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Jaishankar reaffirms India's continued support to Mauritius

'I WOULD KILL TO BE AN ANTAGONIST NOW': RADHIKA MADAN



Avika Gor opens up on BTS of SHANMUKHA



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Back in 2008-09, we told the Pranab Mukherjee Committee that the BJP would gain strength if statehood is given to TG. Now the question is whether the BRS will merge with the BJP or ally with it. Former MP Vinod's statement says "everything is on the table." You can criticise me, but who is being proven right?

-Asaduddin Owaisi, MP



P4

### DON'T MISS...

#### MLA holds meet to discuss Durga...

Vijayawada West MLA Yalamanchili Satyanarayana Chowdary alias Sujana Chowdary held a review meeting on the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam located atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Tuesday. He discussed the development and master plan of the temple with Executive Engineer KS Rama Rao. The MLA had darshan of the goddess and performed special pujas. EO Rama Rao, along with the Vedic scholars, accorded a warm welcome to the MLA...

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#### COVID-19 may enhance...

Contracting COVID-19 may accelerate the onset of visible symptoms of type 1 diabetes in children, an autoimmune condition, according to a study published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). Researchers found that children infected with the virus and in the early stages of type 1 diabetes without displaying symptoms, progressed more rapidly to a clinical onset of the autoimmune disorder. Symptoms of type 1 diabetes can include unusual thirst...

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#### FM participates in customary...

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday participated in a traditional 'halwa' ceremony, marking the final stage for preparation of Union Budget 2024-25 to be unveiled on July 23 in Lok Sabha. The ceremony is a ritual in which traditional dessert 'halwa' is prepared and served to officials and staff members of the finance ministry who are involved in the preparation of the budget. It is organised in the basement of North Block, which houses the ministry in the national capital and is attended by the...

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#### Hardik Pandya to lead India in...

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya is all set to lead India in the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka starting July 27. However, one of the heroes of India's T20 World Cup victory last month will take a break during the three-match ODI series, which is scheduled in August, due to "personal reasons". Hardik Pandya was India's T20 vice-captain under Rohit Sharma. He is completely fit and available for the three-match T20I series and will lead the side, a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of...

-SPORTS

# Cabinet okays repeal of Land Titling Act

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, convened on Tuesday and approved the repeal of the AP Land Titling Act. The Cabinet also approved a new sand policy, a government guarantee for a Rs 2000 crore loan for the Civil Supplies Department, and several other key bills. The new sand policy guidelines will be formulated soon.

The Cabinet granted a government guarantee to the Agriculture and Cooperative Corporation for a Rs 3,200 crore loan from the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) to purchase paddy from farmers. Additionally, several important topics were discussed as a table agenda. The cabinet reviewed the performance of the TDP-led NDA government, which has been in power for one month, and discussed public opinions about this period. The Legislative Assembly sessions are scheduled to commence on July 22.

At a press conference at the secretariat, Information and Public Relations Minister Kolu

### NEW SAND POLICY GETS APPROVAL



- Government guarantee for a Rs 2000 crore loan for the Civil Supplies Department approved.
- The Agriculture and Cooperative Corporation receives approval for a Rs 3,200 crore loan from the NCDC to purchase paddy.
- The Cabinet reviews the performance of the TDP-led NDA government after one month in power.
- Legislative Assembly sessions scheduled to begin on July 22.

Parthasarathy announced that the cabinet repealed the Andhra Pradesh Land Titling Act, 2022, introduced by the previous YSRCP government, due to numerous alleged issues.

"The Land Titling Act has caused significant suspicion and fear among the public, as reported by several newspapers and media houses. There has been massive pressure from landlords to scrap it."

newspapers and media houses. There has been massive pressure from landlords to scrap it," said Minister Parthasarathy. He added that the cabinet has also scrapped the sand policy enacted by the previous YSRCP government in 2019 and 2021.

The Cabinet approved a Government Order (GO) passed on July 8 to offer free sand for construction purposes until a proper mechanism is established. The GO aims to provide essential sand for construction to the public without charge.

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## Follow hands-off approach over sand: CM to Ministers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has advised ministers and MLAs to avoid tarnishing their reputations by interfering in the free sand policy. During a discussion on political issues with ministers, marking one month of governance by the TDP-led NDA government, Naidu emphasised the importance of maintaining a hands-off approach.

The Chief Minister announced that all sand reaches would be accessible after October, following the monsoon season, with permissions granted to boat societies. He noted that there are currently 43 lakh tonnes of sand available at the dump yards, with a requirement of one million tonnes over the next three months.

He noted that there are currently 43 lakh tonnes of sand available at the dump yards, with a requirement of one million tonnes over the next three months. Additionally, 80 lakh tonnes of sand will be transported into the rivers by boat societies. Naidu urged the ministers to periodically raise awareness about these measures.

Addressing budgetary concerns, Naidu highlighted the deficit and stressed the need for monthly reviews on departmental issues.

He instructed ministers to communicate the status of their departments to the public and to coordinate with MLAs without conflicts.

He mentioned that his visit to Delhi later in the evening was aimed at advancing the state's interests.

Naidu also announced that the Assembly sessions would be held for five days starting from July 22.

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## Naidu embarks on second Delhi tour after polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday embarked on his second visit to New Delhi after the TDP-led government came to power after the recently held assembly elections. Following a Cabinet meeting at the Secretariat on Tuesday, the Chief Minister left for New Delhi. Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, Information & Public Relations Minister K Parthasarathy said that he doesn't exactly know the agenda of the CM's visit to New Delhi but noted that he is going for the betterment of the southern state.

"I am not sure of the exact agenda, but the CM is going for the betterment of the state and also to bring financial help for Andhra Pradesh," said Parthasarathy. However, there is no clarity as to how many days Naidu would stay in New Delhi. Naidu's first visit to New Delhi was in the first week of July after he took oath as the chief minister for the fourth time.

## KRMB allows AP, TG to take water from NSP



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A meeting of the KRMB's Three Member Committee was held on July 15 to allocate water in the Srisailem Dam and Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) among Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for drinking purposes.

The Engineer-in-Chief (Irrigation) of Andhra Pradesh had earlier requested the release of five TMCs water through the Nagarjuna Sagar Right Main Canal to meet the drinking water needs of Palnadu, Guntur, Bapatla and Prakasam districts.

Meanwhile, the Engineer-in-Chief (General) of Telangana stated their requirement for 2.50 TMC from NSP for Palair and Udaya Samudram reservoirs and for Hyderabad.

Following the committee's recommendations, the water allocation details were decided as follows:

Water available in NSP as of July 15 is 4.780 TMC - Water available in Srisailem Dam as of July 15 is 5.705 TMC - Release from Srisailem Dam: 5.705 TMC - Net realization from Srisailem Dam at NSP considering

10% losses: 5.134 TMC - Total water available for allocation: 9.914 TMC - Allocation for Andhra Pradesh: 4.500 TMC - Allocation for Telangana: 5.414 TMC.

The order, issued with specific conditions, emphasised the judicious use of water for drinking purposes only due to acute shortages in common reservoirs.

Additionally, it was mandated that water released from the Srisailem Dam should preferably pass through powerhouse to generate power. Water releases from NSP are scheduled to begin on July 17, ensuring a continuous flow of 5,500 cusecs through the NSP Right Main Canal for Andhra Pradesh.

The Chief Engineers of both states are responsible for ensuring the judicious delivery and use of water and reporting to the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) with joint statements.

This water release order, approved by the KRMB Chairman will be implemented in letter and spirit to meet the needs of both states.

## AP Governor Nazeer's message to Muslims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Governor Abdul Nazeer conveyed his message on Muharram, emphasising its significance as a symbol of sacrifice. He stated, "Muharram represents the spirit of sacrifice, which surpasses all other virtues of mankind. It commemorates the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet, who gave his life for the sake of true belief.

The essence of Muharram lies in remembering goodness and sacrifice. Let us embrace the spirit of Muharram and embody humanism, which is a core principle of Islam."

2

## Ministers to hold monthly reviews with HoDs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the coalition government's progress over the past month with his ministers on Tuesday. The CM said that the government is currently facing a deficit and provided key directives to the ministers.

Ministers are instructed to hold monthly review meetings with Heads of Departments (HoDs) and senior officials to address departmental issues. The Chief Minister also stressed the importance of transparency and public engagement, advising ministers to communicate the status of their respective departments to the public.

The CM reiterated that ministers

CM Naidu reiterated that ministers should be accessible to the public at all times and available at their party offices to serve the people. He urged ministers not to misuse their power and to work in coordination with local Legislators, avoiding any displays of arrogance.

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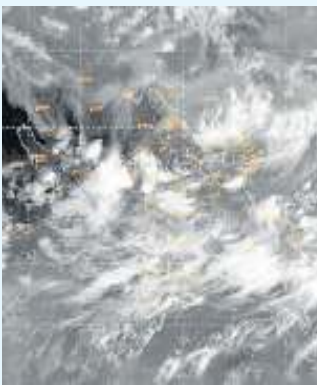
2

displays of arrogance.

In a separate incident, the "Free Bus Travel for Women" scheme posted on social media irritated CM Chandrababu. This occurred after Transport Minister M Ram Prasad Reddy informed the CM about a Twitter post by Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad. On Tuesday, Minister Anagani Satya Prasad announced on Twitter that the Free Bus Travel for Women in Andhra Pradesh would commence on August 15. However, the post was later deleted.

Sources indicate that the CM warned Minister Anagani not to overstep and interfere in the matters of other ministers, which became a topic of discussion among TDP leaders following the Cabinet meeting.

## New low pressure area likely over Bay



PNS ■ GUNTUR

A new low-pressure area is expected to form over the west-central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal on July 19.

Under its influence, heavy to very heavy rainfall is anticipated at isolated locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on July 18, 19, and 20, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on July 19 and 20.

Additionally, heavy rain is expected at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh

over the next 48 hours and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on July 17 and 18.

The low-pressure area that was previously over south Odisha and neighbouring regions has now moved to south Chhattisgarh, adjoining Vidarbha.

The associated cyclonic circulation extends up to 5.8 km above mean sea level and is tilted south-westwards with height, according to the Meteorological Centre.

2



## Venkaiah Chowdary appointed TTD JEO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, IRS (C&T:2005), has been deputed as Joint Executive Officer, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), Government of Andhra Pradesh for three years in relaxation of the policy.

To this effect, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the proposal of the Department of Revenue for the deputation of Venkaiah Chowdary through a letter dated July 16, 2024, issued by Sakshi Mittal, Director Government of India Secretariat of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet Ministry.



Naidu condemns felling of lemon trees: P2

## Jailed BRS leader Kavitha taken to DDU Hospital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BRS leader K Kavitha, who is lodged in Tihar jail here in connection with a money laundering case, was taken to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital after she developed some gynecological problem and high fever on Tuesday, officials said.

The 46-year-old Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader was brought back to prison after undergoing some tests at the hospital, they said.

Kavitha was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case on March 15 from her Banjara Hills residence in

Hyderabad. On April 11, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested her from Tihar jail in a corruption case linked to the alleged scam.

"Kavitha was taken to DDU Hospital after she developed some gynecological problems and a high fever around 4.30 pm. She was kept under observation and underwent some tests," an official said.

After staying in the hospital for two hours, she was sent back to jail, the official said, adding that she is lodged in Tihar's jail number 6.

Sources said the BRS leader often faces gynecological issues in prison and a team of doctors looks after her in Tihar.

## No solid evidence to suggest massage effective for pain, say researchers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"No high-certainty evidence" that massage is effective in treating pain, despite "hundreds of clinical trials and dozens of previous scientific reviews on the topic", researchers said in a study.

According to the findings, published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open, reviews providing moderate- or high-certainty evidence that massage was superior to other pain therapies, such as opioids, were rare. Massage therapy involves using hands to manipulate the soft tissues of skin, muscles and ligaments for treating pain, and is usually delivered by certified therapists.

Despite massage therapy's popu-



larity and long history in practice, evidence regarding its benefits remain limited, according to the researchers, including those from the University of California, US.

Analysing 129 reviews published since 2018, they found that of these, only 41 used a formal method to rate the strength of evidence used to show that massage therapy helped

relieve painful health conditions in adults. Of the 41, the authors focused on 17 relating to 13 different health conditions, such as back pain and cancer-related pain.

"Across these reviews, no conclusions were rated as high certainty of evidence," the authors wrote in the study. While the evidence presented in seven of the 17 reviews were rated as "moderate-certainty," others were rated as "low- or very low-certainty," according to the study.

Evidence of moderate certainty came from reviews showing massage therapy to have "beneficial associations with pain," the authors said. "More high-quality randomised clinical trials are needed to provide a stronger evidence base to assess the effect of massage therapy on pain," they wrote.

# When turncoats make a mockery of the anti-defection law

The true spirit of the country's democracy is at stake if one considers the plethora of defections made ostensibly in the interests of the development of the constituency of the turncoat lawmaker concerned. The common may feel disgusted at the turn events, whether they are pre-poll or post-poll defections.

Most of the defections palpably involve nothing but the selfish motive of the defector for obvious personal gains. Disturbingly, every political countenancing unlawful political activities in its quest for the elusive 'political stability'. The recent developments in Telangana, India's youngest State, mirror the deep-rooted political malaise spreading in various parts of the nation.

The Congress party, which had agreed for the bifurcation of the combined Andhra Pradesh, was routed in residual AP following bifurcation. The party did not get a single

seat in the AP Legislative Assembly. People of Telangana too initially rejected the Congress. Only in its third attempt, the Congress could make it in TG. The Congress got a slender margin in the recent TG Legislative Assembly polls, winning only five seats more than the magic figure.

The Bharat Rastra Samiti (BRS) immediately began taunting that "the Congress government would last only six months" and predicted former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's rule again in TG. So, the Congress seems to have initiated steps to ensure 'political stability'. It has lured legislators from BRS, which had won almost one-third seats (39) in the 119-member House. Legislators belonging to BRS are switching to the ruling Congress. The Congress' high command seems to have given its nod; for, the ultimate purpose is to

**Unfortunately, Telangana has become the focal point for horse trading among legislators. Trashing basic morality in politics, both BRS and Congress have resorted to undemocratic practices. During the period of the first Assembly of TG (2014-18), the then TRS government headed by KCR shepherded Congress and TDP MLAs into its fold. TDP Legislature Party evaporated as it were since KCR was determined to see the end of TDP on TG's soil.**



Jana Reddy to continue in that position. In Andhra Pradesh too, such unhealthy practice has been encouraged at the behest of the ruling parties. During the first Assembly (2014-19) of residual AP, then ruling TDP opened its gates for nearly two dozens of MLAs from the principal opposition YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). The same party admitted four legislators from

TDP during it rule (2019-24). However, such legislators, regardless of their party, had a golden chance of not relinquishing their membership of the Legislature in both TG&AP. Their patrons helped them in the process of enjoying the membership of the Legislature, despite their defection.

The anti-defection law says that those shifting their loyalty to another party would lose membership of the Legislature. In reality, nothing of this sort takes place. The unhealthy practice of joining other parties after getting elected on the ticket of a particular party dilutes the spirit of true democracy.

In the mid 80s, there was talk of morality in politics in the State of Karnataka during the rule of Janata Party leader Ramakrishna Hegde who was known for his integrity. He retained power after dissolving the Assembly on the plank of political stability. His daredevil attempt made him a hero

in politics of Karnataka then. Former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had brought the anti-defection law to check defections. The law does not allow any legislator to shift his loyalty to another party. Otherwise, he/she would lose membership of the Legislature. The same law, being toothless, has allowed unscrupulous switching of parties.

Apparently the resignations submitted by the defectors are put away in iron safes, never to be brought out for acceptance by the presiding officers/speakers of the respective Houses. For example T. Srinivas Yadav, former minister in Chandrababu Naidu's cabinet, had shifted loyalties to TRS in TG. He 'tendered' his resignation and sent it to TGLA's Speaker. But it never came to be accepted. Worse still, the Speaker's secretariat clarified that the resignation letter submitted by Yadav was not with them. Dozens of legislators who had defected to another

party successfully forestalled possible bypolls for their respective seats in the event of their resignations being accepted. The leaders who had encouraged MLAs to shift loyalties assured them of "no-bypolls" to their respective seats.

Rulers are often more particular on safeguarding the political future/interests of members who had joined their party after defecting another party. No such turncoat legislator has been disqualified. Such defections are literally mocking the anti-defection law. The law has become toothless due to biased decisions taken by the presiding officers. While publicly advocating stringent actions against defectors, every leader encourages defectors.

If the loopholes in the anti-defection law are not plugged, and if unhealthy practices among political parties are not curbed, democracy in India will go for a toss.

## Perni slams TDP govt's white papers

Former minister Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) criticised Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu for frequently portraying himself as an intellectual and discussing his promises during the release of white papers. Nani contended that Naidu's competence is evident in his handling of the State budget, pointing out that the current Vote on Account budget is less comprehensive than a full budget.

Addressing the media at the party's central office in Tadepalli on Tuesday, Nani highlighted that when the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) assumed power, the State treasury held only Rs 100 crore. In contrast, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy presented a detailed full state budget in the Assembly on July 12. This budget provided extensive information, including debt details, outstanding payments, and revenue sources.

Nani criticised the Telugu



**He argued that if a complete budget were presented, the Chief Minister would be required to specify allocations for the 'Super Six' schemes, their implementation timelines, and funding amounts. The absence of such details could lead to public comparisons with the previous administration's budget and potential accountability issues.**

Desam Party (TDP) coalition government for delaying the presentation of the full state budget. He argued that if a complete budget were presented, the Chief Minister would be required to specify allocations for the 'Super Six' schemes, their implementation timelines, and funding amounts. The absence of such details could lead to public comparisons with the previous administration's budget and potential accountability issues. Nani suggested that the Chief Minister is avoiding full disclosure of debts to evade scrutiny. The former minister also pointed out that despite the

Chief Minister releasing white papers on various issues—such as Polavaram, Amaravati, energy, and land, sand, and mineral resources—there has been no progress or answers concerning the completion of the Amaravati and Polavaram projects, the return of true-up charges, or responses to questions raised by the YSRCP.

Nani concluded by accusing the Chief Minister and his party leaders of focusing on undermining Jagan Mohan Reddy, spreading negative propaganda, and engaging in vendetta politics instead of delivering effective governance.

## Ex-serviceman brutally murdered in Gajuwaka

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a shocking incident, V Appalanaidu, an ex-serviceman aged around 40 years, was brutally murdered by unidentified assailants at Sri Krishna Nagar Road at Jaggu Junction under Gajuwaka police station limits on Monday night.

According to initial reports, two persons reportedly chased Appalanaidu and attacked him with sharp-edged objects, inflicting fatal wounds to his neck and other parts of his body. The gruesome attack resulted in his immediate death, and he was found lying in a pool of blood.

The Gajuwaka police, along with senior police officials, promptly arrived at the crime scene to begin their investigation. While the exact details surrounding the murder are still emerging, sources within the police department suspect that a land dispute may have been the motive behind the heinous act.



The brutal nature of the crime has sent shockwaves through the local community, and residents are anxiously awaiting further information as the investigation unfolds. The authorities are urging anyone with information related to the incident to come forward to assist in the apprehension of those responsible.

As the investigation continues, the police are leaving no stone unturned to gather more details about the victim's background and the possible reasons behind this brutal murder. The law enforcement agencies have assured the public that all necessary measures are being taken to bring the culprits to justice and ensure the safety and security of the area.

## Ex-MLA: TDP govt failed to address public health concerns

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former YSRCP MLA Dr. Monditoka Jaganmohan Rao criticized the TDP government for its lack of action and focus on public health issues. Speaking to the media at the party central office on Tuesday, the former MLA stated that health conditions in the state are rapidly declining, with the number of diarrhea cases increasing drastically every day.

He highlighted this as a clear indication of the government's inability to provide even the most basic necessity – safe drinking water. Dr. Rao further accused the TDP government of prioritizing political vendettas over the well-being of the people. "Instead of addressing



these pressing health concerns, the government is busy targeting YSRCP workers," he said. The former MLA praised former chief minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for bringing revolutionary changes to the

education and medical sectors during his tenure, emphasizing the prioritization of free healthcare for everyone.

He also criticized TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu for not establishing a single government medical college during his tenure. Dr. Rao reminded the public that the negligence and failure of the current TDP coalition government have stalled the opening of five new medical colleges this year.

He accused the TDP of betraying medical students by reversing its stance on self-financed seats in government medical colleges. Despite promising to abolish the self-finance system while in opposition, the TDP continued it once in power.

## CM condemns felling of lemon trees

Officials directed to take stern action

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has strongly condemned the recent destruction of lemon trees in Poli village, Rajampet Mandal, Annamaya district. The CM expressed his firm stance against such actions, stating that the deliberate destruction of crops and trees is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

He emphasised that the authorities must take strict action against those responsible for the cutting down of lemon trees owned by local



farmer Manjula. The CM also warned that individuals engaging in unlawful and destructive practices will face consequences if they do not amend their behaviour. To prevent such incidents in the future, the CM has instructed officials to implement measures that will ensure the protection of agricultural assets and uphold the rule of law.

## VLA demands action against AU disruptions

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam Lawyers Association (VLA) has ignited a firestorm over recent events at Andhra University, accusing outsiders with criminal records of interfering with university affairs and demanding stricter enforcement of security measures. The VLA's concerns stem from multiple reports and social media posts alleging unauthorized individuals, including Koti John and Areti Mahesh, both with documented criminal cases (FIR No. 39/2022), have been accessing university buildings and disrupting operations. John, reportedly suspended from

university service in the past, is singled out for allegedly maintaining inappropriate access to the Central Administrative Building. Adding fuel to the fire are allegations of harassment against Dr. Nalla Satyanarayana of the Hindi Department. The National Women Commission has summoned Andhra University representatives to address these accusations on July 19th in Delhi. The VLA vehemently condemns these developments, emphasizing the detrimental impact on the university's integrity. "It is unthinkable that such individuals are allowed to influence decisions

and intimidate staff," declared a VLA spokesperson. "This sends a terrible message." In response to these concerning developments, the association has proposed several urgent actions. Individuals with criminal records or serious allegations, such as Koti John, Areti Mahesh, and Dr. Nalla Satyanarayana, should be immediately prohibited from entering the Central Administration Office or any part of the university campus. Security measures must be rigorously enforced to safeguard the academic environment and ensure the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and stakeholders.

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha  
Tithi: Ekadashi: Jul 16 08:34 PM to Jul 17 09:03 PM  
Dwadashi: Jul 17 09:03 PM to Jul 18 08:44 PM

Nakshatram: Anuradha: Jul 17 02:13 AM to Jul 18 03:12 AM  
Jyeshtha: Jul 18 03:12 AM to Jul 19 03:25 AM

Rahukalam: 12:22 PM to 1:59 PM  
Yamagandam: 7:31 AM to 9:08 AM  
Varjyam: 08:51 AM to 10:28 AM  
Gulika: 10:45 AM to 12:22 PM  
Amritakalam: 04:23 PM to 06:03 PM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**  
Forecast: Scattered Showers  
Temp: 32°C  
Humidity: 77%  
Sunrise: 5:44 AM  
Sunset: 6:44 PM  
Updated: July 16, 2024 5:00 PM

## Cabinet okays...

Continued from Page 1

Furthermore, the Cabinet approved a GO passed by the Civil Supplies Department to avail loans up to Rs 2,000 crore from banks and other financial institutions for purchasing grains during the fiscal year 2024-25.

Minister Parthasarathy also stated that the Cabinet has approved the Agriculture and Cooperation Department's proposal seeking the state government's assurance to secure a Rs 3,200 crore loan from the NCDC for the fiscal year 2024-25, intended as working capital assistance.

## New low pressure...

Continued from Page 1

The Monsoon trough at mean sea level now stretches from Jaisalmer to Kota, Raisen, the centre of the low-pressure area over south Chhattisgarh and Vidarbha, Gopalpur, and then southeastwards to the central Bay of Bengal, extending up to 1.5 km above mean sea level.

Thunderstorms, accompanied by lightning and strong surface winds with speeds ranging from 30 to 40 kmph, are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next five days. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected in many places or at a few locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

The Southwest Monsoon has been normal over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema. Rainfall occurred at many places in these regions over the last 24 hours, with heavy rainfall reported at Pagidala in the Nandyal district of Rayalaseema.

## Iconic Bapatla Town Hall is 119 years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 119th anniversary celebrations of Bapatla Town Hall will turn 119 years old on Wednesday and the authorities have made elaborate arrangements for the celebrations. The Edward Coronation Memorial Town Hall was inaugurated by Broodie, the then Guntur District Collector on 17th July 1905. The Forum For Better Bapatla Secretary, PC Sai Babu said that when the coronation celebrations of King Edward, the VII and Queen Alexandria were sponsored by the Indian Government, in 1903, the advantage was taken fully by the Bapatla people. With their cultural background, the elite in Bapatla who were in the forefront of all the progressive movements keenly felt the need for a Town Hall and Reading Room. The public of Bapatla has taken so much trouble to commemorate the coronation of a foreign ruler and indulged in lavish expressions of loyalty.

Sai Babu narrated that when there-fore the Majesties King Edward and Queen Alexandria were crowned King

and Queen of England and Emperor and Empress of India, there was a spontaneous outburst of loyal acclamations throughout the length and breadth of the country. It was in that let out burst of loyal devotion to their beloved Sovereign and Queen, that the motion to commemorate their great event of coronation by building of a Town Hall in Bapatla. In honour of the coronation of his Majesty King Edward, the VII Emperor of India, it was resolved at a meeting of the residents of Bapatla Taluk held on 5th December 1902. K Seshachalapathy Pantulu, the then Tehsildar, formed a committee for the purpose and opened subscription lists.

Regarding the Foundation Stone for the construction of the Town Hall, the secretary explained that the foundation was laid on January 25, 1905. The work of construction was entrusted to V Venkataswamy Chetty, the well-known PWD Contractor of Bapatla Taluqa. The Town Hall was entirely constructed with the public donations without any assistance from the Government or Local Funds.

## Follow hands-off...

Continued from Page 1

He revealed the formation of a committee with three ministers to implement the crop insurance scheme, criticizing the previous YSRCP government for deceiving farmers by failing to pay the premium. The cabinet also discussed irregularities in the Public Distribution System (PDS) rice distribution, particularly implicating Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy in Kakinada. Naidu pointed out that Reddy's family held influential positions, including Chairman of the Civil Supplies Corporation, MLA, and Chairman of the Rice Millers Association, allegedly involved in recycling and exporting PDS rice at Rs 43 per kg.

During the meeting, Nadendla Manohar called for a comprehensive investigation and proposed establishing procedures to address the issue by the next cabinet meeting.



Agriculture officials show to Minister Atchannaidu the "Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity" they received in Portugal recently.

## AP has set a global benchmark: Atchen

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu stated that Andhra Pradesh has become a global benchmark for natural farming. He highlighted that the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) is prepared to send expert farmers to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Zambia, and Rwanda to support their nature farming initiatives with technical expertise.

Representatives from 45 countries have praised Andhra Pradesh's natural farming practices, recognizing it as a significant achievement. Minister Atchannaidu noted that these international representatives have visited the state to learn about the innovative science behind nature farming, with Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (AP RySS) serving as a role model for other Indian states.

T Vijay Kumar, Executive Vice Chairman and

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH FISHERIES DEPARTMENT**  
**SHORT TENDER NOTICE**

NF No. 502/2020, dt.20.06.2024 of the Joint Collector & Chairman, District Purchase Committee, Srikakulam. Tenders are invited by the Deputy Director of Fisheries, Srikakulam for the supply of 310 No of FRP Boats, Marine Nets & OBM Engines in Srikakulam District. Tenders will be available after dt.23.07.2024 in a website <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in/login.html> (Organization name Government of Andhra Pradesh). Further details can be had from the office during office hours on any day in the following address: Office of the Deputy Director of Fisheries, Srikakulam (Baparam, Srikakulam-532001). Sd/-Deputy Director of Fisheries, Srikakulam.

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FRIDAY DRY DAY

# Drive against seasonal diseases

Stress on importance of engaging people in disease prevention and mosquito control measures



NTR District Collector Dr. Srijana releasing a wall poster on sanitation and seasonal diseases at the camp office in Vijayawada on Tuesday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr. G. Srijana has directed officials to observe Dry Day every Friday. The initiative aims to raise awareness among the public on seasonal diseases and to combat the mosquito menace effectively. To ensure the success of this programme, Dr. Srijana emphasised the involvement of Revenue, Panchayat Raj, Medical, Health and Family Welfare, Municipal, and other related departments.

Collector Srijana convened a meeting with all departmental officials at the camp office in Vijayawada on Tuesday to discuss sanitation and seasonal diseases. She also released a wall poster in this regard. By implementing these measures, the district administration aims to create a cleaner and healthier environment, reducing the prevalence of seasonal diseases during the rainy season and enhancing public health standards in NTR district.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that the focus of the Dry Day initiative will be on promoting sanitation practices and encouraging community participation. Dr. Srijana stressed the importance of engaging people actively in these efforts to achieve meaningful results in disease prevention and mosquito control.

The programme should be conducted in all gram panchayats, municipalities, and corporations with the participation of respective officials, she said. Also, she asked the officials to alert the people about diseases such as malaria and dengue spread by mosquitoes. As part of preventive measures, a special sanitation drive should be conducted in addition to the regular sanitation maintenance in all 288 gram panchayats and 389 habitations. Cleaning and chlorination should be conducted in all 588 Overhead Tanks (OHS) in

the district as per the prescribed schedule, she said. They should ensure geotagging and taking photographs before and after cleaning and chlorination, and this should be certified by Extension Officer, Panchayat Raj and Rural Development (EO, PR & RD), she said. The Collector made it clear that if any allegation is raised regarding cleaning OHS and chlorination, stringent action will be taken. She stressed on providing publicity on seasonal diseases and sanitation through media and pamphlets. Officials should be aware of private agencies which are organising sanitation activities in all temples, government hospitals, and tourist places.

# MLA holds meet to discuss Durga temple development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada West MLA Yalamanchili Satyanarayana Chowdary alias Sujana Chowdary held a review meeting on the Sri Durga Mallewaru Swamy Varla Devasthanam located atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Tuesday. He discussed the development and master plan of the temple with Executive Engineer KS Rama Rao.



Durga Temple Executive Officer Rama Rao explaining the master plan and temple development activities to Vijayawada West MLA Sujana Chowdary on Tuesday

The MLA had darshan of the goddess and performed special pujas. EO Rama Rao, along with the Vedic scholars, accorded a warm welcome to the MLA.

Later, the priests gave blessings to MLA Sujana at the Veda Ashirvachana Mandapam. On the occasion, Rao presented him with Sesha Vasthram, Laddu Prasadam and a portrait.

Besides, Sujana Chowdary spoke to the temple authorities about various aspects including the financial position and other pertinent issues concerning the temple. EO Rao explained the master plan and ongoing developmental activities. Meanwhile, the MLA said the meeting was conducted to discuss the infrastructure facilities to be provided in the temple. Also, they discussed many issues regarding development and various issues, he said.

# Collector implements stringent industrial safety measures

Proposal to designate two-kilometre radius around industrial zones as hazard-prone areas

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has adopted a resolute approach to enhance safety standards across all industries within the district. Addressing the District Crisis Management Group meeting on Tuesday, the Collector issued stringent directives to authorities and industrial stakeholders, highlighting the imperative of robust safety protocols. Prasad has underscored the importance of preventive measures, mandating the installation of automatic alarm systems to mitigate industrial accidents and fatalities. The proposal to designate a two-kilometre radius around industrial zones as hazard-prone areas, accompanied by stringent safety protocols, further emphasises the administration's commitment to proac-



District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad addressing a meeting.

guard their welfare in the event of any untoward incident.

A crucial aspect of the new measures involves the establishment of well-trained emergency response teams at every industrial facility. These teams will be equipped to handle any crisis that may arise effectively. The Collector has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards any negligence that jeopardises the safety of workers and the surrounding community. The initiative has received positive industry reception, with participating companies presenting detailed security measures during the meeting. RDO Hussain Saheb, Chief Inspector of Factories Suresh, GM Ganapathy from the District Industries Department, and officials from various other district-level departments participated in the meeting.

# Govt ignoring public health: Malladi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada city YSRCP president and former MLA Malladi Vishnu accused the state government of leaving public health to their fate. He expressed concern that the TDP-led NDA government has completely failed in controlling seasonal diseases and deaths being reported due to diarrhoea in the state due to the negligence of the government and the health staff. This is the first time that

so many deaths have occurred in a single month. People are living in a terrifying atmosphere due to the lack of early detection of diseases during monsoon and the lack of adequate measures in diarrhoea affected areas. Especially in areas like Jaggaipeta, Tirupati, Vijayawada's Moghalraipuram, Guntur, Piduguralla and Urvakonda where a large number of cases are reported, but the government administration is not even bothered about it.



He pointed out that a four-year-old child lost her life in

Sunkesula village of Kurnool district due to the negligence of the authorities. Two died in Tirupati, seven in Piduguralla and six in Jaggaipeta succumbed to diarrhoea. Even though people are falling prey to seasonal diseases, the officials of the medical health department and municipal departments are least bothered to address them on time. The Ministers are also not bothered to initiate action to rescue the patients who are

falling sick due to seasonal diseases. The ruling party leaders are acting strangely after coming to power, said Vishnu. On the other hand, he said that it is sad that 139 people took ill after consuming contaminated food in Naidupet Gurukul School and demanded immediate strict action against the officials and staff who were negligent. It is suggested that the government should take better measures in Gurukul schools so that such incidents do not recur.

# Unauthorised shops mushrooming on roadsides

Certain ward-level political leaders transforming public areas into makeshift commercial hubs

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam's bustling streets are facing a growing menace – unauthorised shops mushrooming on pavements and roadsides. While some residents struggle to make ends meet with these makeshift stalls, a disturbing trend of politically connected individuals exploiting the situation has emerged. Previously, these individuals operated through renting out clusters of such shops. However, a recent escalation involves the collective display of 'To Let' signs, a blatant disregard for established regulations. Reports indicate that certain ward-level leaders are transforming public areas like intersections, drainage zones, and even main roads into makeshift commercial hubs. The city's economic growth has seen a surge in demand for readily available food and daily necessities. Capitalising on this, local leaders, allegedly affiliated with YCP, are reportedly establishing shops at prime locations while posing as representatives of public authorities.

stream, with prices varying between Rs 3,000 and Rs 10,000. The issue reportedly intensified during YCP's recent term. Ward-level leaders and corporators are alleged to have established a network of roadside shops, seemingly bypassing town planning authorities. Even after their removal, these leaders, emboldened by their political connections, re-established their operations. Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) officials, responsible for regulating such encroachments, reportedly face resistance from these leaders, particularly in areas like HB Colony, Sivajipalem, MVP Colony, and Pedawaltair. The situation has reached a new level of brazenness with individuals now displaying 'To Let' signs on vacant shops. Despite GVMC's apparent awareness, these signs remain prominently visible near Seethammadhara Oxygen Towers, igniting public outcry. Citizens are demanding swift action against these unauthorised shops, citing concerns over traffic congestion and pedestrian safety.

Addressing the issue of unauthorised shops requires a multi-faceted approach: ensuring the enforcement of regulations, establishing designated vending zones for genuine struggling vendors, and taking decisive action against those exploiting the system for personal gain. These leaders leverage their political connections to secure electricity for these basic structures, typically measuring six-by-six feet. The cost of acquiring one of these shops ranges from a significant Rs 3 lakh to Rs 6 lakh, depending on the location. Alternatively, some opt to rent them out for a monthly income

# Awareness programme marks World Snake Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a poignant tribute to World Snake Day, the Indra Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) joined forces with the Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society to host a transformative Snake Awareness Programme. This event served as a powerful testament to Andhra Pradesh's ecological diversity, spotlighting the pivotal role of its diverse snake species in maintaining environmental harmony.



Dr. Shanti Priya Pandey, APCCF (Wildlife)

The gathering welcomed domain speakers whose expertise illuminated critical aspects of snake conservation and safety protocols. Dr. Shanti Priya Pandey, APCCF (Wildlife) from Mangalagiri, delivered an enlightening discourse on responsible snake-handling practices while emphasizing the urgency of conservation efforts. Her comprehensive guidance included essential tips for navigating snake encounters and first aid measures for bites. Addressing the audience, Sh. Srikanth Reddy, Chief Conservator of Forests of Visakhapatnam, underscored the imperative of safeguarding these reptiles within the state's rich biodiversity. Murthy Kantimahanti, representing the Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society, detailed ongoing initiatives aimed at preserving Andhra Pradesh's diverse snake populations. Pradipty Bharadwaj, an advocate from Langland Conservation, UK, delved into the legal dimensions of snake conservation, highlighting the global challenge posed by illegal wildlife trafficking. Dr. Phaneendra, Senior Veterinarian at IGZP, shared crucial insights into the specialized care and management practices necessary for snakes in captivity.

"This initiative epitomizes IGZP's steadfast commitment, alongside our partners, to champion snake conservation and raise awareness of their pivotal ecological role," remarked Mangamma, Curator of IGZP. The event also marked the unveiling of educational posters showcasing 32 distinct snake species and informative materials designed to educate the public on snake bite prevention. The programme drew a diverse audience, including District Forest Officers, personnel from the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department, dedicated NGOs, passionate zoo volunteers, and enthusiastic students. Their collective participation underscored a robust community engagement in advancing wildlife conservation efforts across the region.

## DESPERATE TIMES

# Tribal school sans teachers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Parents in Tengillabandha, Ananthagiri mandal, are in dire straits as their children face an uncertain educational future due to the absence of a teacher. Situated amid rugged terrain, these children undertake a perilous journey through a swollen stream during the monsoon season to attend the nearest government primary school, located in P Gangavaram village—a journey that spans 4 km and takes two hours each way. Recent heavy rains have

exacerbated their plight, rendering the stream impassable and cutting off their only access to education. In response, the community staged a protest, capturing the attention of ASR district authorities. This led to a visit from the Mandal Educational Officer (MEO) of Ananthagiri, who pledged that if the villagers constructed a school shed, efforts would be made to establish a new school and appoint teachers. Undeterred by the challenges, every family in Tengillabandha contributed Rs 500 towards building the school

shed, sacrificing their daily routines to complete it within a week. Despite their collective efforts, however, no teacher has been assigned to the village, leaving the children idle at home. "We finished building the shed three days ago," expressed one parent with frustration, "but our children are still waiting for a teacher. Meanwhile, children in neighbouring villages are attending school without hindrance." In a heartfelt appeal, the villagers have called upon the ASR district collector and the ITDA project officer to

# Youth Skills Day celebrations held at Andhra Loyola College

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Commemorating World Youth Skills Day, the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF), MAGIC Youth Units, and the Department of Political Science at Andhra Loyola College jointly organised a grand conference titled 'Cultivating Unbiased Perspectives for a Just Society' on Tuesday. Renowned young YouTuber and podcaster Vijay Kesari attended the programme as a guest.

Introducing the theme, programme coordinator Pity Parker remarked, "In this polarised society, if we speak on one side, we are labelled biased, and if we speak on both sides, we are called escapists. Can impartial perspectives truly exist, and if they do, how much value do they hold in this society?" Vijay Kesari, in his speech, stated, "A just society is a complex concept and heavily burdened word, and every individual interprets justice according to their preferences."

# CPM demands judicial probe into land scam

Reclaim encroached land and redistribute among economically disadvantaged people



CPM State secretary V. Srinivasa Rao addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM State secretary V. Srinivasa Rao has called upon the State government to take action regarding assigned lands that have been unlawfully occupied by various individuals. He has demanded that these lands be reclaimed and redistributed to benefit economically disadvantaged citizens. Furthermore, Rao has specifically requested the government to revoke the Assigned Land Amendment GO 596. Also, Rao demanded a judicial inquiry into the land scam involving thousands of acres in the State.

"Besides, 2,500 acres of tribal lands and small farmers' lands were allotted to the Adani Group in the name of the pumped Hydrel Projects and Data Centre. In the past 10 years, 2.25 lakh acres were allotted to business tycoons in the name of SEZ and Industrial Corridors. However, no industry has been established so far and no one got employment," he pointed out. "Vampic lands in Guntur, Prakasam and Bapatla districts, Knowledge lands in Satya Sai district, and thousands of acres in Visakhapatnam district were allotted to big shots," he said. Srinivasa Rao demanded that the government take back these lands and redistribute them to the poor and genuine beneficiaries. "The government should give exemptions to poor farmers who possess 2.5 acres of agricultural land and five acres of upland," he requested.

He stated that the Gujarat model Land Grabbing Act is not suitable for the State. Gujarat rythu brought their lands back which were allotted to the Ambani Group after fighting against the government. Srinivasa Rao also said that the free crop insurance scheme should be implemented in the State. Also, the government should withdraw the move to install smart metres for the agricultural bore wells, he added.

GANG-RAPE & MURDER OF MINOR GIRL

# Accused juveniles disposed of victim's body with their fathers' help: SP

PNS ■ NANDYALA

The three minor boys, who confessed to gang-raping and murdering a nine-year-old minor girl at Muchumari village on July 7, had disposed of the body with the help of their fathers.

Disclosing this to the media here on Tuesday, SP Adhiraj Singh Rana said when the nine-year-old victim went to a park to play with friends, the accused juveniles forcibly took her on a motorcycle to the outskirts of the village. They gang-raped and strangled the girl



before returning to their respective homes.

The accused informed their fathers about the crime.

Sometime later, the three boys, along with the fathers of two of them, went to the place and took the body of the girl on a

boat to the middle of the canal. They tied a boulder to the body and threw it into the canal.

The police pressed into service the NDRF and SDRF teams to trace the body in the canal. Six teams of expert swimmers were also pressed into service. Advanced technology including underwater cameras and drone cameras is being used to trace the girl. "The search operation will continue till the body is traced," the SP said. The three minor boys and fathers of two of the boys Kadam Yohan and Bolleddula Sadgurudu have

been arrested in the case so far. Cases under various sections including 17/2, 103, 238 and 605 and POCSO were registered against the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, the villagers of Muchumari staged a dharna in protest against the delay in tracing the body of the girl. Holding placards, the villagers raised slogans demanding the arrest of all the accused. The parents of the deceased minor girl appealed to the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister to intervene in the case and instruct the police to trace the body at the earliest.



## Ensure 100% pass result at Gurukul School: DC

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector S Nagalakshmi has asked the school teachers to ensure a 100 per cent pass percentage of the students studying at the Gurukul School.

Collector Nagalakshmi surprisedly inspected social welfare boys at Gurukul School at Tadikonda on Tuesday. She inspected the school surroundings, classrooms, kitchen and dining hall and suitable suggestions were made.

The breakfast and lunch provided to the students should be tasty and according to the menu, she ordered the teachers. She also visited the classrooms and asked the teachers about the education provided to them. The Collector interacted with the

students of 10th class time and she tested the ability of the students to read the English textbook.

The Collector advised the teachers to make the students read the lesson in the book and only then the students can give a good performance. If the students face difficulties in reading the textbook, how can they understand the text and face the exams, she asked the teachers and suggested that teachers should pay special attention to raise the standard of students. The Collector also tests the fifth-class students on their ability in mathematics.

She asked the teachers to find out which subjects the students were lagging and provide them with a special training program. She advised the teachers

and school staff that oil balls and anti-malarial drugs should be used to prevent the growth of larvae in the rainwater stagnated in the premises of the Boys' Gurukul School and to take precautions to prevent the spread of diseases like malaria.

Later, the Collector also inspected the girl's hostel and interacted with the girl students. She inquired about the quality of food being served to them. The students complained to the Collector that the drainage system was getting clogged and the Collector ordered the EOPRD Venkateswarlu to take steps to ensure that drainage would not be clogged. Deputy Collector Ganga Raju and DRO P Srikar were among those who accompanied the Collector.

## Register FIRs in SC/ST Atrocity cases promptly, officials told



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector C Nagarani has directed the officials concerned to act tough against the accused in SC/ST Atrocities cases and register the FIR at the earliest.

The District Vigilance and Monitoring Committee meeting was held here on Tuesday and presided over by the District Collector. She reviewed the progress on the SC/ST atrocities cases and steps to be taken to check atrocities against the SC and STs. The Collector told the officials concerned that the cases related to the SC and ST atrocities should be settled immediately and registra-

tion of FIR at the earliest.

Collector Nagarani said that if anyone deliberately files false cases, they should be investigated and action should be taken against them and directed the officials concerned to hold the Divisional Vigilance Monitoring Committees meeting four times a year, one in every quarter.

The decisions and suggestions made at the division level should be brought to the attention of the district-level meeting, she said, adding that the revenue and police officials should take due care in registering the FIR, file the charges within the stipulated period and provide speedy justice to the victims.

MLA K Raghurama Krishnam Raju advised to investigate thoroughly before registering FIR on the SC/ST Atrocities cases. The officials concerned first of all should confirm whether the complainant belongs to the SC or ST. MLA Pulaparthi Anjaneyulu, MLC Vanka Ravindranath, committee member J Satya Sudhama, Ponnamma Balakrishna and Tenneti Jagajwan Rao also spoke.

Joint Collector CV Pravin Aditya, DRO J Uday Bhaskar Rao, Additional SP V Bhima Rao, RDO K Srinivasa Raju and a host of officials were among those who attended the meeting.



## Seven red sanders logs seized; one smuggler arrested

PNS ■ KADAPA

The flying squad of the Forest department seized seven red sanders logs and arrested one smuggler at Nagasanipalle village in Khajipet mandal.

Divisional Forest Officer Guru Prabhakar told the media that on a tip-off, a flying squad team led by Forest

Range Officer Naiem Ali and section officer Nagaraju conducted a combing in the forest area.

They spotted a red sander smuggler Perugu Kondaiah preparing red sander logs to be transported. The flying squad seized 7 red sanders logs, weighing 148 kg worth Rs 50,000 and arrested the accused.

## Boy electrocuted



PNS ■ ELURU

An 11-year-old boy was electrocuted when he came in contact with a live electric wire at Kademma sluice in old Polavaram village on Tuesday.

Police said that the deceased Koveti Prasad (11) was studying sixth class at a government high school. While playing with his friends, he held a hanging wire through which electricity was passing. He was electrocuted and died instantaneously.

The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH in Polavaram for post-mortem. Electricity AE Konda Satyanarayana told the media that the boy was electrocuted since he was in the water. He said that he would ensure that compensation was paid to the bereaved family.

## Horticulture Dept to provide 143 oil palms per hectare free of cost

Rs.5,200 will be given as fertiliser subsidy for four years: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji has announced that the Horticulture Department will provide 143 oil palms per hectare free of cost to the interested farmers. Besides, financial support of Rs.5,200 per year will be given for four years as fertiliser subsidy. As per the directions from the State government, the district administration is taking steps to extend oil palm cultivation, he said.

Collector Balaji held a review meeting on the cultivation of oil palm and drip irrigation scheme with the Horticulture and Micro Irrigation Department officials at the collectorate in Machilipatnam on Tuesday.

Krishna District Horticulture Officer J Jyothi said that oil palms are being cultivated in Gannavaram, Bapulapadu, and Unguturu

mandals. The crop has been cultivated in Avanigadda, Challapalli, and Mopidevi mandals since last year. To encourage farmers, the government is implementing many schemes, she explained.

Later, Collector Balaji said that if farmers patiently cultivate oil palms for four years, from the fifth year onwards they will yield results. They will get good income, he said. The district administration will convene a meeting with Patanjali and Vehan Company representatives soon, he added.

Awareness meetings will be conducted in Avanigadda and Panarru mandals in a phased manner with village and mandal-level officers. After that, the Drip Irrigation Department will provide subsidy schemes to the farmers, he added.

APMIP Project Director Vijaya Lakshmi and others were present.

## Mystery shrouds death of schoolgirl

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Close on the heels of the horrendous rape-cum-murder of a nine-year-old girl in Nandyala district and the rape of a six-month-old infant in the Vizainagram district, yet another 13-year-old minor girl was found dead under suspicious circumstances in the house of a gas delivery boy in Chebrole village.

Police said that the victim Sailaja (13) was studying 8th Class. On Monday afternoon, she left the school telling the teacher that she was not feeling well. But she did not go home. Her brother, who is also studying at the same school, went to the school and he was told that his younger sister left home in the afternoon.

The family members started searching for her. They were told that the girl was seen going toward the house of gas delivery boy Nagaraju. The family members went to the house and saw her footwear outside of the house. They saw the girl in the house but the doors were locked. They broke open the doors and went inside.

They found the girl in an unconscious state. They took the girl to the GGH in



Guntur where she was declared dead. A large number of relatives, friends and villagers rushed to the GGH and staged a dharna demanding the arrest of the accused.

They said that they had seen injuries on her neck. They also demanded action against the teacher of the school for permitting her to leave the school when classes were going on. The villagers said that gas delivery boy Nagaraju was married but deserted his wife and has been living alone in the house for the last three years.

Nagaraju is at large now and a search is launched to apprehend him, police said. The family members of the deceased Sailaja suspected that the gas delivery boy Nagaraju killed Sailaja.

## Substance abuse among kids: Parents, teachers told to be alert

APSCPCR chief proposes 100-day action plans across various departments to tackle the issue

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (APSCPCR), Kesali Apparao, sounded the alarm on the widening gap between parents and children due to pervasive social media influence. Expressing deep concern, he underscored the critical need for parents and teachers to actively monitor children's activities to curb potential risks.

The Chairman outlined a robust strategy aimed at combating the rising threat of drug and substance abuse among minors. Calling for urgent action, he proposed the formulation of 100-day action plans across various departments to tackle the issue head-on. These plans, rooted in district-level insights and recommendations, will undergo rigorous review every three months to ensure their efficacy, with necessary adjustments coordinated closely with governmental bodies.

Apparao underscored the importance of widespread community engagement, advo-



ating for discussions at every level—from local panchayats to national forums. He proposed integrating awareness sessions into meetings facilitated by DRDA and MEPMA, stressing the imperative of educating communities about the perils of substance abuse through targeted campaigns and extensive public messaging via hoardings.

Gondur Sitaram, a member of APSCPCR, highlighted the correlation between school dropouts and delinquent behavior, urging heightened vigilance through regular parent committee meetings and increased scrutiny of absentee students.

He emphasised the critical role of monitoring environments in hostels to prevent illicit activities, particularly the clandestine sale of substances like alcohol and marijuana, often disguised as charitable solicitation in urban areas.

The gathering, attended by key district officials including In-Charge DRO Sumabala, Child Welfare Committee Chairperson Himabindu, and representatives from ICDS, DRDA, MEPMA, and Education Department, underscored a unified commitment to safeguarding children from the scourge of substance abuse.

## Asaduddin asks BRS to clarify on alliance with BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on Tuesday asked the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) to clarify whether it will forge an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

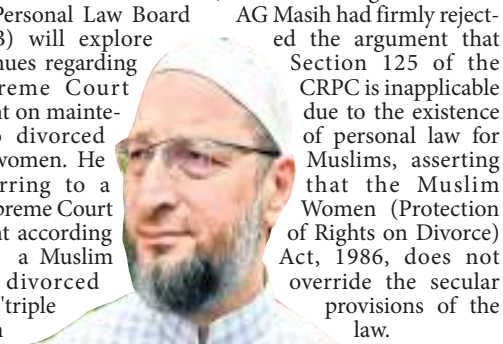
Referring to media reports, Owaisi asked whether the BRS will be merged with the BJP. "In 2009-10, the AIMIM wrote to the Pranab Mukharjee Committee stating, there was injustice meted out to the Telangana region, it is underdeveloped. The party further said that if Telangana is created, the BJP will gain strength here. Now that the State has been formed here are news reports on the alliance between

BRS and the BJP. Former BRS MP Vinod Kumar has said that everything is on the table and anything can happen. I don't know which party will benefit from the alliance however the prediction made in 2009 seems to be coming true."

The AIMIM president further said that the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) will explore legal avenues regarding the Supreme Court judgement on maintenance to divorced Muslim women. He was referring to a recent Supreme Court judgement according to which a Muslim woman, divorced through "triple talaq," can

seek maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC). The court stated that this "religion-neutral" provision applies to all married women, regardless of their personal law.

A Bench consisting of Justices BV Nagarathna and AG Masih had firmly rejected the argument that Section 125 of the CRPC is inapplicable due to the existence of personal law for Muslims, asserting that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, does not override the secular provisions of the law.



## Expedite land acquisition for road and railway projects, officials told

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector A Thameem Ansariya has directed the officials concerned to expedite the land acquisition process for the road and railway projects.

The Collector, flanked by Joint Collector R Gopala Krishna, held a meeting with revenue, SDC, Forest, ITDA and survey and land records officials here on Tuesday and reviewed the process of land

acquisition for the national highway and railway projects works and the progress. She also reviewed the 22A deletions, issuance of CCRC cards, steps taken to resolve Mee Kosam's grievances, Secretariat services, pending ROFR claims and court cases.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the Revenue Divisional Officers to pay special attention to completing the land acquisition process undertaken in connection with



various national highways and railway projects in the district. Steps should be taken to resolve the pending court cases on land acquisition process, she told them.

The Collector said that the revenue authorities should pay special attention to the applications received from the people on the land issues like mutation, re-survey and registration of names in web land. The applicants concerned should be informed of the specific reasons

for not resolving their grievances.

Collector Thameem Ansariya made it clear that no application should be rejected without a specific reason, adding that the Revenue Divisional Officers should supervise how the applications received from the public regarding revenue matters should be resolved at the mandal level.

She told the officials to complete the 22 A Deletion process by the prescribed period. The

Collector directed the officials to carry out the mutation process in drive mode where the land acquisition process has been completed. She said that the revenue, forest and ITDA officers should work in coordination to complete the ROFR claim verification process. Sub-Collector Rahul Meena, DRO Vigneshwara Rao, RDO Subba Reddy, DFO Srinivasulu and survey and land record AD Kishore were among those who attended the meeting.

INDIA CORNER

UGC launches project to develop 22,000 books in Indian languages

The Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission (UGC) launched a project on Tuesday to develop 22,000 books in Indian languages in the next five years. The project, titled ASMITA (Augmenting Study Materials in Indian Languages through Translation and Academic Writing), was launched by Sanjay Murthy, Secretary, Higher Education, and it will be a collaborative effort of the UGC and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, a high-powered committee under the ministry, to promote Indian languages in education. "This project aims to create a robust ecosystem for translation and original book writing in Indian languages across various disciplines within higher education. The goal is to produce 1,000 books in 22 languages within five years, resulting in 22,000 books in Bharatiya bhasha," UGC Chairman Jagadeesh Kumar said. Thirteen nodal universities have been identified to lead this project, along with member universities from various regions.



Goa govt working on heritage policy for monuments: Minister

Goa Archaeology Minister Subhash Phal Desai has said his department has started framing a heritage policy for the state with various objectives, including necessary steps to protect monuments from fire. To a question from independent MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, Phal Desai in a written reply in the Goa assembly on Monday said his department was yet to take up an audit of all the protected monuments/sites in the coastal state. "The department has initiated framing of a heritage policy for Goa," he said. The archaeology department undertakes necessary repairs and restoration of protected monuments wherever necessary, he said. "As part of the heritage policy, the state government intends to undertake necessary steps to protect monuments from fire," the minister said. Responding to another question, Phal Desai said no study has been carried out over fire incidents at historical monuments in Goa.



ED questions Jaffer Sadiq's wife in drugs-linked money-laundering case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday questioned the wife of expelled DMK functionary Jaffer Sadiq as part of a narcotics-linked money-laundering investigation, official sources said. Amina was interrogated at the agency's zonal office here and it is understood that her statement was recorded by the investigating officer of the case under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said. The session ended early as she sought an exemption due to personal issues. She may be summoned again, the sources said. A court here on Tuesday allowed the ED to take Sadiq (36) into its custody for three days in connection with the case. Sadiq was arrested by the federal agency on June 26 from Delhi's Tihar Jail, where he was lodged in judicial custody in a case registered by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).



Jaishankar reaffirms India's continued support to Mauritius

PNS ■ PORT LOUIS

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday reaffirmed India's "consistent and continued" support to Mauritius in its quest for progress as he held wide-ranging talks with the country's leadership to cement the bilateral ties which are critical for the future of the Indian Ocean region.



Jaishankar is here for a two-day visit for "productive engagements" during which he also reaffirmed India's support to Mauritius on the issue of its territory usurped by the UK, the Chagos Archipelago. The gesture was swiftly appreciated by the island nation. After Jaishankar's re-appointment in the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government last month, this visit to the Indian Ocean island nation marks

one of his first bilateral engagements and described as a "testimony of the enduring relationship between India and Mauritius" by the host. Jaishankar said his visit to Mauritius - what he termed as 'this beautiful country' - underscores the strength and depth of the bilateral ties. "It is also an opportunity to underline India's unwavering commitment to its special and

enduring partnership with Mauritius," he said at an event attended by Mauritius Prime Minister Pravin Jugnauth. "India's ties with Mauritius have blossomed into a robust and multifaceted partnership. The bilateral relation with Mauritius serves as a role model for India's successful development collaboration abroad," Jaishankar said. "India remains committed to strengthening this critical partnership that is so important for the future of the Indian Ocean region," he said, amidst the Chinese navy's increasing forays into the region. During the meeting, Jaishankar and PM Jugnauth discussed "various aspects of bilateral ties, including the Development Partnership, Defence and Maritime Corporation, economic and trade ties, and people-to-people linkages," he said. "I reiterated India's consistent and continued support to Mauritius in its quest for progress and prosperity," he said. Jugnauth posted on X after the meeting and the event: "I am delighted to welcome the Indian Minister of External Affairs @DrSJaishankar. His visit is a testimony of the enduring relationship between India and Mauritius."

Captain among 4 Army personnel killed in Doda encounter

PNS ■ JAMMU

Four Army personnel, including a captain, were killed in a fierce gunfight with heavily armed terrorists of Pakistan-based banned outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in Doda district, the third major terror incident in Jammu region in three weeks. The attack on Monday night, which came a week after terrorists ambushed an Army patrol vehicle in Kathua district killing five soldiers and injuring as many, has sparked widespread condemnation and protests in Jammu and other regions. Captain Brijesh Thapa from Darjeeling, Naik Dokkari Rajesh from Andhra Pradesh, and Sepoys Bijendra and Ajay Kumar Singh from Rajasthan suffered fatal injuries in the



gunfight in the Desa forest area, where troops from the Rashtriya Rifles and Jammu and Kashmir Police had launched a cordon-and-search operation. Following the encounter, security forces, including Rashtriya Rifles and Special Operations Group of Jammu and Kashmir Police, swiftly launched an extensive operation in the Desa forest belt to flush out terrorists. Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh said he is "deeply saddened" by the loss of lives and asserted that the security forces are committed to eliminating the scourge of terrorism in the region. Chief of Army Staff Gen Upendra Dwivedi also briefed Singh on the anti-terror operation in Doda district. In a statement, the Army said it has been conducting a series of joint and coordinated operations with Jammu and Kashmir Police to eliminate

Intense search for terrorists underway

four formations of northern command are committed to eliminating the scourge of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir for which the relentless operations will continue," the Army said. The opposition parties, meanwhile, attacked the Centre, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi saying such horrific incidents one after the other are extremely worrying and the Army soldiers and their families are bearing the brunt of "BJP's wrong policies". The Kashmir Tigers, a JeM shadow group, has claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

Cong gave OBC quota to Muslims in Karnataka, BJP won't allow it in Haryana: Shah

PNS ■ MAHENDRAGARH (HARYANA)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday accused the Congress of being anti-backward classes and said if the party comes to power in Haryana, it will snatch the reservation for them and give it to Muslims. Addressing a 'Backward Classes Samman Sammelan' here, Shah referred to the Kaka Kalelkar Commission formed in the 1950s to provide reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and said the Congress did not implement its recommendations for years. "In 1980, (the then prime minister) Indira Gandhi put the Mandal Commission in cold storage. In 1990, when it was accepted, Rajiv Gandhi gave a two-and-a-half-hour speech and opposed OBC reservation," the Union minister said. "In Karnataka, the Congress snatched reservation for backward classes and gave it to Muslims. The same will happen here if they come (to power) here," Shah said. "I want to assure you that we (BJP) will not allow Muslim reservation in Haryana. We will protect the rights of back-

ward classes," he said. He asserted that the BJP would form the government in Haryana with a full majority and urged backward classes to vote for the party in the assembly polls. The Haryana Assembly elections are scheduled to be held later this year. When Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014, he had said that his government is of Dalits, the poor and backward classes, said Shah. He said 27 Union ministers are from backward classes including two from Haryana. Shah also said the Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini-led Haryana government recently took some decisions for backward classes, including increasing the annual income limit for the creamy layer of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 8 lakh. Earlier in panchayats, Shah said, there was 8 per cent reservation for backward classes in Group A posts. Now, in addition to this, 5 per cent reservation will be provided in Group B posts. In municipal bodies as well, 5 per cent reservation will be introduced while the 8 per cent will remain intact, he said.

3 persons killed, 4 feared dead in landslide in Karnataka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Three persons were killed and four others feared dead after a massive landslide near Shirur village in Karnataka's Uttara Kannada district on Tuesday, officials said. Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said seven persons, including four members of a family, were feared killed in the landslide on National Highway 66. A police officer told PTI: "We have recovered three bodies so far including that of 47-year-old Lakshman Naik and his 36-year-old wife Shanti Naik who were running an eatery on the National Highway 66. Search operations are underway to trace others who are feared dead." The others who are feared dead are Roshan (11), Avantika (6), and Jagannath (55), the Minister's office said in a statement. Police sources said parts of a hill collapsed on the roadside eatery. Gowda told the Legislative Assembly that drivers of three gas tankers had stopped by at the eatery for a tea break when mud and rocks plunged down the hill. The landslide, triggered by incessant rains, also swept away two of the three tankers into the Gangavali river flowing on other side of the road.

TN all-party meet decides to knock on SC's doors if needed

PNS ■ CHENNAI

A meeting of the legislative party leaders in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Tuesday decided to approach the Supreme Court, if necessary, to get Cauvery water for the state from Karnataka and Chief Minister M K Stalin vowed to take all necessary steps and protect the interests of farmers. Addressing an all-party meeting at the Secretariat, Stalin assured that the state government would uphold the rights of farmers of the Cauvery delta region. The government said on July 15 that the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) had directed the release of one TMC ft everyday

CAUVERY WATER

CAUVERY WATER

from July 12, 2024 to July 31, 2024. Karnataka had said that it is ready to release 8,000 cusecs of water and not one TMC ft (11,500 cusecs). The CM deplored that Karnataka does not even release a decreased quantum of water stipulated by CWRC. He said since the Karnataka government did not release Cauvery water last year in compliance with a verdict of the Supreme Court, farmers were severely affected. "We secured water only by approaching the Supreme Court. This year, despite the southwest monsoon being favourable, the Karnataka government behaving in this way cannot be accepted." Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan, DMK's P

Wilson (Rajya Sabha MP and senior advocate), R S Bharathi (party organisation secretary), AIADMK's SP Velumani and OS Manian, (both former ministers) took part. Furthermore, the chief minister read out the resolutions, which he said are based on unanimous decisions, "on the basis of views expressed in this meeting." A resolution adopted at the meeting strongly condemned the Karnataka government for refusing to release water as per the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's directive of one TMC ft every day. Such refusal is tantamount to disrespecting the Supreme Court judgment and Cauvery Tribunal's Final Award.

Accelerate efforts to immunize unvaccinated children: WHO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization on Tuesday called on countries in the South-East Asia Region to further strengthen efforts at all levels to identify and immunize unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children. As per the latest global data, in 2023, nearly 3.4 million children in the region did not get all the vaccines offered under the childhood immunization programme. Around 2.7 million among them did not get any vaccines, leaving them vulnerable to life-threatening diseases, WHO said in a statement. "The increasing numbers of unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children calls for urgent and accelerated action. We need to identify where and why these children are missed and prioritize reaching them at the earliest. No child should fall sick or die of any vaccine-

preventable disease when safe and effective vaccines exist to protect them against these deadly diseases," said Saima Wazed, Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia. The region is off track to achieve the 2030 immunization agenda and the regional vaccine action plan to achieve over 90 per cent coverage with three doses of diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DTP3) vaccines in all countries, she said. The WHO and UNICEF joint immunization data for 2023 shows DTP1 coverage in the region at 92 per cent, below the pre-pandemic 94 per cent in 2019 and DTP3 coverage, an indicator of full immunization, at 90 per cent, less than pre-pandemic 91 per cent in 2019. Children receiving the first dose of measles vaccine, typically at 9 or 12 months, declined to 91 per cent in 2023 from 94 per cent in 2019.

COVID-19 may enhance symptoms of diabetes in kids

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Contracting COVID-19 may accelerate the onset of visible symptoms of type 1 diabetes in children, an autoimmune condition, according to a study published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). Researchers found that children infected with the virus and in the early stages of type 1 diabetes without displaying symptoms, progressed more rapidly to a clinical onset of the autoimmune disorder. Symptoms of type 1 diabetes can include unusual thirst and hunger, along with frequent urination, fatigue and blurred vision. Treatment typically involves insulin therapy,

requiring regular injections through the day. In an autoimmune disorder, the body's immune system attacks the healthy cells and organs, instead of protecting it against foreign disease-causing agents. Previous studies have found elevated levels of islet autoantibodies in children infected with COVID-19. Produced when insulin-producing cells in the pancreas are damaged, these autoantibodies from one's blood samples can help in diagnosing type 1 diabetes. In this study, the researchers, including those from the Institute of Diabetes Research, Helmholtz Munich, Germany, found that children already having islet autoantibodies



(early stages of type 1 diabetes) developed diagnosable symptoms of the condition at a faster rate after a COVID-19 infection, compared to those not infected.

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 until 2023, children participating in the FrIDA study (for type 1 diabetes) were tested for antibodies produced in

response to COVID-19, along with islet autoantibodies. The researchers thus had "valuable data" on the association between the SARS-CoV-2 virus and type 1 diabetes.

'If my son has committed wrongs, let him be hanged'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Senior JD(S) MLA H D Revanna on Tuesday told the Karnataka Legislative Assembly that his son and former MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexually abusing several women, should be hanged if he has committed wrongs. The emotional former minister also targeted the Director-General of Police, Alok Mohan, calling him "unfit to be a top cop." "If my son has committed wrongs, let him be hanged. I won't say no," Revanna said.

He said, "I have not come here to defend things or to have a discussion. I have been a lawmaker for 25 years. I have spent 40 years in political life. Against me, some woman is brought to the Director-General's office and the DG gets the complaint filed. He is 'nalayak' to be the DG. He is unfit to be DG... This is a shameful government." Members from the ruling Congress side took strong objection to this. Even Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was heard suggesting that Deputy Speaker Ramappa Lamani, who

was in the chair, expunge the comments. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said, "He (Revanna) is making allegations against the officials. Let him give notice, and then let him be given a chance for discussion if injustice has happened to him." Revanna made his intervention after Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka drew a comparison between the manner in which Special Investigation Teams (SIT) are probing the Hassan sexual abuse case.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Cycle of terror

### Terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir continue unabated, resulting in a heavy toll on lives

In yet another tragic incident four security personnel lost their lives in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), underscoring the persistent instability in the region. Four Indian Army soldiers, including a Major, were killed in action during an encounter with terrorists in Doda district. This incident highlights the ongoing challenges faced by security forces and raises concerns about the broader implications for peace and security in the area. Despite tall claims to restore order, the frequency and intensity of attacks remain alarming. The recent fatalities among security personnel are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of violence that has plagued Jammu and Kashmir in recent times. The shift of terror incidents and targeted killings to Jammu, which had been peaceful for two decades, represents a significant and concerning development. Since 2021, following the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu has seen a troubling rise in terror attacks and targeted killings, leading to an alarming escalation in violence that has destabilized the region.



The counter-terrorism strategies that proved effective in Kashmir may not be suitable for Jammu's unique geopolitical and social landscape. Although past strategic lessons can provide some guidance, the new wave of terror in Jammu requires a new counter-terrorism approach. A notable change is the decline in stone-pelting and social unrest in Kashmir; however, the militancy and terrorist groups that remained active have now relocated to the Jammu region. These groups often receive support from across the border, complicating the security landscape. Despite significant military operations aimed at curbing militancy, the resilience of these groups remains a significant hurdle. The socio-political environment in Jammu and Kashmir also plays a crucial role in perpetuating violence. Historical grievances, political disenfranchisement, and socio-economic challenges contribute to a fertile ground for militancy. Many local youths, feeling marginalised, are drawn into the cycle of violence, further complicating the security situation. Addressing these underlying issues is vital for any long-term solution to the conflict. The loss of security personnel is not just a statistic; it represents the human cost of the ongoing conflict. Each casualty not only affects the families of the deceased but also has a profound impact on the morale of security forces operating in the region. The high casualty rate raises questions about the effectiveness of current strategies and the need for a re-evaluation of approaches to counter-terrorism and internal security. Following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, there was a glimmer of hope, but that now appears to be diminishing. Jammu and Kashmir seems to be slipping back into its previous cycle of violence and persecution. To address the unabated violence in Jammu and Kashmir, a multi-faceted approach is essential. This includes not only robust security measures but also concerted efforts towards political dialogue and community engagement.

The counter-terrorism strategies that proved effective in Kashmir may not be suitable for Jammu's unique geopolitical and social landscape. Although past strategic lessons can provide some guidance, the new wave of terror in Jammu requires a new counter-terrorism approach. A notable change is the decline in stone-pelting and social unrest in Kashmir; however, the militancy and terrorist groups that remained active have now relocated to the Jammu region. These groups often receive support from across the border, complicating the security landscape. Despite significant military operations aimed at curbing militancy, the resilience of these groups remains a significant hurdle. The socio-political environment in Jammu and Kashmir also plays a crucial role in perpetuating violence. Historical grievances, political disenfranchisement, and socio-economic challenges contribute to a fertile ground for militancy. Many local youths, feeling marginalised, are drawn into the cycle of violence, further complicating the security situation. Addressing these underlying issues is vital for any long-term solution to the conflict. The loss of security personnel is not just a statistic; it represents the human cost of the ongoing conflict. Each casualty not only affects the families of the deceased but also has a profound impact on the morale of security forces operating in the region. The high casualty rate raises questions about the effectiveness of current strategies and the need for a re-evaluation of approaches to counter-terrorism and internal security. Following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, there was a glimmer of hope, but that now appears to be diminishing. Jammu and Kashmir seems to be slipping back into its previous cycle of violence and persecution. To address the unabated violence in Jammu and Kashmir, a multi-faceted approach is essential. This includes not only robust security measures but also concerted efforts towards political dialogue and community engagement.

### PICTALK



A vendor sells Capsicum at Azadpur Mandi, in New Delhi

## Cultivating civic sense: The path to a better society

A lack of civic sense results in numerous societal issues, but it can be instilled through awareness and the enforcement of stringent punitive measures

Citizens are one of the four essential elements that define a country, and a responsible citizenry is undoubtedly an asset to any nation. Today, our country boasts state-of-the-art facilities, with concerted efforts being made to upgrade infrastructure, services, logistics, and public transport. Additionally, inclusive and integrated policies are being formulated, and comprehensive citizen-centric actions are being implemented. While the government's efforts are commendable, there is also a need for citizens to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining public goods and ensuring resources are accessible to all, especially the marginalised. Civic sense is the act of considering others in society and having a sense of responsibility towards public goods. It can be described as "a set of perceptions and attitudes that guides an individual's independent actions or actions within a group for the benefit of many and harm towards none." Conversely, a lack of civic



sense signifies disregard for fellow beings, depriving others of a fair chance of accessing what is due to them. Civic sense involves inculcated socially and ethically good behavior, conduct, and approach. Patriotism is deeply rooted among Indians, and we have a strong affinity for our civilizational values and ethos. However many of us are not adept at it, and civic rules are often flouted in some way or another. Examples of this lack of civic sense include vandalism, mishandling public property, disobeying laws, infringing traffic rules, evading taxes, prejudice, intolerance, indiscipline, sectarianism, and insensitivity towards the beliefs and prac-

tices of other social and religious groups. These behaviors create law and order problems and are rooted in disregard for social norms and appropriate behavior. Despite significant improvements in literacy rates in our country over the past few decades, people often remain casual regarding their societal responsibilities. Examples of this include dumping household waste on streets; destroying public property and so on. Such uncivil behavior is rampant and alarming, detrimentally impacting the collective well-being of society. It not only translates into social conflicts but also triggers a vicious cycle, where such behavior, often being an easier way out, is quickly emulated by many, making the problem difficult to address. India witnessed 461,312 road accidents in 2022, resulting in the tragic loss of 168,491 lives. Many of these accidents could have been avoided had people not flouted traffic rules. Similarly, problems arising from adulteration, corruption, and exploitation can be mitigated through a mindful

approach that prioritizes common interest over self-interest. Civic sense is crucial for quality of life and plays an important role in building the reputation of the country. Inculcating civic virtues is not a choice but is essential for addressing both perennial and new problems. Education plays a significant role in civilising people, but the fact that even well-educated individuals living in metropolitan cities often behave in an unruly and uncivilised manner makes it imperative that the desire to perform constructive and positive roles should come "from within." Elders need to set good examples for the young to emulate. Spreading awareness, rewarding good practices, and enforcing stringent punitive actions against law violations can be effective strategies for inculcating civic sense among the people.

(The writer is Assistant Professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi; views are personal)



GURDEEP KAUR

## Bypoll results indicate a shifting voter preference

### This outcome raises questions about the stability of the Govt, as the BJP grapples with internal and external pressures to maintain its coalition



KALYANI SHANKAR

The recent results of by-elections for 13 seats in various states are essential for understanding what people think of the major political parties. One month after the 2024 elections, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi won a third term, the INDIA bloc's significant victory in securing ten of the 13 seats has shifted the country's politics. This positive result for the INDIA bloc could weaken the ruling coalition's power. The BJP won 240 seats but fell short of the 272-majority mark in the recent Lok Sabha elections. As a result, the party had to seek the support of NDA allies, which could influence its policy decisions and lead to compromises to maintain the coalition. This situation raises concerns about the government's stability. A boost to the Opposition could create unpredictability within the ruling coalition. Despite securing 240 seats in last month's Lok Sabha polls, the BJP fell short of the 272-majority mark. It had to seek the help of the NDA allies. This reliance could sway the BJP's policy decisions. The BJP may have to compromise on specific issues to maintain the coalition. There is also a shadow of uncertainty over the government's stability. A substantial boost to the Opposition can shift the balance of power and create a sense of unease and unpredictability in the ruling coalition. The Election Commission conducts the by-polls when a legislative seat becomes vacant. There could be many reasons for a vacant seat. It could be death, resignation, disqualification, or expulsion of a sitting member. Elections are held to fill empty seats when a member of Parliament resigns or dies. Only voters from the area can vote, and there is no party vote. On Wednesday, by-elections were held for 13 assembly seats in Punjab (1), Himachal Pradesh (3), Uttarakhand (2), West Bengal (4), Madhya Pradesh (1), Bihar (1), and Tamil Nadu (1). The Congress,



TMC, AAP, and DMK are some of the parties that put forward candidates in the by-elections to test their strength. The INDIA bloc's win significantly boosted the Opposition. They have been a crucial test for the INDIA bloc as it faced the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the first electoral battle after the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. The regional chieftains in the Opposition performed exceptionally well. Trinamool Congress, a key player in the INDIA bloc, secured all four seats in Bengal, a significant victory. At the same time, the surging Congress won two seats each in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, further strengthening its position in these states. The DMK won one seat, and AAP captured Jalandhar West. These diverse outcomes hint at potential shifts in power dynamics, adding a layer of uncertainty to the current political scenario. Also, the BJP securing only two seats and an independent candidate winning in Bihar add a layer of complexity. Typically, the party in power wins the by-election seat. The TMC, DMK,



THERE IS ALSO A SHADOW OF UNCERTAINTY OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S STABILITY. A SUBSTANTIAL BOOST TO THE OPPOSITION CAN SHIFT THE BALANCE OF POWER AND CREATE A SENSE OF UNEASE AND UNPREDICTABILITY IN THE RULING COALITION.

Congress, and Aam Admi Party controlled their states. For the TMC, the results were a shot in the arm just a month after it had bagged 29 parliamentary seats, up from 22 in 2019. In Uttarakhand and Bihar, things were different. The candidates from the ruling parties - BJP and JD(U) - lost. Congress won two out of the three by-elections in Himachal. After the results, the party has 40 members again in the 68-member house. This will bring stability to our government. Bye-elections are a crucial test for political parties and gauge public sentiment and assess their support base. They often use by-elections to test campaign strategies, influencing future elections. If the ruling party wins seats in the by-election, it could increase its overall number of seats and have more influence on the government's stability and decision-making. The BJP still needs to improve its performance despite investigating the reasons for its low number of seats in the Lok Sabha elections. This raises questions and potential strains within the party. There are speculations about

a possible strain between the RSS and the BJP, which could negatively affect the RSS's support for the party, adding to tension and uncertainty in the ruling coalition. The strong performance of the INDIA bloc shows that power dynamics may be shifting. Despite their differences, this success is because the opposition parties continued to work together. Some analysts think that both factors led to their success. The Opposition's strong showing could weaken the ruling coalition's power and strengthen the Opposition's position. The future is difficult to predict at this stage. Winning and losing are part of the game in a democracy. The impact of these events will be more precise in the upcoming assembly polls in Maharashtra and Haryana later this year. The INDIA bloc's strong showing in the by-elections could strengthen the Opposition's position in these forthcoming assembly polls. They will help determine whether the Opposition gains strength or weakens. (The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### OPPOSITION GAINING GROUND

Madam — The recent state assembly bypolls held on July 10 may not have been critical for the survival of state governments in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. However, the results were highly anticipated as a potential indicator of shifting political winds, especially after the national elections where the BJP saw a reduced tally and the Congress-led INDIA bloc significantly increased its presence in the Lok Sabha. In these state assembly by-elections, the Congress and its allies achieved significant victories, winning 10 out of 13 seats. The ruling BJP secured only two seats, with an independent candidate winning in Bihar. While these results do not necessarily signal a nationwide trend, the BJP's below-par performance should be a concern for the central ruling party. The Congress and its partners in the INDIA bloc celebrated their success. Congress won two seats each in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, the TMC secured all four seats in West Bengal, AAP won in Jalandhar West, and DMK triumphed in Vikravandi, Tamil Nadu. Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi claimed these results reflect a changing political climate, suggesting the BJP's influence is waning. BJP leaders, however, dismissed these claims, pointing out that the ruling party did not previously hold the 13 contested seats. Bishal kumar Saha | Murshidabad

### MANDELA'S LEGACY

Madam — Kudos to Rajdeep Pathak for the article titled "Lessons in forgiveness from Mandela's life" (July 15). On 10th April 1993, the South African Communist leader Chris Hani was murdered by a far-right White. When the newly independent Blacks were seething in anger and were getting ready to massacre the Whites in retaliation, it took Mandela to utter just two firm

### AP and Telangana resolve issues



It is heartening that the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have, putting aside their political affiliations, met each other recently to amicably resolve long standing issues that have arisen after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. AP Chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu is taking the initiative. Both the sides have agreed upon setting up high-level chief secretarial and ministerial dispute resolution committees that will address grievances. Contentious issues like water shar-

ing and power distribution are not easy to sort out but it is heartening that Naidu and Reddy have made a start. Both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are claiming power payment "dues" from either side while Telangana appears keen to get more water allocation. Division of assets and liabilities running into a whopping 1.42 lakh crores, some that have been mentioned in the AP Reorganisation Act and a few that have not been stated, figured prominently in the chief ministers' meeting. Telangana's access to the long coastal corridor of AP may be an important issue. It's no wonder that allocation of some important landmark buildings of Hyderabad, that has exclusively become the capital of Telangana from June 2, have already occupied the attention of both chief ministers. Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

### ALCARAZ TRIUMPHS AGAIN

Madam — Winning is a habit, and Alcaraz has mastered the art, clinching the Wimbledon men's singles title for the second time against all odds. Spectators at the Centre Court were treated to vintage tennis in a packed stadium. Alcaraz set the ball rolling, winning the first two sets rather comfortably. The final lasted for 147 minutes, with the defending champion establishing a 5-4 lead and serving for the championship point. However, he committed a couple of double faults, and the set went to a tie-break. The number three seed secured his second Wimbledon title and fourth Grand Slam win with a straight-set victory. Djokovic could not recover from the fierce serve-and-volley game of the Spaniard. Alcaraz played calculated tennis on his fourth match point, ultimately winning the tie-break, set, match, and Championship. C K Subramaniam | Mumbai

words "NO REVENGE" to promptly bring back the situation under control. Even though Mandela was yet to become the President of the country, he led the nation in what a sane way guiding the society towards light by shedding all sorts of jingoism. Immediately after his release from prison Mandela said "I am not the only one who did not want revenge. Almost all my colleagues in prison did not want revenge, because there is no time to do anything else except to try and save your people". Yes, "Save your people" needs to be the only priority of a true leader, not "call of revenge". And Mandela indeed did walk the talk when Chris Hani got murdered rendering him to a statesman and torch-bearer of the society guiding all on the path of peace. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr had stated - "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that". "We must learn to live together as brothers or we will perish together as fools". Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

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Strive for achieving success that is based on contentment, humility, peace and respect



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Most of us want to be successful, but not everyone knows what success looks like. The concept of "success" can be a real subject of contention because everyone has their definition of success. Success has different meanings to different people, however, to define it in simple words, it can be said that success is very largely a matter of adjusting one's self to the ever-varying and changing environments of life, in a spirit of harmony and poise. So, is it simply the completion of the next task, another job well done, a promise kept, an exam passed, a medal won or a mountain climbed? Whatever we believe success to be, there is no doubt that it will have a profound influence on our lives.

The great philosopher Lao Tzu said - "When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you." However, what we see today in the so-called modern society is something way too different. If we were to follow the trends of the current world, then success would be measured by acquisition i.e. the more you have the more successful you are. Nowadays even our education systems are geared to producing people whose character and skills are shaped and developed to make more. Similarly, economic growth is the yardstick for national success based on the production and selling of more. And amidst all this, we continue to avoid the connection between the philosophy of more and the unprecedented levels of unhappiness, abuse and breakdown of human relationships worldwide.

Some of us say that because we have more telephones there is more communication between more people in more countries every day than at any other time in history. But communication of what? Electronic symbols, packets of data, cold information? This is far from human communication. We seldom nourish each other at the level of mind and spirit over a telephone. Do we? Off lately we have developed more intimate relationships with our techno-toys than we do with each other. So what exactly does it mean to be successful? At what level, in what context and by whose standards? If we were to live in this question for long enough it would challenge us at the deepest level. It would invite us to



review and probably revise our core values. But we don't want that challenge because it means we might have to change how we think and what we do. So we live instead in avoidance and denial while going with the flow of traditional belief, and then we wonder why both contentment and fulfillment are so elusive. Just imagine for a moment that every school student in the world spent one year discussing and debating the question, "What is success?" inside out, and upside down. What would our children tell us? Would we have the patience and the faith to listen and to learn from them?

Instead of imposing our inherited beliefs, definitions and conditions, would we have the humility to facilitate their discussion and allow them to tell us? Or do we intuitively know they would be wiser than us and therefore pull the carpet from under our comfortable feet? Would we be threatened if their wisdom defined success as a simpler, more considerate, caring, sharing, spiritual state of being and giving, and not a material state of acquisition, accumulation and possession? Would success be less and not more for them? If we were to give ourselves the time to explore this question, we would likely arrive at the fairly obvious insight that success is not a material thing, it is not something that can be possessed, it is a state of being. We might call it contentment, or happiness, or even peace because these are the deepest and most meaningful symptoms of success, but only when they are not dependent on anything outside ourselves. So, let us engage our energies in achieving success that is based on a strong foundation of values like contentment, humility, peace, and respect and inspire the next generation to do so.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications; views are personal)

# Imam Husain dared fighting terrorism



HASAN KHURSHID

The tragic events of Karbala, where Husain and his followers were mercilessly slain, serve as a poignant reminder of the values of justice and unwavering faith in the face of oppression



John Bradshaw once said, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." Can man stand up to these conditions? "Man can but not necessarily with ease", Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad annunciated from the battlefield of Karbala (Iraq), on the fateful day of 10th Muharram, 61 A.H. (October 10, 680 A.D.). The pre-Islamic period in Arabia is known as the "age of ignorance". Scudding away from the noble attributes of human principles, the Arabs were treading the path of retrogression and abhorrence. Suffering from the worst evils and vices, these Arabs known as Bedouins (uncivilised rustics) were highly tentative of wrecking vengeance, group quarrels, and tribal animosities leading to bloody warfare that lasted for generations. In the pre-Islamic period, these Arabian Bedouins used to bury their newly born daughters alive out of ego. They had no sense of equality, humanity, decency and brotherhood. In this crucial moment, the Prophet of Islam Hazrat Mohammad brought the message of peace, tolerance, humanity, forbearance, liberty, equality, and brotherhood, assisting to weak and securing justice for the persecuted. The Prophet gradually started transforming the heartless brutes to humane and turn towards peaceful life. The most notorious among them were the Bedouin tribals of "Bani-Omayya" (Omayyads). Omayyads did not tolerate the sojourn of humanity and peace. They violently opposed the Prophet's teachings. Omayya's grandson, Abu Sufiyan, son of Herb, unfurled the flag of revolt against Islamic teachings. They started a campaign of persecution on the Prophet, who was forced to migrate from his home in Mecca to Medina. As such, the year of the Prophet's flight from Mecca to Medina is marked as the beginning of the Hijri era of the Islamic calendar. Still, the Prophet Mohammad was not given any respite or relief. Mohammad was compelled to fight battles many a time. In Medina, the



AFTER THE DEATH OF MUAWIYA, HIS SON ACCURSED YAZID ASCENDED TO THE CALIPHATE SEAT OF SYRIA. HE WAS A HARDCORE TERRORIST AND HAD SURPASSED ALL HIS ANCESTORS IN PRACTISING CRUELTY, VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION

Prophet established the system for administering the "rule of law" in the light of Islamic jurisprudence, under the command of his son-in-law Hazrat Ali Murtaza. Notwithstanding the bravery of Ali, Omayyads suffered a thorough collapse. The shrewd Abu Sufiyan played a trick to subscribe to Islam outwardly and the Prophet mercifully granted a quarter to Abu Sufiyan and his men. On the contrary, Mohammad realised his duties as Prophet were preparing his two beloved grandsons, 'Hasan' and 'Husain', sons of Ali Murtaza and Fatima Zehra, as perfect specimens of his attainment and imparted to their young minds all the characteristics of his high morality. After the demise of the Holy Prophet Mohammad, the school of Islamic thought, philosophy, culture and administration was shifted to the 'Caliphate' with temporal and ecclesiastical powers. The first three caliphs were: Abubakar, Umar and Usman. The last caliph Imam Ali Murtaza, was assassinated by the henchmen of the conspirator and hypocrite Muawiya son of Abu Sufiyan while Hazrat Ali Murtaza was prostrating before Allah in the mosque. After Ali's assassination, Muawiya with the might of a sword, usurped the seat of the Caliphate in Syria and declared himself as the self-appointed caliph. Muawiya, the first ruler of the House of Omayyads displaced the democratic Islamic rule by oligarchical and barbaric despotic rule. After the death of Muawiya, his son accursed Yazid ascended to the Caliphate seat of Syria. He was a hardcore terrorist and had surpassed all his ancestors in prac-

tising cruelty, violence and corruption. Yazid was a libertine and sinner to the extent that the barest mention of his objectionable character is taboo in this civilised society. Yazid was the mammon of unrighteousness, whose lust for power prompted him to beat society into the mould he favoured. Yazid's criminal behaviour indicated the extreme occurrence of vulgar, and inhuman innovations in the established Islamic values. On the contrary Imam Husain was recognised throughout the Arab world for his excellence of behaviour, wisdom, compassion and piety. When Yazid occupied the erstwhile seat of the Caliphate, deceitfully usurped by his father Muawiya, Yazid by terrorising the citizens sought their allegiance to accept him as leader of the faithfully. He then demanded allegiance from Hazrat Imam Husain. Yazid was equipped with all the paraphernalia of power but so long, he didn't get the allegiance of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet, he had no religious sanction to claim the Caliphate. He therefore demanded allegiance from Imam Husain to subscribe to him as the leader of the faithful. When Yazid bargained hard for Imam Husain to choose between allegiance and death, Husain straightaway refused his allegiance, saying, "A person of my kind, can not accept the allegiance of a man of his (Yazid's) kind." Husain knew that recognition of Yazid's immorality would permanently disfigure the "true faith" and a "pseudo-religion" would emerge in the guise of Islam. Had he encountered no opposition, Islam was bound to acclimatise to

the paralysing atonality from Yazid's degenerated symphony. Imam Husain was mercilessly assassinated in the desert of Karbala along with 71 family members and companions on the 10th of Muharram, 61 Hijri (October 10, 680 A.D.), after being kept hungry and thirsty for three days. Their heads were severed from the bodies and were mounted on lancers. Among the slain martyrs was Husain's six-month-old infant son, Ali Asghar, the buoyancy of whose innocent blood refloated the sinking ship of Islam. Ali Asghar's moon-like innocent severed head was too mounted on a lancer. Asghar's little body among 71 others was too trampled through the hoofs of office horses of Yazid's cavalry. The tents of Husain's household were torched. Daughters and grandchildren of Prophet Mohammad's extended family and the only surviving, ailing son office Imam Husain, were taken captives and paraded from Karbala to Syria, on bare backs of camels, where they appeared before accursed Yazid, the wild beast in human form. 10th Muharram is universally observed by right-thinking and kind-hearted people irrespective of caste, religion or faith. "Never in the fight of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few", said Churchill. The event of Karbala, taking place on 10th Moharram, 61 Hijri, teaches us: Never to support injustice and oppression, no matter, how powerful the oppressor might be. No matter, what incentive, what threat you might be given. (The writer is a legal journalist and author. The views expressed are personal)

## Indian tourism industry: The challenges, resilience, and future prospects

As the Union Budget 2024 approaches, the Indian tourism industry has high hopes for increased support and strategic initiatives

Tourism has always been a significant contributor to the economic growth and GDP of nations worldwide, and India is no exception. Indian tourism has consistently shown remarkable growth, even though it has not been a primary focus of government policies. There have been improvements in infrastructure and connectivity, but these efforts have been limited. The Indian Tourism and Hospitality industry, faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sharp decline in both domestic and international travel led to a significant downturn. Despite these challenges, the industry began to show signs of recovery in 2023. According



DIVYA BHATIA

to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 2023 saw 152 million domestic flyers, an increase of almost 24% from 123 million in 2022, and nearly 6% more than the 144 million in 2019. International travel also showed signs of revival, with 63.9 million international travellers to and from India in 2023, close to the 64.2 million seen in 2019, and 35% more than the 47 million in 2022. Consulting firm McKinsey & Company pro-

jects that India will become the fourth-largest domestic travel market in terms of spending by 2030. Additionally, aviation analytics firm OAG indicates that India is now the third-largest domestic aviation market, after the U.S. and China. The WTTC reported that this sector contributed INR 19.13 trillion (\$230 billion) to the Indian GDP in 2023, marking a nearly 10% increase over 2019 levels. Employment in the industry also saw an 8% rise, reaching 43 million jobs. This highlights the sector's resilience and its vital role in the national economy. They projects that the Indian tourism industry will continue to grow, with contributions to the GDP expected to reach INR 21.15 trillion (\$253 billion) in 2024. Jobs in the

industry are also projected to increase by 2.45 million, accounting for one in every 11 jobs in India. Despite positive indicators, the tourism industry has been largely overlooked in recent government budgets. This lack of support is concerning given the sector's significant contributions to the economy and employment. Substantial investments and strategic initiatives are essential to fully capitalize on the industry's potential and ensure sustained growth. As the Union Budget 2024 approaches, the tourism industry remains hopeful for greater support and investment from the government. **Industry Perspectives** Jyoti Mayal, President, The Travel Agents Association of

India (TAAI) feels that the allocation for overseas promotion and publicity has been drastically reduced to just Rs. 3 crore, down from Rs. 100 crore in the previous year. She says, "The industry eagerly anticipates increased budget allocations to enhance infrastructure, marketing, and skill development. Investments in connectivity, heritage sites, and eco-tourism can propel growth. A focus on sustainable practices, waste management, and conservation efforts aligns with responsible tourism. Simplifying visa requirements and encouraging visa-free entry for tourists visiting India can significantly enhance foreign tourist arrivals". Pradeep Shetty, President, Hotel and Restaurant Association Western India

(HRAWI) says that the tourism and hospitality, accounting for around 10 percent of India's GDP and should be declared a priority sector. "Granting infrastructure status to hotels and convention centers of project cost of Rs 10 crore and above is essential for attracting investments and accelerating growth in the hospitality sector. Abolition of the 18 percent GST category for hotels with room rates above Rs.7500/-, merging it with the 12 percent GST category, would boost both domestic and inbound tourism," he says. Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) says the outbound tourism sector is hoping for positive policy changes. "One key

expectation is the reduction of GST rates on outbound tour packages, making international travel more affordable. Additionally, better Tax Collected at Source (TCS) policies are hoped for as compared to current TCS rates, which are causing financial and administrative problems," says he. Mr Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) feels that the adequate funding is needed for promote tourism on global map. He says, "Ministry of Tourism should be given separate substantial funds for marketing and promotion for participation in overseas travel marts along with industry stakeholders, organizing road shows and for MDA Assistance to tour operators".

Mr. Ajay Prakash, President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) feels that for all the lip service to the economic and social benefits of tourism, the industry remains sadly neglected. Mere infrastructure development is not enough - the sector needs specific incentives if it is to realize its potential. The travel and tourism industry puts forth its Wishlist every year before the Budget and, come the day, is invariably disappointed. "The highest GST slab should not exceed 10% and travel agents/tour operators should be eligible to claim a setoff. Aviation fuel must be brought under GST to make airfares more affordable," says he. (The writer is a travel influencer and writes on travel & tourism; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

### India's gems, jewellery exports dip 13.44% to Rs 15,939.77 cr: GJEPC

India's overall gems and jewellery exports witnessed an on-year decline of 13.44 per cent in June at Rs 15,939.77 crore (US\$ 1,909.57 million) amid muted demand in overseas markets, according to data by Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). The total gems and jewellery exports stood at Rs 18,413.88 crore (US\$ 2,240.77 million) during June 2023, the GJEPC data added. "This decline in gems and jewellery exports is owing to the prolonged geopolitical tensions leading to economic uncertainty in the global markets, which has pushed the demand southwards in the overseas markets," former GJEPC chairman and Kama Jewellery Managing Director Colin Shah said. The overall exports of cut and polished diamonds dipped by 25.17 per cent in June to Rs 8,496.87 crore (US\$ 1,017.87 million), compared to Rs 11,354.67 crore (US\$ 1,382.13 million) for the same period of the previous year. Shah said, this was mainly due to the weak demand from the key markets, China being the key one as it accounts for approximately a third of India's cut and polished diamond exports.



### Cipla gets Rs 773 cr demand notice from I-T department

Drug major Cipla on Tuesday said it has received Rs 773.44 crore demand notice from the income tax department for assessment years 2015-16 to 2022-23. The I-T Authority, vide assessment and re-assessment orders dated July 12, 2024, has raised additional demand for tax on account of various disallowances of various expenses, the Mumbai-based drugmaker said in a regulatory filing. The Rs 773.44-crore demand excludes any refund in any of the above-mentioned assessment years, it added. "The company believes that the demands under the above referred orders are not tenable in law," Cipla said. The drugmaker has adequate factual and legal grounds to substantiate its position and does not expect any material impact on financial or operations of the company due to the said order, it added. The company will pursue appeals against the said orders under the applicable laws, the drugmaker said. Shares of Cipla on Tuesday settled 0.56 per cent down at Rs 1,507.50 apiece on the BSE.



### Tariff hikes to push telcos' ARPU to decadal high of Rs 225 in FY26: Crisil

The near-simultaneous tariff hikes by all major private operators will push up telcos' average revenue per user (ARPU) to a decadal high of over Rs 225 in FY26, domestic ratings agency Crisil said on Tuesday. Credit profiles of telcos will also improve on the higher profitability and the lower capital expenditure, the agency said. The ARPU -- one of the most keenly tracked metric influencing the financial health of an entity -- will increase 25 per cent in FY26 when compared to FY24, it said. "The industry ARPU should dial up to a decadal high of Rs 225-230 by end of next fiscal compared with Rs 182 last fiscal," its deputy chief ratings officer Manish Gupta said. It can be noted that after the formation of the new government following the general elections, the top three private sector telcos hiked their tariff rates by up to 20 per cent. Gupta said the increased data usage following the introduction of the 5G services will also help the ARPUs. He said customers have also been "upgrading" their tariff plans due to higher data consumption arising out of video streaming services usage, social media, and gaming.



## Govt likely to scale down fiscal deficit target to 5% or less: ICRA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is likely to lower fiscal deficit to 4.9-5 per cent of the GDP for this financial year in the upcoming Budget aided by revenue buoyancy.

The government had pegged the fiscal deficit estimate at 5.1 per cent for the current fiscal year when it presented the interim Budget in February.

"The union government is likely to set a fiscal deficit target at 4.9-5 per cent, lower than projected 5.1 per cent of GDP, without compromising the capital expenditure target of Rs 11.1 lakh crore," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to present the full Budget on July 23. This will be her seventh Budget in a row. This budget aims to set the foundation for India's journey towards becoming a developed nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047.

The government achieved a



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fiscal deficit of 5.6 per cent of the GDP during the previous financial year.

"There is also a high likelihood of reducing the net market borrowings for the current financial year by Rs 35,000-Rs 55,000 crore vis-à-vis the interim Budget estimate of Rs 11.8

lakh crore, which would augur well for yields, along with the demand boost for G-secs owing to their inclusion in the J P Morgan Government Bond Index," she said.

The incremental revenue receipts of Rs 1.2 lakh crore can be split to increase the revenue

spending and facilitate fiscal consolidation, she said, adding, the government could utilise it for spurring consumption by providing some income tax sops.

She further said that reducing the absolute size of the fiscal deficit will be quite difficult over the next 3-4 years, with the decline in the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio largely dependent on the increase in nominal GDP.

If the government continues with capex at 3.4 per cent of GDP over the medium term (in line with the FY2025 Interim Budget), then incremental fiscal consolidation would require a sustained compression in the revenue deficit, she said.

Notably, she said, the government has 'on-budgeted' a large portion of previously off-budget capex; this should be considered while determining the endpoint of the awaited fresh fiscal consolidation roadmap beyond FY26.

### Gold rallies Rs 550; silver jumps Rs 400 amid strong global cues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rallied by Rs 550 to Rs 75,700 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday on the back of fresh buying by jewellers as well as strong trends in the international markets.

According to All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal rates had closed at Rs 75,150 per 10 grams on Monday.

In the national capital, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity quoted higher at Rs 75,700 per 10 grams and Rs 75,350 per 10 grams, respectively.

Traders attributed the rise in gold prices to a pick-up in demand by local jewellers and retailers in the domestic market.



### GOVT TO RETAILERS

## Cut profit margins on pulses; pass on lower wholesale rates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday pointed out that retail prices of tur, urad and chana dals have not declined in proportion to about a 4 per cent fall in major wholesale markets in the past one month and asked retailers to charge reasonable profit margins for providing relief to consumers.

The government warned that it would take stern actions against unscrupulous speculation and profiteering by market players.

On Tuesday, the Department of Consumer Affairs organised a meeting with the Retailers Association

The meeting was attended by representatives of RAI, Reliance Retail, D-Mart, Tata Stores, Spencer's, RSPG, and V-Mart, among others. RAI has more than 2,300 members, having over 6,00,000 retail outlets in the country

of India (RAI) here to discuss the price scenario in respect of pulses.

The meeting, chaired by Nidhi Khare, Secretary, the Department of Consumer Affairs, also reviewed compliance with the stock limits for tur and chana.

The meeting was attended by representatives of RAI, Reliance Retail, D-Mart, Tata Stores, Spencer's, RSPG, and V-Mart, among others. RAI has more than 2,300 members, having over 6,00,000 retail outlets in the country.

According to an official statement, the secretary "informed that prices of chana, tur and urad in major mandis had declined by up to 4 per cent in past one month, but retail prices have not seen similar decline".

## Sensex, Nifty close at fresh record highs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Continuing the record-breaking run for the third straight day, benchmark Sensex and Nifty closed at record high levels on Tuesday following buying in FMCG, telecom and select IT shares and FII inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 51.69 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a new lifetime high of 80,716.55. During the day, it advanced 233.44 points or 0.28 per cent to hit a fresh record high of 80,898.30.

The NSE Nifty rose by 26.30 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,613, extending the gaining streak to the third day. Intra-day, it rallied 74.55 points or 0.30 to hit a new record peak of 24,661.25.

Stock markets opened on a firm note and benchmark indices hit intra-day record high levels in the first half.



However, losses in Reliance Industries and Kotak Bank restricted gains and dragged indices from the day's highs.

Sensex and Nifty have been on a record-breaking run since Friday as foreign investors have turned net buyers in the Indian equities amid growing hopes of a rate cut by the US Fed by September. Encouraging quarterly results by blue-chips have also supported the rally despite high valuation concerns, according to analysts.

US Federal Chair Jerome

Powell said that the Fed is becoming more convinced that inflation is headed back to its 2 per cent target and there could be a rate cut before the pace of price rise actually reached that point.

Among Sensex shares, Hindustan Unilever rose the most by 2.7 per cent. Bharti Airtel (2 per cent), Tech Mahindra (1.13 per cent), Infosys (1.09 per cent), Mahindra & Mahindra 0.95 per cent) were among the lead gainers. ICICI Bank, ITC and Asian Paints also advanced.

## Govt deposits Rs 92 cr to clear bond interest dues of MTNL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has stepped in to make a Rs 92 crore payment towards bond dues of MTNL, a government source said, adding that another Rs 64 crore would also be paid in coming days towards interest obligations that are slated to become due in August. The helping hand from the government is significant as it averts a crisis-like situation for the telecom corporation which has been teetering on the brink with regard to its debt obligations, particularly in this case government-guaranteed bonds. Last week, the debt-laden firm had expressed its inability to make interest payments to cer-

tain bondholders due to paucity of funds.

The government sources said Rs 92 crore is being deposited in an escrow account for payment towards interest on bond dues. Another Rs 64 crore would be paid later this month to clear interest dues that slated to come up in August, sources said. The second semi-annual interest (7.59 per cent) on certain bonds is falling due on July 20, 2024.

Amid mounting financial woes, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) last week informed in a statutory filing that it is unable to make interest payments to certain bondholders "due to insufficient funds".

## Scindia holds talks to chart telecom growth roadmap

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union telecom minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday brainstormed with Reliance Jio Chairman Akash Ambani, Bharti Airtel founder and Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal, and Vodafone Idea MD and CEO Akshaya Moondra to chart growth roadmap for the telecom industry. This was the first meeting of telecom sector leaders with the minister under the third term of the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It was also the first meeting with the telecom chiefs following an increase in mobile tariff in the range of 10-27 per cent.

Scindia during the meeting deliberated on fostering growth of the telecom sector in



a collaborative manner while maintaining the interest of consumers and the nation.

"We have identified a rather deep agenda for these committees. Now the members of these committees and we will be working together," Scindia told reporters after the meeting.

Vodafone Idea CEO Akshaya Moondra and indus-

try body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) Director General S P Kochhar were also present at the meeting of the advisory committee of telecom service providers.

Scindia said there are varied schedules for the first presentation of these committees that will be over the next couple of weeks.

### GVK Power and Infrastructure Ltd faces insolvency proceedings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

GVK Power and Infrastructure Ltd (GVKPIIL) will face insolvency proceedings for failure to pay loans to lenders, a corporate insolvency court has said.

The Hyderabad bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) issued the order on a petition of lenders' group led by ICICI Bank Ltd, GVKPIIL said in a stock exchange filing.

## Samsung in talks with component partners to boost ops in India: TM Roh

PNS ■ PARIS

Samsung views India as a crucial market with Noida and Bengaluru becoming one of its biggest R&D centres, and is in talks with Indian component partners to strengthen its operations, a senior official said.

Samsung Electronics President and Head of Mobile eXperience (MX) Business TM Roh was speaking at a media roundtable here on the sidelines of Samsung Unpacked 2024.

"The Indian market is very



important to Samsung. We have operated the manufacturing facility since 1996, and we

also have R&D centres in India. Noida and Bengaluru R&D centres have become one of the

biggest R&D centres of Samsung and MX business.

"They are busy developing flagship products as well as contributing to the development of Galaxy AI technologies," Roh said, adding that these collaborations and efforts will continue in the future.

In January this year, Roh termed India as one of Samsung's important manufacturing bases and said that the Korean electronics major will start manufacturing laptops this year at its Noida facility.

### Motilal Oswal MF sells Zomato shares for Rs 646 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Motilal Oswal Mutual Fund on Tuesday divested its stake in online food delivery aggregator Zomato for Rs 646 crore through an open market transaction. According to the block deal data available on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), Motilal Oswal Mutual Fund (MF) sold more than 2.84 crore shares or 0.3 per cent stake in Gurugram-based Zomato.

The shares were disposed of at an average price of Rs 226.85 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs 645.84 crore.

### IMF'S ECONOMIC VIEW

## Brighter outlook for China and India but tepid global growth



PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The International Monetary Fund is upgrading its economic outlook this year for China, India and Europe while modestly lowering expectations for the United States and Japan.

But it says worldwide progress against accelerating prices has been slowed by stickier-than-expected inflation for services, from airline travel to restaurant meals.

Overall, the IMF said Tuesday that it still expects the world economy to grow a lackluster 3.2 per cent this year, unchanged from its pre-

vious forecast in April and down a tick from 3.3 per cent growth in 2023. From 2000 through 2019, before the pandemic upended economic activity, global growth had averaged 3.8 per cent a year.

The IMF, a 190-nation lending organisation, works to promote economic growth and financial stability and reduce global poverty. In a blog post that accompanied the latest update to its World Economic Outlook, the IMF's chief economist, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, wrote that China and India would account for nearly half of global growth this year.

### FINAL STAGE OF BUDGET PREPARATION

## FM participates in customary 'halwa' ceremony

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday participated in a traditional 'halwa' ceremony, marking the final stage for preparation of Union Budget 2024-25 to be unveiled on July 23 in Lok Sabha.

The ceremony is a ritual in which traditional dessert 'halwa' is prepared and served to officials and staff members of the finance ministry who are involved in the



preparation of the budget.

It is organised in the basement of North Block, which houses the ministry in the national capital and is attended by the finance minister and other high-ranking officials.

"The final stage of the Budget preparation process for Union Budget 2024-25 commenced with the customary Halwa ceremony in the presence of Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs

Smt. @nsitharaman, in New Delhi, today," the finance ministry said in a post on X.

As part of the ceremony, the finance minister also took a round of the Budget Press and reviewed the preparations besides extending her best wishes to the officials concerned.

Like the previous three full Union Budgets and one Interim, the full Union Budget 2024-25 will also be delivered in paperless form.



## 'PLAYING BHOOT WAS AN ENTICING PART FOR ME'

ZEE5's latest spooky spectacle, *Kakuda*, has stirred up quite a storm in the horror-comedy collection! As they say, "When it rains, it pours," and the Hindi film industry seems to be making horror comedies faster than you can say "Bhoot!" Love it or hate it, *Kakuda* is making waves in Bollywood's ever-growing horror-comedy genre. As the old saying goes, "The devil's in the details," and it seems this film has stirred up enough devilish details to keep audiences talking.

The stellar cast, including Sonakshi Sinha, Riteish Deshmukh and Saqib Salim, have delivered outstanding performances, bringing the quirky characters to life. Lead star Sonakshi Sinha, who impressed us with her glam and fiery role of Fareedan in *Heeramandi*, shared her excitement about taking on a ghostly role in this new venture.

"Playing a *bhoot* was the most enticing part for me," Sonakshi Sinha revealed. "When I read the script, I immediately said, 'Wow, *mai bhoot banungi ab!*' It was thrilling to try something I've never done

before. Usually, I steer clear of horror films; I don't watch them at all. I'm quite the scaredy-cat and struggle to sleep after watching them. But *Kakuda's* script was so enjoyable and it gave me a chance to do something completely different. I had an absolute blast during filming and I wouldn't mind taking on another ghostly role in the future! (She giggled)"

The plot of *Kakuda* revolves around a remote village called Ratodi, where a supernatural entity known as Kakuda has to be welcomed on Tuesdays at 7:15 PM. To avoid a curse that causes male villagers to develop a deadly tumor, residents must keep the smaller door open. The story follows Indira (Sonakshi Sinha), who hires a ghost hunter, Victor (Riteish Deshmukh), to save her husband Sunny (Saqib Saleem) from this curse. The film expertly weaves together elements of horror, comedy and social commentary, addressing issues such as the treatment of widows in traditional societies.



## New poster for Rajkummar Rao's *Stree 2* out!

Rajkummar Rao is gearing up for the release of the most-awaited film of the year, *Stree 2*. The actor unveiled a new poster for the film to announce that the trailer for the film will be out in just two days. While the teaser of the film was received with loads of love, the trailer, which is set to be released on July 18, is expected to reveal more about the film's plot and Rajkummar Rao's role in it.

Earlier this year, Rajkummar Rao dominated the box office with two releases, *Srikanth* and *Mr and Mrs Mahi* and the overwhelming response to the *Stree 2* teaser indicates that the most versatile performer is set to score a hatrick of hits, claiming 2024 as his year. While *Srikanth* and *Mr and Mrs Mahi* performed well and ended the dry spell of Bollywood's box office, *Stree 2* is set to shatter all of Rao's previous records, cementing the National Award-winning actor's status as a powerhouse performer. *Stree 2* is set to head to theaters on August 15. Apart from *Stree 2*, Rajkummar Rao will be seen in *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*.



## Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia undergoes shocking weight loss transformation ahead of KKK

The *Choti Sardarni* actress Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia left her fans stunned with an incredible weight loss transformation before she left the country to participate in the action-adventure reality game show *Khatron Ke Khiladi* season 14. The actress has not only shed a significant amount of weight but also transformed her overall health and fitness, inspiring many with her journey.

Nimrit's weight loss journey goes beyond just the number on the scale. She emphasises that while losing kilos is noteworthy, the real focus should be on reducing fat percentage and gaining muscle. "Many of us focus too much on the number of kilos lost. I realized it's more than just the number on the scale; it's about feeling healthier and stronger. This transformation has been about internal changes and I believe that energy is now radiating outward. I've undergone significant internal changes, making this an incredibly empowering experience."

Nimrit's transformation is particularly significant given her past struggles with body image and bullying. During her school and college days, she faced considerable trauma from being bullied for her weight. This motivated her to adopt a healthier lifestyle, incorporating a balanced diet and regular exercise into her daily routine.

Nimrit's journey to weight loss has been rigorous and disciplined. Although she followed a strict diet earlier, her approach has evolved over time. "Since leaving the *Bigg Boss* house, I haven't stuck to a strict diet. Currently, I consume carbs in a very controlled way, focusing on a high-protein, low-carb diet. I also try to have dinner early and avoid eating anything afterward," she explained.

Her dedication to healthy eating habits and consistent workouts has paid off and she is now ready to take on the challenges of *Khatron Ke Khiladi* with renewed energy and confidence.



## Uljah trailer: Janhvi Kapoor delivers an intense performance that leaves you wanting more

The wait is over as Jungle Pictures releases the gripping and intriguing trailer for *Uljah*, featuring Janhvi Kapoor, Gulshan Devaiah and Roshan Mathew. Directed by National Award Winner Sudhanshu Saria, *Uljah* takes viewers into the high-stakes world of international diplomacy.

In this thrilling narrative, Janhvi Kapoor portrays Suhana, a young diplomat embroiled in a treacherous personal conspiracy during her crucial assignment at the London embassy. As she navigates the complexities of her career-defining role, she finds herself entangled in the weight of her legacy and in a web of deception, where every ally could be a foe. Janhvi Kapoor's character and actions add an extra layer of intrigue for the audience, leaving them wanting more!

The trailer pulses with intensity, showcasing Janhvi, Gulshan, and Roshan at their electrifying best. Each character is layered with shades of grey, promising a rollercoaster ride of suspense and unexpected twists. Audiences can expect heart-stopping moments and edge-of-your-seat drama as *Uljah* unfolds its gripping tale of traps, conspiracies and betrayals. With its captivating storyline and stellar performances, the film promises to be a cinematic experience like no other.

Janhvi Kapoor shares her thoughts on her role in the film, stating, "This film is particularly special to me as I portray the very challenging role of a diplomat for the first time. It has been a humbling and fascinating experience. Working with Sudhanshu Saria has been incredibly enriching; he made me push my own boundaries. Suhana's character is strong and multi-dimensional and I found a personal connection to some shades of the character that enabled me to deliver an authentic performance."

Director Sudhanshu Saria adds, "*Uljah* is ultimately about the conundrum of choices, and setting it in the high-stakes world of international diplomacy made it that much more exciting. Directing this spectacular cast, led by Janhvi, Gulshan and Roshan,

has been a privilege and they have all brought remarkable depth to their characters and elevated the narrative. I can't wait to see audiences go on this thrill ride loaded with twists and turns." The film also boasts powerhouse performances from Adil Hussain, Rajesh Tailang, Meiyang Chang, Rajendra Gupta and Jitendra Joshi. Written by Parveez Shaikh and Sudhanshu Saria, with dialogue by Atika Chauhan, *Uljah* is all set to release on August 2, 2024.



## PRODUCER RAMESH CONFIRMED SEQUEL TO SOLDIER

A sequel to Bobby Deol and Preity Zinta's *Soldier* is in the works. It was recently confirmed by producer Ramesh Taurani that the sequel's filming will start in 2025. He did not, however, state that Bobby and Preity would play the same roles in *Soldier 2*. *Soldier 2* is undoubtedly coming, Ramesh Taurani stated in an interview. "Soldier will undoubtedly have a sequel. Next year, we'll start filming the movie," he said. Taurani said, "We aren't sure about the cast yet," in response to a query regarding the ensemble. "We'll decide whether or not to include Bobby and Preity based on how the plot develops." In the same interview, Taurani recounted how Preity Zinta was ultimately picked for the role of *Soldier*. "We signed her for *Kya Kehna*... first, but it was released later than expected," he stated. "*Soldier*, a huge movie for us, was also playing on the floor as we were filming it. Additionally, we decided to cast her in *Soldier*." Previously, during an interview, Bobby Deol made light of *Soldier 2*. "It has been quite some time, he said. Perhaps Ramesh Ji, the owner of Tips, will consider creating [*Soldier*] Part 2 with me after *Animal*." The 1998 film *Soldier* was directed by Abbas Mustan. Bobby Deol, Preity Zinta, Rakhee Gulzar, Farida Jalal, Suresh Oberoi and other actors starred in it as well.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



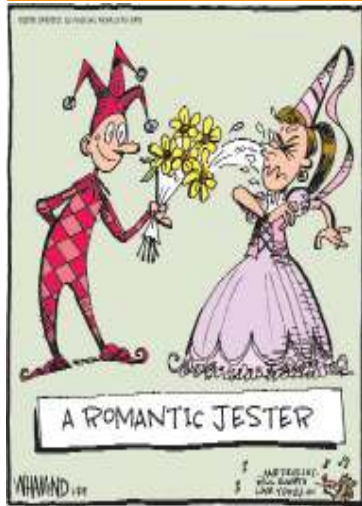
### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



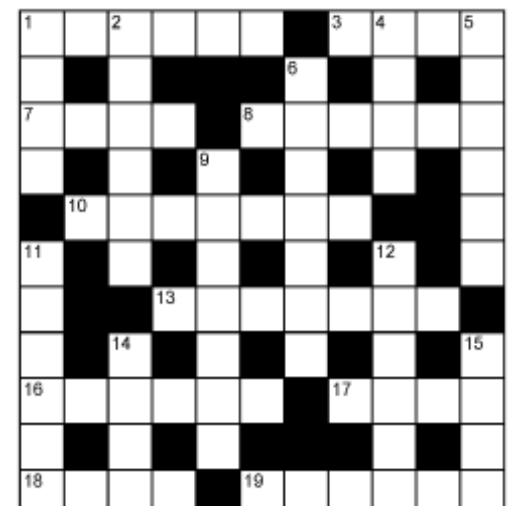
### REALITY CHECK



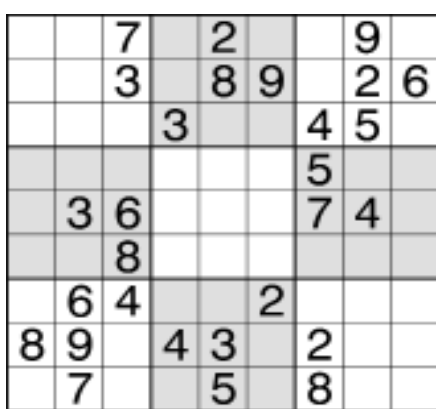
### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- Further up
- A stopper for a bottle
- Follow orders
- Say again
- Cooked over boiling water
- Not normal
- A hole through a hill
- Your body's covering
- Devours
- A baby's toy

### DOWN

- A horse's foot
- Invited visitors
- Opposite of under
- Baby cat
- Set free from captivity
- An artist
- A slinging plant
- A short coat
- A tied joint in string
- A leg joint



## 'I would kill to be an antagonist now': Radhikka Madan

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The weekend profits of *Sarfira*, Radhikka Madan's Hindi remake of Suriya's National Award-winning *Soorarai Pottru*, showed an increase. There has also been a sharp increase in the amount of appreciation she is receiving in addition to the box-office collections. Her outstanding performance is highlighted in every interview with her director, Sudha Kongara, which the entire cast and crew are raving over.

Here we have another exclusive interview with the leading lady of *Sarfira*, who is gaining momentum. Receiving a plethora of praise from critics, a much happier Radhikka declares, "It's all thanks to Sudha Kongara; she took it upon herself to develop my character in a way that wasn't cliché. On *Sarfira*'s sets, I had a sense of empowerment!"

She takes us on a zoom interaction and goes back in time, saying, "I had just finished doing *Sanaa* when I received the script for *Sarfira*. For my part in *Sanaa*, I was in a pretty sad place, so *Sarfira*'s script was a breath of fresh air. While I was doing *Sanaa*, Sudha Kongara took me out of that dark place and reminded me of who the real Radhikka is. I regret having forgotten that aspect of myself."

However, was it necessary for director Sudha to persuade Radhikka so much? "I said yes in the very first hour of reading the *Sarfira* script," the actress proclaimed. "It's a really powerful and inspirational movie. At that particular moment in my personal life, I was held to the same standards of clarity and ambition as my character. I could relate to that!"

We asked *Shiddat* fame about Akshay Kumar's off-screen moments with her because we were quite intrigued about it. She replied, "He didn't even for a second bring the aura of a superstar to the *Sarfira* sets. So gentle, so grounded. Something strange about me is that, when I'm on a movie set, I don't see my co-stars as superstars; instead, I see them as the characters they play beside me. That is all." Because, she recalled, "I experienced the same thing when I was acting with the late Irrfan Khan Saab. I began to sense that he was my dad! That's how it all seeps in—I was crying at my first screening. Playing Ludo together helped Akshay and I become close. Besides, he was always actively divert-

ing my attention to see how concentrated I could be! Even though the director approved of it (she laughed), they were wagering on whether or not I would ask for another take. However, I wish I had Akshay Kumar's level of ease."

The *Angeezi Medium* star remembers several difficult scenes from *Sarfira*'s sets, saying, "I'm a Delhi girl, yet I was meant to play a Marathi lady! People may have wondered how I would carry off playing a Marathi girl when I was offered this job, in my opinion. I faced it head-on because it was a challenge. I enjoy proving people wrong! Please don't categorise me. When I did *Patakha*, the industry only offered me the part of a village belle. However, I broke the mold with another hit. Sudha Kongara was of great assistance to me."

As a matter of fact, "Rani" was Sudha Kongara. I used to simply look up to her working approach whenever I was feeling lost. There she stood, a fiery, passionate and ravenous lady. However, I did my lot to embrace my "Marathi" side by, for instance, listening to only the best Marathi music. I was surprised to see a director with that level of clarity on the *Sarfira* sets. Her ability to control emotions is really motivating!"

The actress concluded by saying, "In love being challenged. Right now, I would kill to be the antagonist! I'd love to break the mold as well, because I get comments about how naive I seem much too often. I want to play a dark character in movies now."

Radhikka Madan talks about her amazing performance in *Sarfira*, her collaboration with director Sudha Kongara and her friendship with co-star Akshay Kumar in this exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*. She shares her ambition to play darker roles in the future and muses on overcoming personal obstacles. Learn about the inspirational path of an actress who redefined her career by breaking the mold!



## Anand Iyer joins *Mirzapur* mafia

Anand Iyer, an ad filmmaker turned director for *Mirzapur Season 3*, discusses his journey from ardent fan to essential creator of the critically acclaimed crime thriller in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*. Anand explores the evolution of the series, character interactions and the intense anticipation surrounding the upcoming season while thinking back on his inspirations and challenges. Come along as we reveal the behind-the-scenes knowledge that molds *Mirzapur*'s compelling story.



AARTI SREENATH

"Welcome to the club; I'm also a big fan of the show!" Anand Iyer greets us with an enthusiasm that mirrors our own. This mutual admiration for *Mirzapur* is exactly what drew him to be part of the show. As we settle in for the interview, the excitement is palpable.

When asked what inspired him to create this gritty, action-packed crime drama and what



message he hoped to convey, Anand reveals, "Basically, I'm a huge fan of *Mirzapur*. I was a spectator for the first two seasons, just like you. Joining the team was more about fandom than inspiration."

Anand's background as an ad filmmaker for nearly two decades provided a unique perspective on storytelling. "The opportunity to tell a story in a longer format, where you aren't fighting for time or frames, is superb. You have the freedom to let the actors fully express themselves. In ad films, you have to pack so much into a short span, often struggling with constraints like, 'pack it like this, do it that way, you only have two seconds.' Here, it's different. The actors' expressions carry the weight and you can hold onto those moments, letting them convey more than words ever could."

*Mirzapur*

has become synonymous with the raw essence of Purvanchal. Balancing authenticity with storytelling demands is no easy feat. "The show has its own template set by the first two seasons," Anand says. "I'm the newest entrant, so there wasn't much setting up to do. The cast and crew are like a well-oiled machine, each playing their part seamlessly. Things are already established—the character arcs, the setting. My role was more about nudging the plot gently, making subtle adjustments here and there."

Adjusting to the established team was surprisingly smooth for Anand. "It wasn't difficult to bond because the whole soul of the show comes from the camaraderie between everyone. They accepted me with open arms and I just went with the flow. It's a bunch of lovely people and the respect and affection they have for each other translate on screen. The spirit of collaboration makes the whole process incredibly rewarding."

*Season 2* ended with a cliffhanger, leaving fans eagerly anticipating *Season 3*. While Anand remains tight-lipped about specifics, he teases, "The throne is empty and everyone is vying for it. This season is about how each character tries to claim the 'Gaddi'. The cliffhanger at the end of *Season 2*, with its massacre, left many questions unanswered. The contenders for the throne are scattered and now everyone is plotting and planning. The central theme is power—the quest for it and the lengths to which people will go to obtain it."

Directing *Mirzapur* came with its challenges, particularly the statue-breaking sequence shot in Banares. "It was hot and crowded, but the locals were very cooperative, being huge fans of the show themselves. We managed to shoot the entire sequence smoothly. Initially, we planned to shoot one axis in Banares and the reverse axis in Mumbai, but we couldn't figure out how to manage crowd control. Eventually, we

shot everything in Banares. The fans were eager to be part of the process, yet very respectful when we asked them to step aside."

Anand also had to navigate unexpected weather conditions while filming on the ghats of Banares. "It rained and water levels rose, altering our plans. We had designed shots of characters arriving by boat, but with water covering the steps, we had to improvise. The shoot got extended by a day due to these conditions, but the team's dedication made it all work out. These challenges are part of the filmmaking journey and overcoming them brings a unique satisfaction."

To the passionate fanbase of *Mirzapur*, Anand has a simple message: "Just wait for *Season 4* and give as much love as you can. The fans' intense and passionate connection to the show is what drives us. Their love and anticipation fuel our creativity and commitment to deliver an even more gripping story."

The strong and complex women in *Mirzapur* defy stereotypes. "Women are intrinsically strong, often stronger than men. Portraying them in powerful roles was a natural choice. The characters, like Beena and Golu, are written with layers and depth. Beena embodies cerebral strength, while Golu represents physical resilience. These varied portrayals reflect the multifaceted nature of strength in women. It's not about navigating their portrayal; it's about recognising and showcasing their inherent power."

Regarding character development in *Season 3*, Anand explains, "A story must evolve. Characters like Golu and Chote Tyagi had to grow. Each season brings new challenges and growth for them. The script has a life of its own, and the characters evolve with it. If people expect the same dynamics from *Seasons 1* or *2*, they might be surprised. Growth is essential for both the story and the characters. It's about reaching new heights and exploring new facets of their personalities."

Balancing action sequences with character development is crucial. "Season 3 involved a lot of planning and plotting. One memorable action scene was the jail sequence. The show doesn't need constant, high-octane action; it's about when the story needs it. The sporadic but impactful action scenes add to the narrative without overshadowing the character arcs. For instance, the head-chopping scene in the first episode sets the tone without overwhelming the story's progression."

Anand Iyer's passion for *Mirzapur* is perceptible. As he ends the conversation on a sweet note, it's clear that this collaboration between a fan and a creator has only deepened the dark allure of *Mirzapur*. The journey of *Mirzapur* is far from over and with Anand at the helm, fans can expect more gripping tales from the dark heart of Purvanchal.

## EMBARRASSED BY SNORING AND BAD BREATH? HERE'S WHAT TO DO

Do you snore? Or does your partner snore all night, making it impossible for you to have a good quality sleep? Did you know that snoring has much more to do than just bother you with the annoying sound? You might wake up in the morning only to feel sleepy throughout the day and no amount of coffee seems to work. Maybe it's time you consulted a dentist! Yes, you read that right—a dentist.

More often than not, your snoring could be a result of what is called sleep apnea. It is a condition in which you're breathing during sleep repeatedly stops and starts. This means you are out of breath every now and then while you sleep. You might find yourself waking in the middle of the night, gasping for air. Well, this happens because your body is not getting enough oxygen.

### Sleep apnea and oral health

Do you feel embarrassed about your bad breath? Or do you find your gums bleeding often? What if you are told that all of this is connected? Yes, sleep apnea affects your oral health in ways you might not expect. To begin with, sleep apnea leaves your mouth dry because this condition forces you to breathe with your mouth instead of your nose. When your mouth remains open the whole night, you experience a loss of saliva, which plays a significant role in oral health. Lack of saliva due to sleep apnea takes a toll on your oral health as the flushing action of the saliva is reduced, hence creating a breeding ground for harmful bacteria.

### Help is just a dentist's appointment away!

Seeing a dentist could help protect you from the adverse effects of sleep apnea. A dentist will examine you and, based on your condition, provide you with a splint or anti-snoring appliance that is fabricated and made according to your measurements by a dental laboratory. In severe cases, you might need a sleep apnea device along with an ENT opinion. Based on your condition, the dentist might also suggest other corrective measures to get uninterrupted, quality sleep at night.

Along with following your dentist's advice, make sure to stick to the good oral hygiene habits you learned as a kid. They're key to getting that healthy smile. Brush your teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and floss once a day to remove plaque and bacteria from your teeth and gums. To combat the issue of dry mouth, aim for a minimum of 8 glasses of water daily. And always keep a glass of water by your bedside. It is an absolute lifesaver if you wake up with a parched mouth in the middle of the night.

So, there you have the secret formula for a good night's sleep, a confident smile, and an improved quality of life: see a dentist and practice good oral hygiene habits.

(The author Dr. Darshan Doshi, BDS, is a TMJ specialist, aesthetic dentist, implantologist at Beaming Smiles Dental Clinic.)



# HARDIK PANDYA TO LEAD INDIA IN T20IS AGAINST SRI LANKA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya is all set to lead India in the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka starting July 27. However, one of the heroes of India's T20 World Cup victory last month will take a break during the three-match ODI series, which is scheduled in August, due to "personal reasons". "Hardik Pandya was India's T20 vice-captain under Rohit Sharma. He is completely fit and available for the three-match T20I series and will lead the side," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Rohit retired from T20 Internationals at the end of the World Cup. The T20Is against Sri Lanka will run from July 27 to 30 in Pallekele, followed by the ODIs from August 2 to 7 in Colombo. The squad for the series is expected to be announced in the next couple of days. While there is still no clarity on who would be Pandya's deputy, the toss-up is between Shubman Gill, who recently captained India to a 4-1 series win over Zimbabwe, and Suryakumar Yadav, who led the side during the T20Is against South Africa last year. About the ODIs, the official confirmed that Pandya has asked for leave and has already communicated this to regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who is also taking a break from this series.



"The break from ODIs is for very personal reasons. Hardik doesn't have any fitness issue as is being floated in the media," the official said. For the ODIs, KL Rahul, who led in the last ODI series in South Africa, and Gill are in contention for the leadership role. **THRUST ON DOMESTIC AVAILABILITY:** BCCI secretary Jay

Shah has made it clear that even star cricketers must make themselves available for domestic engagements when they are free from national duty. But exceptions will be made for the likes of Rohit, Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. The BCCI would, however, want all the other Test specialists to play at least one or not a couple of Duleep Trophy games

in August as a precursor to the Tests against Bangladesh and New Zealand. "This time there is no zonal selection committee for Duleep Trophy. Only national selection committee will pick Duleep teams. "All Test team contenders will be picked. For Rohit, Virat and Bumrah, it will be their choice if they want to play or not," the source added.



## Harmanpreet moves to 12th, Shafali 15th in ICC T20 rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India opener Shafali Verma on Tuesday moved to 15th place while her skipper Harmanpreet Kaur climbed to the 12th spot in the latest ICC T20 rankings, following their strong performances in the series against South Africa. Harmanpreet has moved up three places and now has 613 rating points while Shafali rose two rungs to share the 15th spot with New Zealand's Amelia Kerr and Danni Wyatt

from England. The swashbuckling Smriti Mandhana continues to be the top-ranked Indian batter as she remained static on the fifth spot. In the bowlers' list, the seasoned Deepti Sharma continued her stay at the third place. Radha Yadav moved eight spots to 15th while Pooja Vastrakar climbed up six places to 23rd and Shreyanka Patil rose nine rungs to 60th. England spinner Sarah Glenn

has claimed a new career-high rating of 768 points. She has claimed eight wickets through four matches of England's ongoing T20I series at home against New Zealand. This has allowed the right-armed to maintain her place as the No.2 ranked T20I bowler in the world. The only player in front of Glenn in the ratings is teammate and fellow spinner Sophie Ecclestone and she also has eight scalps from the first four matches of the five-game series.

# Lakshya underdog in reasonable Olympics draw, will play freely: Coach Vimal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The presence of some established foes notwithstanding, Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen has got a "fair" draw in his debut Olympics, according to his coach Vimal Kumar, who expects the youngster to play freely in Paris thanks to his "underdog" status and some technical improvements in his overall game. World No. 19 Sen's path to an Olympic medal has multiple hurdles as he will need to get past familiar Indonesian nemesis Jonatan Christie, last Olympics' surprise semifinalist Kevin Cordon from Guatemala, and Julian Carraggi from Belgium in Group L. "I think it (the draw) is very fair, I feel it is a very reasonable draw for him," Vimal, a former India coach, told PTI from Marseille, France

where Sen is currently training ahead of the Paris Olympics. "A couple of times, he has lost to Jonatan Christie in close matches. It's a 50-50 match. You have to convert (chances) if you have to get to the second stage. In my opinion, Lakshya has nothing to lose. He will be the underdog and he can play a lot more freely," he asserted. Describing Sen as a big-match player, Vimal said he expects Sen to trump former Asian Games champion Christie, who was also a part of Indonesia's Thomas Cup-winning team in 2022. Vimal said Sen has worked on his front-court alertness and closing stage composure. The 22-year-old would be aiming to become the first Indian male shuttler to finish on the Olympic podium. India's previous badminton medals at the Games have been clinched by

Saina Nehwal (bronze in 2012, London) and P V Sindhu (silver in 2016, Rio de Janeiro and bronze in 2020, Tokyo). "Jonathan will be the last match of the group and Lakshya should pull through. So I see a lot of positives. Not going to the Canada Open was a dampener but he has overcome that. Being away here in similar conditions will help him," Vimal said referring to Sen being forced out of his title defence in Canada Open owing to visa issues. To prepare the player from Almora, Korea's Yoo Yung-Sung, a two-time men's doubles Olympic silver-medallist, was brought back to polish his net game, improve his on-court pace and dial up the focus in crunch situations. Yung-Sung had worked with Sen in 2022. "We have brought in a lot of speed work into closing stages, we



introduced a lot of double drills in finishing, pushing the pace towards certain points. Last three weeks, Yoo Yung-Sung has been helping us with those drills," Vimal said. Vimal said Sen has also been doing a lot of service variations practice. "(The idea is) basically to bring in

some sort of intensity in the routines. Certain sets of routines that we follow are mostly singles-oriented. He (Sen) worked on those flat exchanges, retrieving and things like approaching the net and being a little more alert at the net," Vimal explained.

For the last one week, Sen has been training at the Halles des Sports Parsemain in Fos-sur-Mer, which is about 45 minutes from Marseille city centre. Sen is also training with the Olympic-bound Popov brothers -- Christo and Toma Junior -- till July 21. Indian shuttlers Kiran George, Ayush Shetty have been roped in too for sparring. "Next week we will be doing one set of tournament practice because he needs that little bit of that match practice. It would have been good to see him in Canada. So next week I want to see how he is implementing what he learned. "Against both the Popov brothers, it will be a good test. So I'll be able to assess him. Once he gets into the village in Paris, we won't get to play much. We will have limited time for practice in the main arena."

Lakshya had struggled through much of 2023 and early part of 2024. He fell behind in the qualification race but turned things around in time with two semifinal finishes at the All England Championship and the French Open to seal his place in the Olympics. "From all that he has survived, he got an opportunity to qualify. He has been practising and has worked on his game. Lakshya has acclimatised to the conditions, he plays well there in those conditions. "We have also got some of that tournament shuttlecock (F-90) because the conditions are a little on the slower side in Paris. So we have been practising with those shuttles," said Vimal, who guided Saina Nehwal to world No. 1 in 2015. Sen, along with his coach, will be leaving for Paris on July 22.

## Moudgil overcomes mental demons to secure place in shooting contingent for Paris Games



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Overcoming mental demons after being left out of the Indian team from last year's Asian Games and the World Championships was key to shooter Anjum Moudgil securing a Paris Olympic berth. Former world no.1 Moudgil, a world championships and Commonwealth Games medallist, competed in two events during the last edition in Tokyo. She finished 15th in the 50m rifle 3 position and 18th in the 10m air rifle, but in Paris, she will be featuring in only women's 50m 3 position. By her own admission, the ouster from the Indian team for Worlds and Asian Games due to inconsistent form was an eye opener for her as the 30-year-old worked on bettering her mental toughness besides focussing entirely on her training. "Three years after Tokyo was a roller-coaster ride for me. I have seen tough times but I wanted to comeback stronger. The experiences of Tokyo will surely be of helpful (in Paris)," Moudgil said in a virtual media interaction. "I really took advantage of

quotas and trials, the federation told me not to lose out hope. They understood the things I was going through. I was really confident of making through to the team after I didn't make the team for World Championships and the Asian Games because of just 2 points in the trials. "I was too focussed and positive in giving my best in the trials. I knew my strengths and how to work under pressure and it paid off. "One year after Tokyo, I won couple of medals in World Cups and became world no.1. I did mental training focus, it's been a positive step for me. I now speak up, which is a positive change heading to Paris. I used time to get better and find what works better for me," she added. Understanding the importance of mental health issues, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), has set up the Mentally Fit Helpline, a dedicated, independent and confidential mental health counselling service available to all athletes accredited for the Paris Games. "It's (mental health) so important for all the

federations and IOC to understand. It's important to understand the mental side, understand how it works for an athlete, understand mental toughness. So, it's positive step to see mental helpline being introduced in Paris Olympics," Moudgil said. "Athletes have spoken in the past about mental health issues. It's a common issue which needs to be addressed not only for athletes, but in every profession. "People should respect mental health, and not hide anything. The helpline is a positive step towards admiring mental health issues." India have named a strong 21-member shooting contingent for Paris Games, which includes many youngsters, including 22-year-old Sift Kaur Samra who will be competing alongside Moudgil in 50m 3p event. "There are so many strong, young shooters, it really helps me to push my limit. I would have been stuck if I was not pushed. There is high competition in my event, and it really helped me to push. The reason I am here because of the efforts I have put in over the last 3 years," Moudgil said.

"I am very positive going into Paris with this young contingent. All of them are confident, the team is doing very well. It is positive for each and every shooter, there is no pressure. My expectation is for everyone to give their best, everyone going with positive mindset." Moudgil is counting on her difficult Tokyo experience to shine in Paris. "Competing in one rather than two events both have positive and negative sides, but I am happy. In Tokyo, the environment was different because of Covid. Everything was tentative, we had to appear for Covid test everyday and if you turn positive you are out of the competition. All of these things were disturbances. "The competition is very high in India and the pressure situations we face during trials will definitely help in Olympics. I just wanted to be my best in trials, the fire to perform in trials and the experience of last 15 years really paid off. These things will surely help me in Paris, the experience of playing in the Olympics is there with me," she said. "...We had a different experience in Tokyo because of Covid, we won quotas 3 years before and was waiting as the Games were postponed. But we really don't discuss too much baggage of Tokyo. It's just another big competition and that's what we discuss." Shooting competitions of the Paris Olympics will be held at National Shooting Center in Châteauroux, the capital city of the French department of Indre, central France, which is approximately 270km from Paris. "The preparation is going really well and according to plan. We are Luxembourg for the last phase of our training and preparation before we head to Châteauroux, France on 21st."

## Bawa assures India of medal in World Junior squash, Anahat bows out

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Shaurya Bawa guaranteed himself of a medal as he moved to the semifinals with a hard fought 3-2 win over Malaysian Low Wa-Sern in the World Junior Squash Championships in Houston. The 18-year-old from Delhi, thus, becomes only the second Indian male to reach the semifinals after Kush Kumar, who reached the last four stage in 2014. In a thrilling clash that lasted 80 minutes, Bawa was down 6-

9 and 7-10 in the fifth game but remarkably saved three match balls to eke out a 2-11 11-4 10-12 11-8 12-10 victory in the boys' quarterfinals on Monday. With the win, Bawa set up a semifinal clash with Egyptian top-seed Mohamed Zakaria. Meanwhile, compatriot Anahat Singh bowed out from the girls' quarterfinals for a third straight year. The 16-year-old women's national champion lost a close five-setter to Nadien Elhamamy, with the Egyptian winning 11-8 11-9 5-11 10-12 13-11.

## Punjab FC retains five Indian players ahead of upcoming ISL season

PTI ■ MOHALI

Punjab FC on Tuesday announced retaining five Indian players, including midfielder Ashis Pradhan and goal-keeper Ravi Kumar, on multi-year deals for the upcoming Indian Super League season. The other players retained are Ricky Shabong, Manglenthang Kippen, and Suresh Meitei. While Ravi and Pradhan will remain at the club until May 2026, centre back Meitei and midfielder Ricky will be a part of the Punjab FC till May 2027.

Kippen, also a midfielder, will continue till May 2028. "They were key players for the club in the previous season and the club has kept their faith in these players," the club said in a release. Ravi made 47 saves for the club in 16 appearances last season while Meitei made 14 appearances while assisting once for the club. "Pradhan, Shabong and Kippen made 17, 10 and four appearances respectively adding steel and creativity in the middle of the park," the club added.

## Olympics-bound javelin thrower Jena says he was on verge of quitting last year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games silver medallist javelin thrower Kishore Jena says he was on verge of quitting the sport in 2023 after a string of poor performances but he heeded to his father's advice, leading to a revival of his career. Jena admitted that Neeraj Chopra's Tokyo Olympics gold medal motivated him to achieve more in his sport but he found it difficult to get the big throws and thought of quitting the sport in July last year just before the World Championships. "When Neeraj won at the Olympics, we celebrated and enjoyed his victory. But honestly, the victory also left me dejected because I too was playing the same sport. I felt it was time for me to achieve something in sports," Jena said. "I participated in Lebanon National Championships after a dip in my rankings and produced a throw of 78m. Despite giving it my all, I



couldn't achieve much. I started doubting if all the hard work was worth it. I called my father, who encouraged me to participate in next competition in Sri Lanka," he said in a JioCinema release. Jena won in Lebanon (on July 21) with a throw of 78.96m, which by any standard was a modest performance. In fact, Jena could not breach the 80m mark till the end of 2022. His first 80m-plus throw came in March 2023 during the Indian

Grand Prix in Thiruvananthapuram where he came up with 81.05m effort. "I decided the event in Sri Lanka (July 30) would be my last attempt, after which I would quit and go back to prioritizing work and family. With God's grace, I performed well, producing a throw of 84.38m which led to my qualification for the World Championships." Jena qualified for the Budapest World Championships in

August 2023 through world ranking quota. He could not breach the automatic qualification mark of 85.20m. "I performed well in the World Championships as well, achieving a personal best of 84.77m," said Jena who finished fifth in the final while Chopra won the gold with 88.17m. "I followed it up with another personal best of 87.54m at the Asian Games (in Hangzhou, China where he won a silver behind Chopra) securing my ticket to Paris 2024. I now want to give my best at Paris. I am quite confident. While I haven't set any particular targets, I am aiming to improve my personal best." Jena is currently struggling for form as he has crossed the 80m mark just once in the six events he has taken part after the World Championships. He threw 80.84m to win a bronze medal at the National Interstate Championships in Panchkula in June and that was his season's best so far.

# Avika Gor opens up on BTS of *Shanmukha*

PNS | HYDERABAD

The makers of the highly anticipated Telugu thriller fantasy *Shanmukha* recently had a special reason to celebrate. On Avika Gor's birthday, they unveiled her character, Sara, hinting at an unforgettable cinematic journey. Directed by Shanmugam Sappani and produced by Thulasi Ram Sappani under Sapbro Productions, *Shanmukha* is set to captivate audiences with its unique blend of thriller and fantasy elements. With music composed by the acclaimed Ravi Basru, renowned for his mesmerizing scores, the film is already generating significant buzz.

Avika Gor, known for her versatile performances, steps into the role of Sara, a character brimming with mystery and intrigue. The film's hero, played by Aadi Sai Kumar, adds another layer of excitement to this dynamic narrative.

Reflecting on her experience with the talented team behind *Shanmukha*, Gor shared, "The director had his immense clarity. He knew exactly what he wanted and that makes the actor's job easy. Working with the music director, Ravi sir, I think it's a once-in-a-lifetime kind of an opportunity because he is pretty big in the South and to get a film which has his name along with it, it itself is a big dream come true. So an absolute honour to be a part of a project that he is also a part of. And I can't wait to see the final product because, yes, we work hard as actors, we see how it works. But music after the edit really adds a lot of depth to the movie."

Discussing what audiences can expect from *Shanmukha*, Gor said, "The story has romance, the story has drama. Of course, you know, when it comes to VFX and the thrill and the fantasy element, all of that is of a very, very good level. And the way our director and our makers have created the whole idea, the whole story and the whole film is something that really people will like because it has a lot of emotions, it has a lot of depth to it. And I'm very, very excited because Telugu audiences really like experimental films and experimental concepts. They are just done with the usual

conventional kind of films and they want something out of the box. And I think this one is going to be that in my career because it is very different from what I've done earlier. And even as a concept, it is very thrilling to be a part of something that is so experimental and so huge. And it is definitely going to be something people are going to like. Adi, the hero, has done a very, very good job and I can't wait for people to watch the film and see this side of him and me. Both of us together, I think we've done a really good job in the film."

Expressing her excitement about the film's release, she added, "The most exciting aspect is that Ravi sir's work, the music, is going to be the highlight of the film because we have all watched his work, especially in *KGF* and other films of his. We know that he is a masterclass in himself. And to be a part of something that he's been creating is an honour, as I mentioned. That's definitely going to be the biggest plus of the film. And aside from that, the story, the way it has been narrated, Adi being a really

good actor and the way he has performed. There's a good amount of action, emotion, romance and drama."

Reflecting on memorable moments from the shoot, Gor shared, "I think the most memorable would be going on set and always asking the director and my hero, 'What are we up to today?' That excitement and curiosity of doing something truly unbelievable at times. And just the idea, the title *Shanmukha*, is so meaningful. When you watch the film, you'll realise that every detail—whether through music, acting, or characters—holds a lot of value. It has turned out very, very nice and it's in the process of post-production right now. We cannot wait to share more details."

With such an enthusiastic and talented cast and crew, *Shanmukha* promises to be a remarkable addition to Telugu cinema, blending thriller and fantasy elements in a way that is sure to captivate audiences.



## Split personality concept in *Darling* is fantastic: Nani

The excitement surrounding the upcoming Telugu romantic comedy, *Darling*, reached new heights at a star-studded pre-release event, signaling what many expect to be a major success in Telugu cinema. The event was graced by the presence of Natural Star Nani, who took center stage to endorse the film's promising prospects.

Directed by Ashwin Ram and produced by Niranjan Reddy and Sreemathi Chaitanya under the banner of Prime Show Entertainment, *Darling* is creating significant buzz for its unique blend of romance and comedy. The film stars Priyadarshi in the lead role, with Nabha Natesh as his co-star. The movie is scheduled for a worldwide release on July 19, and the pre-release event showcased the film's grand vision and high expectations. Nani highlighted a growing trend of action films in recent times, noting the refreshing return of comedy and love stories with *Darling*. He remarked, "Last year, I came with a love story and emotion in *Hi Nanna*. This year, Darshi is coming with a love story and comedy in *Darling*. This movie should be a big blockbuster." Nani emphasised the importance of diverse genres and expressed his enthusiasm

for Darshi's choice of subjects, stating, "The split personality concept is fantastic. It's like a 'Lady Don'. If done right, it can generate a lot of laughter." He also shared his hopes for the film's success, aligning it with the achievements of Niranjan Reddy and Chaitanya's previous project, *Hanuman*. "I hope that Niranjan sir and Chaitanya's success with *Hanuman* will be replicated with *Darling*," Nani said. He also commended the music of Vivek Sagar, noting his cult following and high expectations for another successful soundtrack. Hero Priyadarshi, who stars in the film, also shared his thoughts at the event. Reflecting on his journey and inspiration, Priyadarshi said, "As a child, I was inspired to become an actor by watching Chiranjeevi garu. Now, Nani is my inspiration. For the current generation wanting to enter cinema without any background, Nani is a great inspiration." Priyadarshi expressed his gratitude for the support and collaboration he received, stating, "I have found a brother in Ashwin. With *Darling*, Telugu cinema is adopting Ashwin. I have learned a lot from him." He also thanked the film's entire team, including Vivek Sagar and others, for their contributions.

## THANGALAN REVEALS ITS CONNECTION TO KGF HISTORY AND INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

The highly anticipated trailer for *Thangalaan*, starring Chiyaan Vikram, has just dropped, offering a glimpse into its massive, mystical world. The trailer showcases Vikram's dramatic transformation and hints at an epic narrative blending historical and mythological elements. *Thangalaan* is set against the backdrop of the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) and integrates aspects of Indian mythology into its storyline. According to sources close to the production, the film explores the real history of KGF while weaving in mythological themes to create a visually stunning experience. The trailer also introduces Malavika Mohanan in an intriguing new role as Aarathi, a sorceress with extraordinary powers. This addition promises an intense confrontation between her character and Vikram's, heightening the film's anticipation. *Thangalaan*, featuring Malavika Mohanan in a key role, is slated for a global release on August 15, 2024. It will be available in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The film's music is composed by GV Prakash Kumar.

## Zee5 announces a star-studded project

ZEE5 has announced the release of *Manorathangal*, a major Malayalam anthology series set to premiere on August 15. The series is a tribute to the 90-year legacy of literary legend Madath Thekkepattu Vasudevan Nair, affectionately known as M.T.

Featuring nine interconnected stories, *Manorathangal* brings together a stellar lineup of South Indian cinema's finest talents. The anthology showcases stories penned by M.T. Vasudevan Nair himself, exploring the complexities of human nature.

The series includes segments directed by renowned filmmakers such as Priyadarshan, Ranjith, Shyamaprasad and Mahesh Narayanan and stars prominent actors like Mohanlal, Mammootty, Fahadh Faasil and Parvathy Thiruvothu, among others.

The director, Priyadarshan, stated, "Dreaming is a part of life, and I had dreamt of making films. It was a dream come true to make a film with MT Vasudevan Nair. This moment is very special to me as I am now making my 97th film. In the past, I had tried to create a film with MT Vasudevan Nair but couldn't. I had almost given up on that dream, but then this opportunity happened, for which I thank God. I have fulfilled a big dream and have done two films in *Manorathangal*: *Olavum Theeravum* and *Shilalikhithangal*. As Mohanlal mentioned before, my desire to make a film began with reading the script of *Olavum Theeravum*. I thank God for making this dream come true and wish MT Vasudevan Nair a very happy birthday."

Manish Kalra, Chief Business Officer at ZEE5 India, expressed excitement about the project, noting its celebration of M.T.'s literary brilliance and Malayalam cinema's creative excellence. The anthology will also be available in Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu.

With its star-studded cast and rich storytelling, *Manorathangal* promises to be a landmark addition to Malayalam cinema.



## First single from Allari Naresh's *Bachhala Malli* out now

The much-anticipated mass and action entertainer *Bachhala Malli*, starring Allari Naresh, has begun its musical journey with the release of its first single, *Maa Oori Jatharalo*. The film, directed by Subbu Mangadevi and produced by Ramesh Danda and Balaji Gutta under the Hasya Movies banner, is set to hit theaters worldwide in September.

Following a buzzworthy first look and a special birthday glimpse of Allari Naresh, the release of *Maa Oori Jatharalo* has further piqued the audience's interest. The song is a charming blend of folk and funk, composed by Vishal Chandrasekhar, known for his work on *Sita Ramam*. It features the melodic vocals of Gowra Hari, celebrated for his work on *HanuMan* and *Sindhuri Vishal*.

Lyricist Sreemani has beautifully captured the heartfelt bond between Allari Naresh and Amritha Aiyer in the song's lyrics, portraying their deep affec-

tion. The lyrics narrate Naresh's desire to gift something special to his wife, who, in turn, finds joy in simply being with him.

The accompanying visuals are equally captivating, showcasing the on-screen chemistry between Naresh and Aiyer. The song is sure to become a new favorite on your playlist.

*Bachhala Malli* is directed by Subbu Mangadevi, recognised for *Solo Brathuke So Better* and produced by Ramesh Danda and Balaji Gutta, the team behind hits like *Samajavaragamana* and *Ooru Peru Bhairavakona*. The film features performances by Rohini, Rao Ramesh, Achyuth Kumar, Balagam Jayaram, Hari Teja, Praveen and Viva Harsha.

Cinematography is handled by Richard M Nathan, known for his work on *Maanaadu*, *Rangam* and *Matti Kushi*, with editing by Chota K Prasad and production design by Brahma Kadali.

The story and dialogues are written by Subbu Mangadevi, with Vipparthi Madhu providing the screenplay and Viswanetra contributing additional screenplay work. *Bachhala Malli* is scheduled to release in September 2024, and fans can look forward to more updates as the date approaches.



## Vishwak Sen adds more charm to *Roti Kapda Romance*

*Roti Kapda Romance*, the coming-of-age bromantic and romantic comedy, is produced by Bekkem Venugopal and Srujan Kumar Bojjam. Lucky Media of *Hushaaru*, *Cinema Choopistha Mama*, *Mem Vayasuku Vaccham*, *Prema Ishq Kadhal* and *Paagal* fame is poised to score a hit at the box office. The film will hit the screens worldwide on August 2nd.

A song titled *Galeez* from the movie was launched in the presence of Mass Ka Das Vishwak Sen as the chief guest.

Producer Srujan Kumar Bojjam said that everyone enjoyed a recent preview of the movie. "Everyone who saw the song *Galeez* in the movie requested its release. As per everyone's wishes, we have released the song today with Vishwak Sen launching it," the producer added. He expressed his confidence that the film will entertain everyone.

Producer Bekkem Venugopal said that Vishwak Sen always supports him. "Vishwak Sen helps a lot of newcomers. This is a youthful entertainer made with the intention of conveying a new message to the audience. Director Vikram Reddy has made a very impressive film. Recently, a show was held for young people and their feedback made the makers more confident. Harshavardhan Rameshwar's music is a big plus for the film. Rahul Sipligunj sang the song *Galeez* very well," he added.



## Ram Pothineni and Kavya Thapar are an absolute mood in *Maar Muntha Chod Chinta*

The anticipation surrounding Puri Jagannadh's *Double ISMART* is skyrocketing. To keep the excitement among fans, the makers are steadily unveiling catchy singles from the upcoming movie. The first track, *Steppa Maar*, became an instant hit and now the makers have released the second single (lyrical video) *Maar Muntha Chod Chinta*. This energetic dance number featuring Ram Pothineni and Kavya Thapar is an absolute banger. In the song, we see both Ram and Kavya performing some epic dance moves that are sure to go viral on the internet with those catchy lines.

Talking about the song, Ram Pothineni shared, "It's a fun dance number composed by Manisharma sir. I was quite excited about making a song using *Maar Muntha Chod Chinta* when Puri sir had shared this thought, as it was from a very popular line from *iSmart Shankar*. It's a peppy dance number and a perfect theatrical song for the audiences to vibe with the energy of the song on the big screen."

The song is sung by Nakash Aziz & Bhoomi Trivedi and the catchy lyrics are by Raqueeb Alam while the music is by Manisharma.

The film is directed by maverick filmmaker Puri Jagannadh. The duo earlier tasted success together with *iSmart Shankar*, a blockbuster.



The movie also stars Sanjay Dutt as the antagonist. Kavya Thapar is the lead actress opposite Ram.

*Double ISMART* will be released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi languages. The movie was produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmee Kaur on Puri Connects banner on 15th August 2024.

PIC

TALK

Director Sankalp Reddy, known for his work on *Ghazi* and *Antariksham*, has officially launched the trailer for his upcoming film *Just A Minute*. The event also marked the unveiling of the Sudharma Movie Makers banner logo. The highly anticipated film is set to hit cinemas on July 19th. Fans are eagerly awaiting the release, and the new trailer has generated significant buzz.

