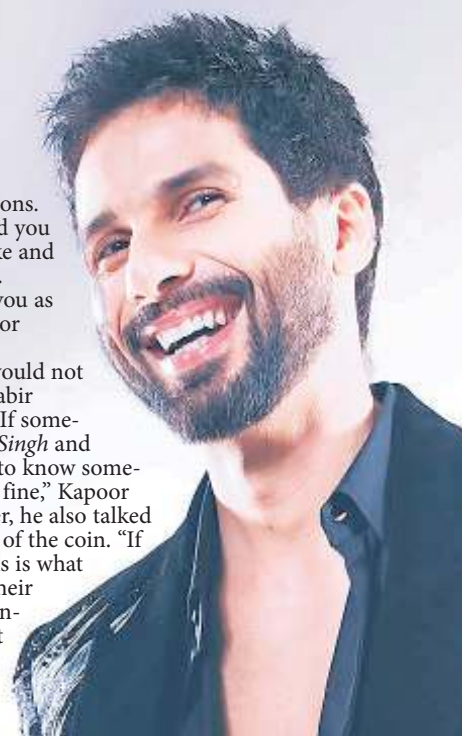
Although he had taken on different roles prior to this film, some fans still see Kapoor as that chocolate boy from earlier days. Nonetheless, following *Kabir Singh*, even critics had to acknowledge Shahid's versatility as an actor. Launched in 2019, the film

was helmed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga and featured Kiara Advani alongside Shahid. Although the film garnered positive reviews, the character Kabir faced criticism for his toxic behavior. The actor has now responded to this criticism.

In a conversation with Faye D'Souza, Shahid addressed the debate around *Kabir Singh* as a character. He admitted that Kabir Singh's personality was deeply flawed and that many of his actions were "unacceptable." Yet, he defended the narrative, stating that such individuals exist in real life. "Do guys like Kabir Singh exist? Yes, they do. Do girls fall in love with such guys? Yes, they do. So why can't we make movies about them? Cinema mirrors life and life is both good and bad. The audience, he believes, has the responsibility to

draw their conclusions. "You walk away and you decide what you like and what you don't like. That's really up to you as an audience," Kapoor remarked.

He clarified, "I would not accept a guy like Kabir Singh in real life." "If someone watches *Kabir Singh* and says, 'I never want to know someone like that,' that's fine," Kapoor continued. However, he also talked about the split side of the coin. "If someone thinks this is what true love is, that's their perspective. You cannot blame the artist for how the audience interprets a story."



'Not retiring; just taking long break,' clarifies Vikrant Massey

A day following his suggestion in a social media post about retiring from acting after 2025, Vikrant Massey clarified that his comments had been 'misunderstood' by the audience. During an interview, Vikrant explained that he is merely taking a 'break' as he feels 'burned out'. He also mentioned that his health has suffered, although he did not specify what his condition is.

He said, "I'm not retiring... Just burned out. Need a long break. Miss home and health is also acting up... People misread it." In his social media post on Monday, Vikrant wrote, "The last few years and beyond have been phenomenal... But as I move forward, I realise it's time to recalibrate and go back home. As a Husband, Father & a Son. And also as an Actor. So, coming 2025, we would meet each other for one last time. Until time deems right."

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FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

				1				
8		2					6	9
	9		4					7
	7		5					6
4	5		9		1		2	3
	1				8		9	
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Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Small towns
- Overdue
- Changed direction
- In the lead
- Something worn around the neck
- Likely to kill or harm you
- Cross and upset
- Paper is made from these
- Counts up
- Black stuff on roads

DOWN

- Mountains that erupt
- A measure for liquid
- A type of door in a fence
- Very unusual



Shreyas Talpade on portraying Vajpayee;

'a challenge' he couldn't refuse

AARTI SREENATH
 aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

From delivering side-splitting comedy in *Golmaal* to embodying the intensity of a cricket coach in *Iqbal*, Shreyas Talpade's career has been anything but predictable. A master of both humour and drama, he's made a mark across genres, seamlessly transitioning from light-hearted roles to more nuanced performances. Now, as he takes on the formidable role of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in *Emergency*, directed by Kangana Ranaut, Shreyas is set to leave audiences stunned once again.

Shreyas Talpade, credits his theatrical roots as the cornerstone of his career. "Theatre groomed me as an actor and a person," he shares, reflecting on how it transformed an "under-confident guy" into a self-assured artist. From understanding discipline and teamwork to shaping his body language and perspectives, his foundation in theater set the stage for his cinematic journey.

Going further, he delved into his portrayal of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the upcoming *Emergency*, directed by Kangana Ranaut. He describes the challenge of embodying such an iconic personality, balancing his own research with the director's vision. "It was about following her conviction and ensuring I did justice to the character," he explains, eager for audiences to witness the result of their collaborative effort.

Despite setbacks and criticisms surrounding *Emergency*, he remains focused on the bigger picture. "What matters is teamwork and delivering our best," he remarks, highlighting the resilience of the cast and crew amid delays. "Setbacks are tough, but they're not impossible to handle," he reflects, speaking about the challenges faced by *Emergency*. Despite delays, the team has remained united. "We'll face it together and emerge stronger. At least, that's what we're hoping for."

The film, which delves into a controversial period of Indian history, encountered issues flagged by the censor board. These concerns were addressed by the production team. "Kangana is the right person to elaborate, but as far as I know, all issues have been resolved and certification was granted again," shares the *Om Shanti Om* star.

"It's demotivating to see a film repeatedly postponed. But, as I mentioned earlier, it was beyond our control. Had it been up to us, we'd probably be celebrating the success by now. Instead, we're still talking about the release. It's tough, especially when you've invested time and effort into promotions, only for everything to be halted just days before release. The financial losses are significant, too. But now that we have a new release date, we're all gearing up to give it our best shot," enthuses the *Welcome to Sajjanpur* actor.

When asked about the message the film conveys, he added, "Everyone will take their own message from it. We're presenting a fac-



Shreyas Talpade, the actor known for his impressive range and nuanced performances, joins us for an exclusive conversation about his latest projects, his approach to acting and the future of Indian cinema

tual story about that period and how each viewer interprets it is up to them. Our job was to tell it as truthfully as possible."

Striking the perfect balance between humour and authenticity is no easy feat, but for Shreyas Talpade, it's all about embracing the art of comedy with seriousness and sincerity. "Anyone can do tragedy, but comedy is serious business," he reflects, citing a timeless piece of wisdom. The secret, he believes, lies in approaching humor with honesty and innocence. When done with heart, comedy feels natural. However, when forced, it can easily fall flat. "You've got to immerse yourself in the situation, let the moment flow, and trust the timing," he says. Drawing on his extensive theater experience, he has fine-tuned his comedic timing, learning to read the room and deliver with finesse. He even points to

legends like Akshay Kumar, who, with his sharp instinct and flawless timing, has mastered the craft of making us laugh effortlessly.

His comedic genius lies in his ability to deliver lines with utmost seriousness, creating humour without even trying. As the *Golmaal* fame shares, "When you do comedy, you do it seriously." His craft involves remaining true to his character, never letting the comedy overshadow the integrity of the role. "You have to stay in character, stay true to the situation and perform with seriousness and honesty," he explains. Drawing inspiration from seasoned actors, he continually hones his skills, learning from those who've mastered the art of comedy. He reflects on working alongside actors like Akshay Kumar, who, despite their humorous roles, approach every line with sincerity. "It's about doing it with innocence, not

forcing it," he adds, emphasising the importance of being authentic.

Theatre, for him, has been a critical teacher, helping him fine-tune his comedic timing. "The moment you start taking your audience for granted, that's when it all falls apart," he says. "Comedy works when you approach it with honesty." And it's this honesty that resonates with audiences, whether on stage or on screen. He takes immense pride in knowing that his work has brought smiles to people's faces. "It's a great feeling when people relate to a character you played, when they recognise you, even in a random place like an aircraft," he says, clearly enjoying the connection with his fans.

When asked about quirky habits, Talpade chuckles, admitting that he doesn't know of any, though his co-stars might have a different story. He mentions a simple pre-show pooja as part of his routine, but beyond that, he's focused on bringing his best to the screen, time and time again.

On the future of Indian cinema, it has big dreams. "The goal is to make your country proud," he says, reflecting on the legacy of greats like Amitabh Bachchan, whose discipline and work ethic continue to inspire him. "I want to be remembered for contributing something to the industry, whether it's one piece of work or many." He admires how Bachchan's influence has shaped his generation and admits that elements of the legend's style are present in his own work, especially in roles like the one in *Pushpa*. "There's something of Mr. Bachchan in that role," he shares, with a touch of reverence.

Looking ahead, he remains eager to explore new horizons, both in acting and in different genres. "I like to keep experimenting, whether it's theater, television, or films," he says. His latest project lineup, which spans various sequels and franchises, offers an exciting mix. "It's interesting how some of my upcoming films follow a sequence, from *Mufasa* to *Housefull 5*," he laughs, appreciating the patterns that emerge as he journeys through his career.

For aspiring actors, his advice is simple yet powerful: "Just keep working. You never know which opportunity will strike gold." Reflecting on his own breakthrough in *Iqbal*, where he started with a small role that eventually led to the lead part, he emphasises the importance of seizing every opportunity. "You never know which film will give you the recognition you deserve," he says, recalling his rise from *Iqbal* to *Golmaal* and *Pushpa*. His journey reminds us all that success is often found in unexpected places. "You just have to keep going, keep experimenting, and stay true to your craft," he concludes with a smile.

Habits leading to kidney & bladder stones

Kidney and bladder stones are crystalline deposits that form in the urinary tract, causing significant discomfort and health complications. These stones often result from a combination of genetic predisposition, dietary factors, and lifestyle habits.

PHYSIOLOGY OF STONE FORMATION

Kidney and bladder stones develop when urine becomes supersaturated with minerals like calcium, oxalate, or uric acid. This creates an environment where crystals can precipitate and grow. Protective factors, such as citrate, which inhibit crystal aggregation, may be deficient in individuals.

EVERYDAY HABITS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STONE FORMATION:

1. Insufficient hydration

Dehydration is one of the most significant risk factors for stone formation. Inadequate water intake concentrates urine, increasing the likelihood of mineral crystallisation. A habit of drinking less than the recommended 2-3 liters of water daily can lead to this condition. Tea, coffee, and sugary sodas, often consumed in place of water, exacerbate the issue due to their diuretic and oxalate-rich properties.

2. Excessive salt intake

High dietary sodium levels promote calcium excretion into the urine, a primary component of calcium-based stones. Common culprits include processed foods, salty snacks, and canned goods. A diet persistently high in sodium overwhelms the kidney's ability to reabsorb calcium, leaving it to combine with oxalate or phosphate to form stones.

3. High oxalate foods

Spinach, nuts, and chocolate are rich in oxalates, compounds that bind with calcium to form stones. While these foods are nutritious, excessive consumption, especially without adequate calcium intake, raises stone risk. Calcium binds with oxalate in the gut to reduce absorption, underscoring the importance of a balanced diet.

4. Low calcium diets

Paradoxically, avoiding calcium to prevent stones can increase risk. Dietary calcium deficiency leads to greater oxalate absorption, contributing to stone formation. The key is consuming calcium in moderation from dairy or fortified foods.

5. Sedentary lifestyle

Physical inactivity contributes to calcium loss from bones, increasing urinary calcium levels. Prolonged immobility or a desk-bound lifestyle creates an ideal environment for stone formation.

6. Excessive animal protein

Diets high in animal protein, such as red meat, eggs, and fish, can acidify urine, reducing citrate levels. Citrate binds with calcium, preventing stone formation. High protein intake also increases uric acid excretion, a common component of stones.

7. Irregular urination

Holding urine for extended periods can concentrate minerals in the bladder, facilitating stone formation. Regular urination flushes out potential stone-forming substances, reducing risk.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Prevention is better than cure. Drinking adequate water, maintaining a balanced diet with moderate calcium and low sodium, and adopting an active lifestyle can significantly reduce stone risk. Regular health check-ups and dietary adjustments tailored to individual metabolic profiles are essential for those with a history of stones. Kidney and bladder stones are often preventable. Identifying and modifying hidden habits, such as dehydration, high sodium intake, or a sedentary lifestyle, can go a long way in promoting urinary health. By making small but significant changes to daily routines, individuals can reduce the risk of this painful and recurrent condition.

(The author, Dr. Kinjal Banerjee, is a consultant - renal transplant, urology, at Sarvodaya Hospital.)



PRESERVING ASSAMESE HERITAGE AND HOW

TEJAL SINHA
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In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Tara Bhuyan, the creative force behind the eponymous luxury fashion, opens up about her vision, design philosophy and the role she sees herself playing in bridging traditional Indian craftsmanship with emerging technologies and global sustainability movements



manship with emerging technologies and global sustainability movements.

At the heart of the couture lies a deep commitment to celebrating Assamese culture and craftsmanship. "I once remarked, 'I've dreams on their looms!' and it had to have been born one... to the softness and richness of the eri silks that my mother wore every day... in the unique style of the 'mekhela sador,' the traditional dress of Assam!" says Tara Bhuyan, reflecting on her connection

to Assamese heritage. This connection is evident in their designs, which seamlessly blend traditional Assamese motifs with modern elegance. "My design ideas start from the base; I intend to work on the bigger picture by visualising the ramp. Through my designs, I want to show the world how, with the usage of elegant weaves, one can make an Indo-fusion outfit," Bhuyan explains, highlighting her approach to storytelling through fashion.

Storytelling is indeed a crucial aspect of its design philosophy. Each piece is not just a garment but a testament to the team's collective experience and dedication to preserving Assamese heritage. They curate an exquisite blend of Indian, Asian and Western designs.

Its participation in events such as New York Fashion Week

2023, runway shows in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand and exhibitions in Dubai, India, Canada and the USA has showcased their commitment to excellence and cultural representation. "Our garments are not only fashion statements but also tell stories that weave together cultural heritage and contemporary innovation."

Sustainability is another core value that drives the design process, dedicated to upcycling and zero waste, using handwoven silk from the villages of Assam and repurposing materials to create new, functional items. "We operate with zero electricity consumption, utilise natural dyes, and ensure that our garments embody eco-friendliness. It's not just about sustainable creations but also fostering a sustainable team and community," emphasises Bhuyan. Going ahead, their commitment to sustainability extends beyond their design process. "Holistic sustainability is a mindful approach towards both the environment and the well-being of the individuals involved in the process. Striking a balance between eco-conscious practices and social responsibility is paramount in shaping a responsible fashion industry."

"Harnessing Handloom: A Shift Towards Zero Electricity consumption is a pivotal move that involves limiting the use of electricity in production processes. By embracing handloom techniques, the sector can not only reduce its reliance on electricity but also uplift communities by providing employment opportunities."

In addition to their commitment to sustainability, it is also dedicated to preserving Assamese heritage and promoting cultural exchange. "The theme, *Couture Chronicles* resonates deeply with our philosophy, which celebrates storytelling through fashion. Just as each piece in a couture collection narrates a journey, our designs intertwine heritage, craftsmanship, and contemporary aesthetics. Our vision is to become a global beacon of luxury fashion that seamlessly blends Assamese heritage with modern elegance, creating timeless and bespoke pieces that inspire and captivate while championing sustainability and craftsmanship. We strive to lead in the fashion industry by delivering exceptional quality, fostering environmental responsibility, and sharing the beauty of our heritage with the world."

Carey backs Australia's 'world-class' batters to counter Bumrah threat

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Alex Carey on Tuesday maintained Australia are a "united group", confident that their "world-class" batters will come up with better plans to counter India's pace threat Jasprit Bumrah in the upcoming pink-ball Test here.

With their backs against the wall, India came out all guns blazing in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series opener at Perth to win by a massive 295 runs with Bumrah (5/30 and 3/42) ripping apart Australia's batting in each innings.

The heavy margin of defeat left Australia looking for answers as their batters flopped collectively, leaving their famed bowling attack with a lot to do.

"He's obviously a fantastic bowler; (he) has been for a number of years. Our batters are world class as well and always find ways to come up with

solutions," Carey told the media. "We've had a look at him now. Hopefully we can combat that first, second spell. Get him bowling a little bit deeper in the innings with an older ball."

"We saw Travis (Head) sort of counterpunch a bit (in the second innings). I trust our batters, we'll find a way not only (against) Bumrah. They played a couple of other debutantes who bowled well as well," Carey said.

After Australia were set an improbable 534 to win, Josh Hazlewood had invited the media to ask their batters how they planned to go about in the second innings, sparking rumours of a rift between the batting and bowling groups.

Carey, however, declined there was any tensions in the dressing room.

"If you ask the batters, we all want to perform better and (as) cricketers, you go out there to score a hundred and if you don't



do that, I think you're at times disappointed," Carey said.

"But we're a very united group. We all do get the opportunity to bat and we're all keen to continue to put those big runs on the board and I trust the guys to do that," he added.

Carey said Australia's resounding loss at Perth sparked a "big reaction externally" but maintained that the team will stick to its processes.

"It's quite a big reaction externally for one Test loss. Internally, we don't feel that. We didn't play the way we would have liked to have played."

"We know (that) over four or five Test matches, (if) we keep rocking up and playing our style of cricket we will have the success. We've had that success to, I guess, call upon the method does work."

"We're calm internally, we're excited to get back out and play a better style of cricket and we've

got that opportunity come Friday."

Carey did not want to draw much attention to the last contest here in which India were shot out for their lowest-ever Test total of 36.

"There are obviously amazing days in cricketing history but we don't expect to go out there and do that again. We have a process and a plan that we try to execute and whatever happens, happens. I was not here for that Test match."

Australia have never lost a pink ball Test in Adelaide, in fact they have only lost once in day and night fixture.

"We are excited. We take a lot of confidence for our record in pink-ball cricket — it doesn't mean we will have the success but (with) our methods, our style of play and the experience we have in this group we'll bounce back from Perth," he added.

The two teams will take on each other in the second Test, starting here from Friday.



Gilchrist advises Australian batters to stay longer at crease

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

The legendary Adam Gilchrist has advised the beleaguered Australian batters to stay longer at the crease to nullify the threat posed by the Jasprit Bumrah-led Indian bowling attack in the pink-ball second Test here.

The swashbuckling former keeper-batter also backed the out-of-sorts Marnus Labuschagne to regain form.

After Bumrah scythed through the Australian batting line-up, taking eight wickets including a five-for in the first innings at Perth, Gilchrist advised the hosts to "weather the storm".

Steve Smith and Labuschagne, the team's two batting mainstays, flopped in the series opener and that did not help Australia's cause.

"Marnus had the onus to do that (stay at crease) and tried at good effect to nullify 50-odd deliveries. So, if you face an average of 50 deliveries every Test innings, you're probably going to be on the right side of the ledger more than you're on the wrong side of it," Gilchrist was quoted as saying by Nine's World of Sports.

"He just couldn't find a way to score and maybe that's what (the Australians) as a collective will look to try and do."

"It will bring with it risk, for sure, but it is a risk for reward."

Queenslander Labuschagne has been struggling for runs in recent months and now finds himself under immense pressure to retain his place in the side.

Gilchrist attributed Labuschagne's poor run of form to conditions and the quality of bowlers in the opposition camp, and didn't see it as a technical issue.

"I'm sure the people around him are already doing this but he needs to be reminded that he is a class act," Gilchrist said of Labuschagne.

"He's got a game that has been able to tolerate and withstand everything that the cricketing world has presented, and he's dominated for a number of years."

The former star added, "Most players that have played long enough will have been in this situation at some point in time and it's about not letting any self-doubt creep in and understanding you don't lose that skill — you don't lose that edge — (and) certainly not in a short space of time."

Gilchrist urged Labuschagne to "trust your training, get out there, see the ball and play it."

The second Test, a day/night affair, will begin on Friday at Adelaide Oval.

India lead the five-match series following their 295-run victory in the opener at Perth last week.

New Zealand penalised WTC points, drop to fifth in table

PTI ■ DUBAI

New Zealand's aspirations of qualifying for the World Test Championship Final suffered a setback after they were docked three penalty points due to slow over-rate against England leading to a drop in the ranking table, the ICC stated on Tuesday.

The deduction is a welcome news for India, who enjoy pole position with 61.11 percentage points.

New Zealand now have a points percentage of 47.92 percent and can only move as high as 55.36 percent with victories from their remaining two fixtures against England, South Africa (59.26), Australia (57.26) and Sri Lanka (50) are placed second, third and fourth respectively.

"The race to feature at next year's ICC World Test Championship Final at Lord's has taken a twist with



New Zealand and England sanctioned for maintaining a slow over-rate during the opening Test of their series in Christchurch," the ICC said in a statement.

"Both teams were fined 15 percent of their match fees and penalised three crucial World Test Championship competition points, adding more intrigue to the thrilling final stages of the ongoing cycle," it further stated.

While England are already out of contention of reaching next year's final despite the impressive eight-wicket triumph at Hagley Oval, the loss in competition points is a major blow to New Zealand who drop from equal fourth to outright fifth on the standings as a result.

It means the inaugural World Test Championship winners face a tough ask to qualify for next year's one-

off Test in June 2025, with two wins against England and several other results also needing to go their way if they are to reach the Lord's decider.

New Zealand and England were both found to have three overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration, with sides penalised one point for each over they were found to be short.

Both captains - Tom Latham of New Zealand and Ben Stokes of England - pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

On-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Rod Tucker, third umpire Adrian Holdstock and fourth official Kim Cotton levelled the charges, with David Boon of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposing the sanctions.



World Chess Championship: Gukesh squanders advantage to settle for draw in Game 7

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

The youngest-ever challenger to the world crown, D Gukesh let go of a very promising position and had to settle for a fourth consecutive draw against defending champion Ding Liren of China in a marathon seventh game of the World Chess Championship here on Tuesday.

The stalemate, which came after five hours and 22 minutes of nerve-wracking play, left both players on an identical tally of 3.5 points each, still shy of four more points in order to win the championship.

The two players signed peace after 72 moves.

It turned out to be a tough day in office again for Liren, who was staring at a losing position for a long time, till Gukesh blundered. The Indian, playing white, got a huge advantage but miscalculated to let the Chinese off the hook in what was the longest game of the match thus far.

It was a miraculous save by Liren after getting into what the chess pundits termed as a lost rook and minor piece endgame.

Earlier in the day, Gukesh yet again tightened the noose in the opening. He has clearly been the better player when it's come to springing opening surprises.

Moving his knight forward on the first move, the Indian faced the Neo Grunfeld defense from Liren, and as early as on the seventh turn, Gukesh came up with a surprise idea.

Liren, who seemed to have

solved his opening problems in the last couple of games, was at the receiving end on Tuesday, and even though he chose normal continuation, white's position remained preferable.

Gukesh exerted pressure through the centre and got a dangerous-looking passed pawn in the early stages of the middle game, with the advantage of the bishop pair only adding to Liren's woes.

The middle game saw inaccuracies from both sides, and it seemed that Liren was close to obtaining equality. However, the process had yet again eaten up most of Liren's available time as the players are required to make the first 40 moves in two hours without any increment.

Gukesh went for the trade of queens after fracturing black's pawn structure on the king side as the Indian got an indisputable advantage.

As has happened so many times in the past, the 40th move proved to be jinxed yet again as Liren lost a pawn. The Chinese either underestimated Gukesh's chances or it was an oversight. Despite the advantage, Gukesh still had to go through the technicalities, which has not been his forte here.

Gukesh's 45th move was not the best and Liren slowly clawed back into the game with some really resourceful play.

The tenacity of the Chinese came to the fore in the second time control also after he was left with just four minutes with a 30-second increment after each move is made.

Todd Greenberg appointed new Cricket Australia CEO

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former National Rugby League boss Todd Greenberg will succeed Nick Hockley as the chief executive officer of Cricket Australia next year, the governing body announced on Tuesday.

Green, who is the current chief executive officer of the Australian Cricketers' Association, will assume the role from March.

Hockley, who was appointed in 2020 initially on an interim basis, had announced in August that he would step down from the post at the end of the current domestic season.

Greenberg has previously worked with Cricket New South Wales. A top-order batter, he played 10 seasons for Randwick CC in Sydney.

Apart from serving as the CEO of NRL, Greenberg also worked with NRL club Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs before joining the ACA in January 2021.

"This is an extremely exciting time for cricket with the rapid growth of the



game across the globe creating fantastic opportunities, while also presenting some challenges to ensure Australian cricket retains its position at the very peak of the game," Greenberg was quoted as saying by cricket.Com.Au.

"Thanks to the work of the current administration the game has strong fundamentals in place. I want to ensure we build on this momentum so Australian cricket continues to thrive -

from local parks to the nation's biggest stadiums," he added.

As CEO of the ACA, Greenberg worked closely with Hockley and the two reached an amicable agreement on the current Memorandum of Understanding for cricket, which outlines the distribution of wealth within the game and resulted in a significant increase in women's remuneration.

"We are entering a period of great opportunity and the recruitment panel and CA Board was enormously impressed by Todd's passion for cricket and his vision to build on the achievements of the past few years and continue the game's growth," CA chairman Mike Baird said.

"I would like to thank Nick Hockley who will leave the game in a position of great strength at the end of the season with important foundations including our broadcast rights deal, MOU and seven-year content strategy in place," he added.

Former England captain Alastair Cook Praises India for being 'Brave' in Perth Test

PTI ■ LONDON

Opting to go in without a proven performer like R Ashwin and batting first in an opening Test of a high-pressure series in Australia are reflections of an Indian team that is brave and supremely confident in its ability to win from any situation, feels England's all-time great Alastair Cook.

Cook, a former captain and the first England batter to make 10,000 runs in Test cricket, praised India for their remarkable comeback after getting bowled out for just 150 in the first Test at Perth.

"I thought India was so brave. I thought that first, you know, they win the toss and bat on that wicket, you look there, even though there's only 150 they got, the thought process to say, 'we're going to take Australia on there. We know it's going to be hard, but we think it's going to be hard for both

sides only, and then it'll be a one-innings game," Cook said on TNT Sports.

He added, "I think most captains would have bowled first, certainly would have done and probably got the end of a bad result, like normally in Australia. But India took it on brilliantly. It was just an all-round fantastic performance."

"You think... Bowled out for 150, you think we're struggling here, but to bounce back when you've got Boomer (Jasprit Bumrah) up with the new ball on those kinds of wickets, he's always going to be outstanding and backed up by team."

Captaining the team in the absence of Rohit Sharma, pace spearhead Bumrah came up with a magnificent performance to grab eight wickets, including a first-innings five-for, to lead India to a memorable win.

Speaking about India's move to exclude the senior off-spinner Ashwin from the



playing XI, Cook said, "... Just think of how brave they were? They didn't bother playing Ashwin who has got 500 Test wickets. They've kind of played a couple of

like, not makes you spinners, but you know, I thought Ashwin would have been great thinking by them. "And isn't it nice to see

Australia get thrashed?" Cook lauded the "classy" Yashasvi Jaiswal for the manner in which he dominated the formidable Australian pace attack and

said he wouldn't have told the menacing Mitchell Starc he is bowling too slow even if he was.

After failing to open his account in the first innings

of the series opener, Jaiswal adapted to the conditions beautifully and played a brilliant 161-run knock in the second essay, his maiden century on Australian soil.

During the second day of the match, Jaiswal told Starc, "It's coming too slow", with his confidence attracting the attention of many in the cricket world, including the former England captain, who had been a prolific scorer in Tests for a prolonged period.

"We've seen his celebration enough here, but it's more enjoyable against Australia than England, certainly," Cook said, referring to Jaiswal's phenomenal run in the Test series against England, when he amassed over 700 runs.

He added, "And sledging Mitchell Starc, saying at a certain stage, I think he wasn't on 100, he wasn't on anything on a major score, but he's telling him you're bowling slow."

"And I've faced Mitchell Starc and he certainly doesn't bowl slow. And if he was bowling slow, I'd keep my mouth shut and not wind him up, but have the confidence to do that as a 22-year-old."

"I think he scored the most runs as any Indian player up to after 15 Test matches at the top of the order, which I'll keep saying it, no one else believes me, it's the hardest place to bat. What a classy player he is."

India thrashed Australia by 295 runs in the five-match series opener and Cook said he was pleasantly surprised by the result.

"I was surprised. I was surprised that India have gone there and hammered Australia in what normally is a very hard place to go and play cricket, Perth. I know it's not the WACA. I know it's the new stadium, but still, historically, Australia don't lose many games there," Cook said.

Ticket price hike for *Pushpa 2: The Rule* sparks debate in T'wood

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Allu Arjun's *Pushpa 2: The Rule* is set to release worldwide this Thursday, but not without controversy. The film's producers successfully sought approval from the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh governments to raise ticket prices. This led to the premiere show tickets on Wednesday night being priced at 1,000 for single screens and 1,200 for multiplexes—the highest in Telugu cinema history.

While Allu Arjun often credits his fans, calling them his 'Allu Arjun Army,' the decision to impose such high prices has disappointed many. Fans feel burdened, despite the makers claiming the hike is for their benefit.

Every fan wants to watch their favourite star's movie on the first day, first show. But these increased prices put unnecessary pressure on them," said Tummalapalli Ramasatyanarayana, a producer and exhibitor. "The rising budgets of films cannot justify shifting the burden onto the audience." Ticket price hikes for major releases are not new. Films like *Salaar*, *Kalki*, *Devvara* and *Guntur Kaaram* also saw similar price hikes. However, none reached the extent of *Pushpa 2*.

A few years ago, a delegation from the Telugu film industry, led by stars like Chiranjeevi, Prabhas and Mahesh Babu, approached Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to request a general increase in ticket prices for big-budget films. The move drew criticism from filmmaker Thammareddy Bharadwaj, who argued, "If you're making pan-India movies, why impose higher prices only in the Telugu states? This burdens local audiences unfairly." Benefit shows, once a philanthropic tradition, have changed significantly. "Previously, proceeds from these shows supported star associations or relief funds," Ramasatyanarayana explained. "Now, they serve as a tool for producers to pocket more money."

He added, "Stars exploit their fans' emotions. Fans often go to extreme lengths—selling valuables or taking loans—to buy these tickets. This is unethical. If a star truly values their fans, they should hold benefit shows for free."

Producer and distributor Natti Kumar echoed these sentiments, calling the practice "emotional blackmail." He said, "Not every fan is wealthy. Many earn between 7,000 and 70,000 a month. Expecting them to pay exorbitant prices is unreasonable. If Allu Arjun truly cared for his fans, he would not have allowed this hike."

Natti Kumar also warned of the financial risks such practices pose. "When a film's ticket price is so high, and the movie turns out to be average, fans feel cheated. This creates negative word-of-mouth, which can harm the film's performance. With standard pricing, audiences might be more forgiving."

Some producers argue that stars pressure them into hiking ticket prices to set record-breaking opening-day collections. "These inflated numbers help boost the star's market value, allowing them to negotiate higher pay for their next projects," said an unnamed producer. "But if the film flops, the losses fall squarely on the producers, distributors, and exhibitors."

Ramasatyanarayana concluded, "High ticket prices can sometimes backfire. A more balanced approach is needed to respect fans' financial limitations while ensuring the industry thrives."

As the release of *Pushpa 2* draws closer, the controversy over its ticket pricing continues to divide opinions. Whether this strategy will succeed or backfire remains to be seen!

Allu Arjun's much-awaited film *Pushpa 2: The Rule* has sparked a debate due to its ticket pricing, set at nearly Rs 1,000 for single screens and Rs 1,200 for multiplexes. Fans and critics alike question the fairness of this steep hike



Naga Chaitanya's wedding attire pays tribute to grandfather ANR

Naga Chaitanya has always carried forward the legacy of his illustrious family with grace and his upcoming wedding with Sobhita Dhulipala is no exception. The actor has decided to pay tribute to his grandfather, the legendary Akkineni Nageswara Rao, by donning traditional attire called 'pancha' reminiscent of his grandfather's timeless style.

The decision has struck an emotional chord with fans, who have taken to social media to praise Naga Chaitanya for his simplicity and reverence for his roots. Fans are applauding the actor for choosing tradition over extravagance in

an age of opulent celebrity weddings. Netizens are also showering love on the couple's cultural authenticity, particularly their 'mangal snaanam' ritual, which has become a viral sensation for its heartfelt simplicity. With an 8-hour-long wedding ceremony rooted in age-old customs, the couple's union is proving to be an inspiring celebration of tradition and family values.

Naga Chaitanya's tribute to his grandfather through his wedding attire is not just a nod to the past but a reminder of the enduring power of tradition, earning the couple admiration from fans and followers worldwide.



Working on periodic series is unique experience: Costume designer Gayathri Devi

The recent web series *Vikkatakavi* on Zee5 is receiving praise and positive reviews. Set between the 1940s and 1970s, it is a detective web series with a Telangana backdrop. To reflect the era authentically, every actor needed costumes that matched the time, making the role of the costume designer crucial. Josyula Gayathri Devi, who worked on the series, played a significant role in ensuring the outfits were perfect. The series stars Naresh Agastya and Megha Akash in lead roles and is directed by Pradeep Maddali.

"Working for OTT platforms and web series provides great opportunities for young talent and technicians. However, as a professional, I make it a point to stay updated by watching projects in Hindi, French, and Korean, even amidst my busy schedule," says costume designer Josyula Gayathri Devi.

Born in Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh and raised in Chennai, Gayathri pursued a degree in Computer Science Engineering and later worked as a developer in private organisations. "Due to personal reasons, I resigned from my job and decided to take a break. During that time, I developed an interest in fashion designing," she shares. She joined a one-year diploma course in fashion designing at Hamstech and later participated in a fashion show, which became a valuable learning experience. "Within a

year, I was invited to be a mentor for the course, and I took up the role," she adds.

Her experience as a fashion show mentor helped her understand the entire process, and she subsequently launched her own boutique. While her boutique operated successfully until 2019, the pandemic forced its closure. It was then that Gayathri transitioned into films, starting with the web series *Kudi Yedamaithe* on OTT. "After that, I worked on a movie titled *Parahushar*, but it didn't

release due to certain reasons," she explains. She later collaborated with director Karuna Kumar on *Kalapuram* and with Pradeep Maddali on the web series *Sarvam Shaktimayam*.

"After *Sarvam Shaktimayam*, I worked on another periodic series titled *Harikatha*. My experience with *Harikatha* directly helped me while working on *Vikkatakavi*. Working on periodic series with unique concepts isn't a regular occurrence, so when such opportunities arise, one must seize them. Balancing these projects and understanding the nuances of each era has been a rewarding challenge," she shares.

Regarding her upcoming projects, Gayathri reveals that she is currently working on a web series titled *Marmayogi*, directed by Satish Vegesna. "The shooting has recently started. Additionally, I'm also working on a movie titled *Manasachora*," she concludes.



RISHAB SHETTY TO STAR AS CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ

The powerhouse of Indian cinema, National Award-winning actor, Rishab Shetty and maverick director Sandeep Singh, today announced their collaboration for one of the biggest stories in Indian history, *The Pride Of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj*. Rishab Shetty, who is known for redefining cinema with *Kantara*, has an impressive slate, becoming the only actor to be a part of the most



anticipated mega films lined up in consecutive years—*Kantara 2* (2025), *Jai Hanuman* (2026) and *The Pride Of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj* (2027). With this stellar lineup, Rishab Shetty cements his place as a leading force in Indian cinema, bringing larger-than-life stories to the silver screen.

Sandeep Singh, the creative genius behind iconic films like *Mary Kom*, *Sarbjit*, *Veer Savarkar*, *Ramleela*, *Sarbjit*, *Bajirao Mastani*, & the short film *Safed* will helm this historic epic, while Rishab Shetty will breathe life into the role of the legendary warrior king who defied and inspired generations.

This magnum opus promises action on a scale never witnessed before, featuring groundbreaking visuals, stunning VFX and an unforgettable musical score. Backed by a team of top-notch technicians from across the globe, it will bring to life the story of India's greatest warrior kings, a leader who reshaped history and brought the Mughal invaders to their knees.

Rishab Shetty added, "Sandeep's vision for *The Pride Of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj* was so grand, that as soon as I heard the film, I said yes without blinking any eyelid. Playing *The Pride Of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj* is an honour beyond words. He is a national hero whose impact transcends history, and I feel immense pride in bringing his story to the screen."

Sandeep Singh added, "Rishab Shetty was my first and only choice for the role—he truly embodies the strength, spirit and valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This film has been my dream for many years now, and it is my privilege and honour to be bringing this story to the silver screen. The film has been envisioned with a scale, grandeur and never seen before action choreography that will help take Indian cinema truly global."

Witness history being unfolded in cinemas globally with the arrival of the multi-lingual magnum opus, *The Pride Of Bharat: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj* slated to release on 21st January 2027 globally.

'You are an inspiration to all Telugu girls,' Allu Arjun to *Kissik* sensation Sreeleela!

With her magnificent aura and electrifying dance moves, Sreeleela has always captivated the hearts of audiences. The actress, who made waves with the popular song *Kurchi Madathapetti* from *Guntur Kaaram* starring Mahesh Babu, has returned with yet another epic dance number in the biggest film of the year, *Pushpa 2: The Rule*. While the young sensation received tremendous love for her performance from all across, During a recent pre-release event, Allu Arjun praised Sreeleela, calling her a talented actress with a promising future in the industry.

The icon star Allu Arjun praised Sreeleela saying, "What a cute girl, She is so cute! She has a bright future and I wish you all the best, Sreeleela. For this generation, you are an inspiration to all Telugu girls." "In this generation, you are the first star Telugu girl to bring us pride. I wholeheartedly wish that you take us all to even greater heights. Amma, you should make us all proud!" the icon star further added.

Sreeleela, known for her graceful moves and vibrant presence, has garnered significant praise for her performance. The song's choreography, high-energy visuals and the dynamic performances from both actors have made *Kissik* a trending hit.

