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**Counter opposition propaganda against govt**



**GOYAL SETS US\$ 50 BN EXPORTS TARGET FOR LEATHER, FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY**



**Rakshit Atluri on bringing thrills, transformation to big SCREEN**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**The substantial rise in debt relative to income growth suggests heavy dependence on borrowing to fund expenditure, potentially endangering fiscal sustainability. The persistent rise in debt far outstripping income gains suggests that without stringent fiscal reforms, Telangana's financial health could be at risk, necessitating measures to balance expenditure with revenue generation and reduce dependence on borrowing.**

**-Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Deputy CM, Telangana**



P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Road connectivity to several villages...**

Though the flood water in the River Godavari has started receding, the road connectivity to several villages remained cut off as floodwater was overflowing on the road. The floodwater affected 20 villages in Velerupadu mandal and five villages in Kukkunuru mandal. Some of the villagers were shifted to relief camps and they are still in the centres since their villages were surrounded by the river Godavari water. As the roads leading to some villages were under flood water, the officials were operating 13 mechanized boats to reach the...

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**'Super-Jupiter' detected, could...**

A nearby "super-Jupiter" exoplanet -- about 12 light years away from Earth -- was detected and could be one of the coldest, according to an international study, including researchers from IIT Kanpur. Estimating the temperature on the planet at two degrees Celsius, the authors said that Epsilon Indi Ab is colder than any other imaged exoplanet -- planets existing outside of our solar system. The closest one is Proxima Centauri b at about four light years from Earth, according to NASA, the US space agency...

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**Indian garment factories follow...**

Indian garment factories follow sustainable manufacturing practices by increasing the usage of renewable energy, and zero-liquid discharge, AIEPC said on Thursday. As the world is moving towards zero-carbon emission, demand for eco-friendly products are increasing in the global markets. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AIEPC), which has taken a big delegation to Tokyo for the India Text Trends Fair, said the aim is to increase exports from India to Japan and to encourage and invite investment...

-PAGE: 8

**Gambhir's first headache: Pant...**

New India head coach Gautam Gambhir will have the onerous task of choosing between Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson during the three-match T20 series against Sri Lanka starting from Saturday. While most of the key stars of the T20 World Cup winning side sans the retiring duo of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are in the Island nation, the choice between two flamboyant wicketkeeper batters Pant and Samson won't be an easy one. Worse, even with two slots vacant, one can't fit in both the hard-hitting...

-SPORTS

## NDA govt aims crime-free AP: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has declared that the coalition government's goal is to create a crime-free Andhra Pradesh, assuring citizens that peace and security will be restored. In the Assembly, he released a white paper on the law and order situation from 2019 to 2024, emphasising that stringent action will be taken against anyone causing disruption, regardless of their status.

In his address, the Chief Minister alleged that YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had looted the State. He reiterated the NDA government's policy of zero tolerance for crime. Naidu stated that 250 SCs and STs and 2,027 women were brutally murdered in various parts of the State over the past five years. He also highlighted the dramatisation of the murder of YS Vivekananda Reddy, the paternal uncle of Pulivendula MLA YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, and expressed regret over the harassment of former minister and Assembly speaker Dr. Kodela Sivaprasad, which allegedly led to his suicide.

Chandrababu Naidu said that in a democracy, the government's primary responsibility is to protect the lives and assets of its citizens. He criticised the previous administration for neglecting law and order for five years, contrasting it with the disciplined approach of the Andhra Pradesh police. Naidu recalled that

- Naidu accuses YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of looting the State.
- He highlights the NDA government's zero tolerance for crime policy
- Brutal murders of 250 SCs/STs and 2,027 women in the past five years explained.
- Naidu criticises the previous government for neglecting law and order



- He says steps between 2014-2019, like the PD Act, reduced crime rates significantly.
- He accuses the YSRCP govt of using GO No. 1 to suppress TDP activities.
- Releases white paper on law & order during 2019-24
- Naidu mentions facing 17 cases in the past five years, largely politically motivated.
- CM says JC Prabhakar Reddy faced 66 cases and was arrested 46 times.
- Plans police reforms and use of tech to control ganja abuse.

there was no compromise on law and order in the combined State despite various challenges.

The Chief Minister stated, "To avoid allegations of political vengeance, we first arrested our party MLA and then took others into custody. The region began progressing only then." He noted that

measures taken between 2014 and 2019, including the Prevention of Detention (PD) Act, instilled fear in lawbreakers. As a result, the State saw a 15% reduction in murders, 16% in kidnappings, 20% in physical attacks, 25% in lootings, and 11% in harassment cases.

Naidu also revealed that 17 cases

were registered against him in the past five years, except for one instance when he staged a protest for the Babli project in Telangana. He mentioned that seven cases were filed against Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, who was forcibly removed from Visakhapatnam.

Continued on Page 2



### Polavaram: Cabinet nod for new diaphragm wall

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP Cabinet has approved the proposal to build the new diaphragm wall of the Polavaram project during this session. The proposal was made on Thursday at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu.

An international team of irrigation experts from the USA and Canada had previously inspected the damaged diaphragm wall and submitted their report. The technical committee recommended the construction of a new diaphragm wall, as the existing structure was damaged at three locations during the 2019-20 floods.

The Andhra Pradesh government will propose the new diaphragm wall construction to NITI Aayog. Chief Minister Naidu is scheduled to present this proposal at the NITI Aayog meeting on July 27 in Delhi.

**The technical committee recommended the construction of a new diaphragm wall, as the existing structure was damaged at three locations during the 2019-20 floods.**

Since Cabinet approval is required for proposals submitted to NITI Aayog, an emergency Cabinet meeting was convened. Additionally, the Cabinet passed a resolution expressing appreciation for the Central government's prioritisation of Andhra Pradesh in the Union Budget for 2024-25. The Cabinet also reviewed the height of the Polavaram project, which was originally set at 45.72 m (150 feet) but was reduced to 41.15 m (135 feet) by the previous government in 2023.



### Rs 674 crore paddy dues to be cleared soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Nadendla Manohar, announced that the government plans to settle paddy procurement dues of approximately Rs.674 crore within the next one or two weeks. He highlighted that the previous YSRCP government had left Rs.1,674 crore unpaid, but his administration has already cleared Rs.1,000 crore. The remaining Rs.674 crore will be cleared soon, aiding farmers in making investments for the Kharif season.

During the 2023-24 Kharif season, the government procured 29.97 metric tons of paddy from 4.97 lakh farmers, amounting to Rs.6549.15 crore. In the Rabi season, 12.64 metric tons of paddy were procured from 1.32 lakh farmers. Minister Manohar acknowledged the rise in essential goods prices in the state and mentioned that the government is working to control these price increases. As part of this effort, dal and rice will be supplied to consumers at subsidized prices.

## Govt to tie up with pvt agencies for setting up e-waste recycling units

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Environment, Forest, and Science & Technology, K. Pawan Kalyan, has announced plans to establish e-waste recycling units in each district headquarters of Andhra Pradesh in collaboration with private agencies. This initiative will supplement the existing six e-waste recycling units, reflecting the state's commitment to improving its e-waste management capabilities. Andhra Pradesh currently ranks 12th nationally in e-waste collection and processing.

During the Legislative Council sessions chaired by Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan responded to queries about e-waste production. He noted that six



registered e-waste recyclers are operational in Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati, and Anantapur, tasked with the collection, recycling, and disposal of e-waste.

He revealed that Andhra Pradesh collected and processed 2,021.19 tons of e-waste in the 2021-22 financial year, based on estimates from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB),

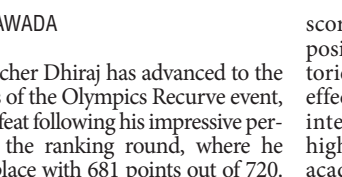
which derives data from country-wide sales reported by producers. The recyclers segregate e-waste into plastics, precious and other metals, hazardous waste, and other materials. Plastic waste is repurposed into granules/pellets, hazardous waste is managed by pre-processors and Treatment Storage Disposal Facilities (TSDF), and precious and other metals are extracted by the e-waste recycling units.

Additionally, Deputy CM Kalyan provided data on e-waste collection and recycling over the past three financial years. In 2020-21, approximately 229.083 tons of e-waste were collected, with 159.5 tons recycled. In 2021-22, 2,164.34 tons were collected and 2,114.5 tons recycled. For the 2022-23 fiscal year, 1,060 tons were recycled out of the 1,302.337 tons collected.

## City archer earns 4<sup>th</sup> seed in Olympics ranking round

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

City-based archer Dhiraj has advanced to the quarter-finals of the Olympics Recurve event, a remarkable feat following his impressive performance in the ranking round, where he secured 4th place with 681 points out of 720. His participation across Individual, Mixed, and Team events underscores his versatility and skill. Additionally, the Indian team's overall performance has been outstanding, with a 3rd place finish in the team event and a total



score of 2,013 points. This strong showing positions them well for potential medal victories. Dhiraj's success is a testament to the effective training he received under the late international archer Cherukuri Lenin, highlighting the significant role of his academy in developing talent.

As the quarter-finals in Paris approach, anticipation builds. Dhiraj's achievements so far are a source of pride for Vijayawada and Indian sports enthusiasts. The Olympics will officially kick off on July 26.

## Man kills sister-in-law, her 2 kids and ends life

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a tragic incident, a man allegedly stabbed to death his sister-in-law and her two daughters at their residence in Padmavati Nagar on Wednesday night. ASP Kulasekhar informed the media that the accused, T. Mohan (35), a software engineer, had experienced personal turmoil over the past few years. After marrying in 2019, Mohan divorced his wife in 2020. His elder brother, T.P. Das, and his wife, Sunita (40), arranged another marriage for Mohan a few months ago, but his second wife left him recently, which reportedly caused him severe

mental distress. On Wednesday, Mohan consumed alcohol and visited his brother's home when Das was not present.

According to the police, Mohan then allegedly attacked and fatally stabbed his sister-in-law, Sunita, and her daughters, Devisri (13) and Neeraja (10). Devisri was a student in the eighth grade, and Neeraja was in the sixth grade.

After committing the murders, Mohan reportedly hanged himself from a ceiling fan in the same house.

When T.P. Das returned home later, he found the doors locked from the inside.

Continued on Page 2

## NCDC aid to AP co-op societies rises 370% in 2 years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has substantially increased its financial support to cooperative societies and federations in Andhra Pradesh, with a remarkable 370% rise in the past two years. Assistance from NCDC surged from ₹2,831.59 crore in 2021-22 to ₹13,280.13 crore in 2023-24. As reported in the Rajya Sabha by Union Minister Amit Shah, there are currently 17,675 registered Cooperative Societies in Andhra Pradesh according to the National Cooperative Database (NCD) portal.

Minister Shah elaborated that NCDC provides financial aid to cooperative societies and federations nationwide.

Over the last three years, NCDC disbursed ₹1,34,670.90 crore in



loans and ₹1,200.04 crore in grants. To enhance the efficiency of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies

(PACS), the Government of India has approved a ₹2,516 crore project for their computerization. This initiative

**As reported in the Rajya Sabha by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, there are currently 17,675 registered Cooperative Societies in Andhra Pradesh according to the National Cooperative Database (NCD) portal. Minister Shah elaborated that NCDC provides financial aid to cooperative societies and federations nationwide.**

aims to integrate all functional PACS into a unified ERP-based national software system, linking them with

NABARD through State Cooperative Banks (SCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs). The project includes 67,009 PACS from 30 states and union territories, with hardware procured for 28 states/UTs. So far, 25,674 PACS have been onboarded onto the ERP software, and 15,207 are operational. The Government of India has allocated ₹654.22 crore to 29 states/UTs for hardware procurement, digitization, and support systems over the fiscal years 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25.

RS MP Parimal Nathwani had inquired about the number of cooperative societies in the country, government measures for revitalization, transparency, modernization, competitiveness, and capacity building of these societies, and the financial assistance provided for their expansion following the establishment of a separate Ministry.

# 3,13,832 TIDCO houses to be completed by Dec: Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Minister Ponguru Narayana announced that all efforts are being made to complete the construction of TIDCO houses, along with the provision of basic facilities, by the end of December. Minister Narayana responded to questions posed by TDP MLAs PGVR Naidu, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, Tenali Shriram Kumar, and Kolikapudi Srinivasa Rao during the Assembly sessions on Thursday.

Answering inquiries about the details of TIDCO houses constructed between 2014 and 2019 and the basic facilities provided in various areas of Visakhapatnam district, Minister Narayana highlighted the ambitious undertaking of TIDCO houses for poor women



The central government has approved the construction of a total of 7,01,481 houses through TIDCO. Of these, 5,00,000 houses received administrative permissions under the previous TDP government.

across the state. He emphasized that the Chief Minister aimed for these houses to be built and handed over to the women beneficiaries to ensure their happiness with their families.

Minister Narayana shared that during his visit abroad for the construction of Amaravati's capital, he studied how houses were constructed for the poor in other countries.

The central government has approved the construction of a total of 7,01,481 houses through TIDCO. Of these, 5,00,000 houses received administrative permissions under the previous TDP government.

Minister Narayana detailed that tenders were called for 3,13,832 houses, with 77,371 houses completed, 89,671 houses at 75%

completion, and 49,329 houses at 50% completion. By 2019, 2,16,370 houses were completed, and 52,192 houses were removed from the list due to the YSRCP government not achieving even 25% completion.

Currently, 2,61,640 houses have been started in 104 municipalities. In Visakhapatnam's Padmanabha Nagar, tenders for 864 houses have been called, with 504 houses allocated in Mulagada and 336 houses completed. Minister Narayana noted that while the construction of houses has been completed in some places, basic facilities have not yet been provided to the beneficiaries.

He assured the legislators that all efforts are being made to complete the 3,13,832 houses by the end of December.

## 2 Jharkhand MLAs disqualified under anti-defection law

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Assembly Speaker's Tribunal on Thursday disqualified two legislators under anti-defection law with effect from July 26, an official said.

The order disqualifying JMM's Lobin Hembrom and Congress's Jai Prakash Bhai Patel from the House came on the eve of the assembly's six-day monsoon session beginning on Friday.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the BJP had initiated proceedings under the anti-defection law against Hembrom and Patel respectively in the Speaker's Tribunal.

Hembrom contested independently from the Rajmahal Lok Sabha seat, challenging JMM's official candidate, Vijay Hansdak. Patel joined the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha polls and contested from Hazaribag seat.

# APTRANSCO bags two prestigious awards

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Transmission Corporation of Andhra Pradesh Ltd (APTRANSCO) has received two prestigious awards at the Southern India level. The 'South Govtech Symposium Award' in the category of 'Digital Transformation Excellence' was awarded for the Joint Meter Reading (JMR) Application developed by the IT Wing of APTRANSCO. Additionally, APTRANSCO won the IT Innovation Award for its innovative steps in developing and implementing a demand forecasting model based on cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) by the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) of APTRANSCO. The awards were presented to APTRANSCO officials by representatives of the Governance Now South Gov-Tech Symposium in a ceremony held on Wednesday in Hyderabad.

Special Chief Secretary Energy & CMD APTRANSCO, K Vijayanand, along with MD APGENCO, KVN Chakradhar Babu, and JMD HR & Admin/APTRANSCO, Kirthi Chekuri, congratulated the IT/Telecom team of



APTRANSCO and the State Load Dispatch Centre for their achievements. They appreciated the efforts of the concerned IT and SLDC teams in gaining recognition at the Southern India level.

Vijayanand urged officials to maintain sustained efforts in operational excellence in the power sector under the guidance of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar. He emphasized the importance of continuing to achieve more awards for power utilities in the future.

Addressing the officials on winning the Digital Excellence award, the Special Chief Secretary

said that the JMR application helps field engineers submit energy particulars online with secure digital signature transactions. This process eliminates the conventional procedure, saves time, and ensures data security through DSC authentication.

"The implementation of the JMR application has enabled the APCC department to eliminate Late Payment Surcharges (LPS) and receive rebates on invoice bills due to reduced delays. Normally, surcharges amount to around 15% of the invoice's total amount, with a rebate of around 1%. With annual invoice processing of around Rs 50,000 crore, it is estimated that APCC benefits by around Rs 750 crore by implementing the JMR Online Application," Vijayanand said.

"I am happy to share that this innovation is the first of its kind in the power utilities in the country. This AI model has superseded the traditional manual forecasting approach previously employed at the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC). The JMR Application has enabled APCC to eliminate late payment surcharges, thereby receiving rebates by reducing delays," said Vijayanand, Special Chief Secretary of Energy.

## TG public debt to touch Rs 4.5L cr by FY 2025

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's total outstanding public debt may cross Rs 4,50,910 crore at the end of FY25 while the debt to GDP ratio will remain at 27.4%. The debt which is at 4.01 lakh crore in FY24 is going to touch Rs 4.50 lakh crore in FY25. As per the budget estimates, the Congress government proposed to raise Rs 57,112 crore through open market borrowings, Rs 3,900 crore from the Union government and Rs 1,000 crore from other loans. The total open market borrowings would be Rs 3,58,541 crore as per Budget estimates for FY24, which was Rs 314,546 crore in FY24.

Loans from the Central government last year was Rs 18,057 crore while in FY25, it is estimated at Rs 21,559 crore. The loans from autonomous bodies are slightly less from Rs 13,095 crore in FY24 to Rs 11,098 crore in FY25.

# Indian and US navies strengthen ties at RIMPAC 2024

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A landmark bilateral discussion on the sidelines of the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024 exercise has solidified the burgeoning cooperation between the Indian Navy and the United States Navy. Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command (FOCINC ENC), and Vice Admiral John F. G. Wade, Commander of the US Third Fleet, engaged in high-level talks, emphasizing the deepening strategic partnership between the two naval forces.

Vice Admiral Wade lauded the Indian Navy's active and impactful participation in RIMPAC 2024. The Indian contingent was praised for its operational excellence and professionalism, featuring the guided-missile frigate INS Shivalik, the long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft



P8I, and the elite Marine Commandos (MARCOS). Notably, the Indian Navy's inaugural leadership roles in the exercise were highlighted as key drivers for enhanced integration and interoperability between the navies.

"The Indian Navy's participation and leadership at RIMPAC 2024 are commendable and crucial for fostering deeper maritime cooperation," Vice

Admiral Wade stated. "Their leadership roles are pivotal for enhancing the operational synergy between our forces."

The discussions spanned a comprehensive range of topics, reflecting the intricate and vital nature of the Indo-Pacific maritime security landscape. Central to the dialogue was the US Navy's ongoing focus on environmental stewardship, a fundamental principle of RIM-

PAC 2024. This focus underscores the commitment of both navies to sustainable maritime operations and the preservation of the marine environment. Additionally, the bilateral talks explored various technological challenges and opportunities, aiming to strengthen cooperation on issues of mutual interest. Both sides acknowledged the importance of leveraging advanced technologies to address modern maritime security threats and enhance joint operational effectiveness.

The meeting between Vice Admiral Pendharkar and Vice Admiral Wade represents a significant advancement in the strategic partnership between the Indian and US navies. It reflects a shared dedication to maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts in ensuring regional stability and security.

## NDA govt aims...

Continued from Page 1

"When Pawan Kalyan attempted to enter the State while I was arrested, he was stopped at the inter-state border and staged a protest on the road," Naidu added.

The Chief Minister expressed regret over the daylight murder of TDP activist Tota Chandraiah, who was killed for resisting pro-Jagan slogans. Naidu highlighted several similar incidents.

Naidu accused the government of using GO number 1 to suppress TDP activities, with some leaders placed under house arrest and thousands of party

activists detained on false charges. He noted that TDP leader JC Prabhakar Reddy faced the highest number of cases (66) and was arrested 46 times. Additionally, Dr. Sudhakar was branded a madman for demanding masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, and senior IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao was denied a posting for five years.

Reiterating that YS Jagan is unfit for politics, Naidu announced plans to introduce reforms in the police system and raise awareness about new criminal laws. He added that the latest technology would be utilised to control drug and ganja abuse.

## Speaker discusses problems of RMPs with Minister Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Assembly Speaker Ch Ayyanna Patrudu discussed the problems of Rural Medical Practitioners (RMP) with Minister Nara Lokesh in the Speaker's Chamber on Thursday.

During the meeting, there was a wide range of discussion about the problems of RMPs and the steps to be taken to solve their problems. The Telangana Non-Qualified Practitioners Association (TNCPA) expressed happiness that this discussion will have a good outcome for all RMP rural doctors. TNCPA State Working President M Ravichandra and General



Secretary Sheikh Rasool expressed their special thanks and gratitude to the speaker Ch Ayyanna Patrudu and Minister Nara Lokesh on behalf of all the rural doctors.

The problems faced by the rural doctors while performing dirty were discussed. Minister

Nara Lokesh has promised to look into these issues positively and take the necessary steps to solve them. TNCPA believes that this development is good news for all rural doctors. They expressed hope that though these decisions soon their issues will be solved.

## MP Chinni meets Gadkari, seeks new flyover in V'wada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) met with Union Minister of Roads, Transport, and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Thursday to discuss the four-lane flyover project planned from Mahanadu Junction to Nidadanuru Railway Bridge on National Highway No 16. This project is set to be the longest flyover in Vijayawada City.

During their meeting in Gadkari's chamber in Parliament, MP Sivanath congratulated the Minister on his third term as Union Minister of Roads, Transport, and Highways and expressed his gratitude for the approval of the Amaravati Outer Ring Road and the Vijayawada East Bypass.

MP Sivanath requested Minister Gadkari to instruct NHA officials to submit the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the flyover project by the end of July.

He also urged the commencement of the flyover project in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, emphasizing the need for swift completion. He highlighted that the completion of this flyover would significantly alleviate traffic congestion in Vijayawada and provide quicker access to Gannavaram Airport.

Minister Gadkari responded positively to the representation, instructing NHA officials to prepare the DPR. He assured MP Sivanath of full assistance in expediting the flyover construction.

## Man kills sister...

Continued from Page 1

With the help of neighbours, he broke open the door and discovered the bodies of his wife, daughters, and younger brother. SP Subba Rayudu visited the crime scene, and the police registered a case. The bodies were moved to the GGH for postmortem examination. This shocking incident has left the Padmavati Nagar community in distress. The exact motive behind the crime is still under investigation, according to ASP Kulasekhar.

## Jagan blocking flow of...

Continued from Page 1

Anitha challenged Jagan to present the names of the deceased in the Legislative Assembly instead of making statements in Delhi. She questioned the effectiveness of his actions outside the Assembly sessions in Andhra Pradesh. Additionally, Anitha accused Jagan of attempting to deter investors from coming to Andhra Pradesh by spreading false information. She reminded him of his conduct when the YSRCP was in power. Minister Anitha stated that if detailed information about the murders is provided, the police will conduct a thorough investigation.

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha  
Tithi: Shashthi: Jul 26 01:58 AM to Jul 26 11:30 PM  
Saptami: Jul 26 11:30 PM to Jul 27 09:19 PM  
Nakshatram: Uttar Bhadrabhadra: Jul 25 04:16 PM to Jul 26 02:30 PM  
Revati: Jul 26 02:30 PM to Jul 27 12:59 PM  
Rahukalam: 10:46 AM to 12:22 PM  
Yamagandam: 3:35 PM to 5:11 PM  
Varjyam: 01:45 AM to 03:15 AM  
Gulika: 7:33 AM to 9:10 AM  
Amritakalam: 10:03 AM to 11:32 AM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 AM to 12:48 PM  
**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**  
Forecast: Cloudy  
Temp: 32°C  
Humidity: 72%  
Sunrise: 5:46 AM  
Sunset: 6:41 PM  
Updated: July 25, 2024 5:00 PM

## IT RETURNS TO BE SUBMITTED BEFORE JULY 31

# Taxpayers told not to make any false claims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Joint Commissioner of Income Tax department Ashish Kumar Shukla suggested that taxpayers should not make any false claims and file the Income Tax returns (ITR) as per the rules.

The Income Tax department officials briefed drawing and disbursing officers, zonal and circle officers, establishment clerks of various departments of GHMC about ITR filing, responsibilities of taxpayers, tax evasion, false refund claims as per IT norms and income-filing on Thursday.

He said that all types of income

details should be given in the income filing and documents related to exemptions and deductions should be submitted to the DDO. Do not give any wrong details. Similarly, it is advised to cross-check while filing ITR. Income tax returns can be filed in the new/old regime.

"The ITR should be submitted before July 31 and the documentation should be properly submitted in the ITR submission.

The respective DDOs should examine the total income, deductions etc, in relation to the employees. Properly ITR filing and submission is suggested. If there are any doubts,

## SALES VALUE SOARS 27%, WHILE TRANSACTIONS RISE 11%

# Hyd homebuyers opt for bigger, costlier homes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A report by Square Yards has revealed that homebuyers in Hyderabad are opting for bigger homes. The city witnessed a commendable growth in registered home sales transactions both annually (11 per cent) and sequentially (4 per cent) during the April-June 2024 period. A total of 19,574 transactions were recorded in IGR, underscoring the city's vibrant real estate activity.

In the June 2024 quarter, the registered sales value surged to Rs 11,953 crore, marking a robust 27 per cent increase from the same period last year. The average registered home sales value in Hyderabad climbed to Rs 61 lakh, reflecting a 15 per cent annual growth. In line with this trend, the share of transactions for properties priced between Rs 50 lakh-1 crore increased to 28



per cent in the June quarter, up from 21 per cent during the same period the previous year. Additionally, the share of transactions for properties priced between Rs 1-2 crore nearly doubled, rising to 14 per cent from 8 per cent in the same period.

This shift towards more expensive properties coincides with a preference for larger homes, with 45 per cent of transactions being for apart-

ments between 1,000-1,500 sq.ft. in size, and 37 per cent for those between 1,500-2,000 sq.ft., up from 31 per cent same period last year. During this period, the total area of homes sold reached 29 million square feet, 15 per cent higher as compared to previous year.

Debayan Bhattacharya, Principal Partner & Sales Director, Square Yards said, "The Hyderabad proper-

ty market is on a remarkable upward trajectory. Our latest figures show an 11 per cent annual increase in registered transactions and a substantial 27 per cent rise in registered home sales value for the June quarter. This growth reflects a strong appetite among homebuyers for premium and spacious properties, particularly those from reputable developers such as Prestige and Brigade offering high-quality amenities."

He further added, "As the city's expanding IT sector continues to drive residential demand, we're seeing increased interest from not only end-users but also investors, drawn by attractive returns. Looking ahead, we anticipate that both demand and supply will continue to strengthen, solidifying Hyderabad's position as a leading residential real estate hub not only in the southern region but across India."

# Sharmila for relief to flood-hit ryots

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

APCC president YS Sharmila has written to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu seeking compensation for flood-hit farmers and immediate desilting of drains and canals. She said that the coastal districts have been severely affected by last week's heavy rainfall.

Sharmila demanded immediate action to address the losses suffered by the farming community due to the floods. "It is disappointing to note that neither your cabinet colleagues nor the local MLAs or



**"It is disappointing to note that neither your cabinet colleagues nor the local MLAs or MPs are seen addressing the plight of the farmers in the affected areas and this starkly contrasts with the frequent promises and assurances made by your government. The Congress strongly urges you to treat this situation as a State Emergency. We request the immediate deployment of teams to assess the damage and the prompt announcement and disbursement of sufficient compensation to the affected farmers," she wrote.**

MPs are seen addressing the plight of the farmers in the affected areas and this starkly contrasts with the frequent

promises and assurances made by your government. The Congress strongly urges you to treat this situation as a

State Emergency. We request the immediate deployment of teams to assess the damage and the prompt announce-

ment and disbursement of sufficient compensation to the affected farmers," she wrote.

Sharmila said that the floods contributed to the flooding of the drainage system, exacerbated by the accumulation of silt in drains. "The previous government failed to address this problem, neglecting desilting and canal repairs, and potentially diverting funds intended for these purposes. We request you to immediately allocate funds and direct the district authorities to desilt drains and repair canals."

# 'Budget announcements will boost marine products sector'

MPEDA Chairman says seafood exports reached a record Rs 60,000 crore in last fiscal year

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has applauded the recent announcements made in the Union Budget 2024-25, which are set to significantly enhance India's aquaculture and seafood export sectors. The budget includes a range of strategic measures aimed at bolstering the competitiveness of India's marine products sector, with a particular focus on shrimp production and export.

In a press release, the MPEDA Regional officials here on Thursday said that the government has committed to providing substantial financial support to establish a network of Nucleus Breeding Centres (NBCs) for shrimp broodstock. This initiative is anticipated to drastically reduce India's reliance on imported broodstock, potentially saving the industry up to ₹150 crore annually. Hatchery operators are expected to benefit significantly, with projected savings of 50 per cent on broodstock costs. Approximately one lakh farmers will benefit from a 30 per cent reduction in shrimp seed costs.

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) will play a crucial role in facilitating financing for shrimp farming, processing, and export. This intervention is designed to cover 80 per cent of project costs for farmers, accompanied by an interest subvention of up to three per cent. A total of 639 export processing units are expected to benefit from enhanced access to infrastructure development funds, enabling them to improve and



MPEDA chairman DV Swamy

expand their facilities through assistance from NABARD.

Various inputs used in the manufacture of shrimp and fish feed will now enjoy customs duty exemptions. Various feed inputs viz. mineral and vitamin pre-mixes, krill meal, fish lipid oil, crude fish oil, algal prime, and algal oil were fully exempted from any import duty. Artemia and Artemia cysts which are key nutritional inputs in aqua hatchery were also fully exempted from any import duty.

The Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on essential aqua-farm/hatchery inputs such as Vannamei and black tiger broodstock, polychaete worms, and fish/shrimp feed has been reduced to five per cent. Import duty for insect meal and single-cell protein was also reduced to five per cent. Breaded and battered shrimps, fish fingers, squid rings, etc. are in high demand in the international market. Pre-dusted breeding powder is one of the integral ingredients for manufacturing the product. Pre-dusted powder for

seafood processing was exempted from 30 per cent import duty.

MPEDA Chairman DV Swamy stated: "These budget announcements are a testament to the government's unwavering commitment to positioning India as a global leader in seafood exports. The proposed measures will substantially lower production costs, elevate quality, and enhance the international competitiveness of Indian marine products."

MPEDA hoped that these initiatives would lead to a significant increase in shrimp production, enhanced biosecurity, and a notable surge in value-added seafood exports. The marine products sector has been a vital contributor to India's export earnings, with seafood exports reaching an all-time high of over ₹60,000 crore in the last financial year. With these supportive measures in place, MPEDA is confident that the sector would achieve new milestones in production and export performance, he explained.



## MID-DAY MEAL

# DC: Set up kitchen gardens in schools

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector A Shyam Prasad, on Thursday, emphasised the pivotal role of schools in fostering the overall well-being of students. During a comprehensive review meeting with the Education Department, he outlined a vision for schools that prioritise both academic excellence and physical health.

A cornerstone of this vision is the establishment of kitchen gardens within school premises. Recognising the prevalence of nutritional deficiencies such as anaemia among students, the Collector stressed the importance of incorporating fresh, locally grown produce into the mid-day meal scheme. By cultivating a variety of vegetables, including leafy greens, carrots, beets, and pulses, schools can significantly enhance students' dietary intake and contribute to their overall health.

Beyond nutrition, the Collector underscored the significance of maintaining hygienic environments in school. Regular cleaning of

drinking water tanks, proper sanitation facilities, and overall cleanliness of the school premises were highlighted as essential components of a healthy learning environment.

To elevate educational standards, the Collector called for a renewed focus on timely completion of the syllabus and effective teaching practices.

He emphasised the role of teachers in monitoring students' progress and providing necessary support. Additionally, the Collector encouraged the organisation of science exhibitions to stimulate scientific curiosity and promote critical thinking.

The Collector advocated the identification and nurturing of sports talent among students. He expressed hope that by providing opportunities for students to excel in sports, they could represent the district at national and international levels. District Education Officer Gara Pagadalamma, along with Deputy Education Officers, Mandal Education Officers, and KGBV Special Officers, participated in the meeting.

# VMC's new Commissioner Dhyanchandra takes charge

Says satisfaction of people his primary goal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The new Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner, HM Dhyanchandra, assumed office on Thursday.

Addressing the media later, he said that his primary goal is to ensure the satisfaction of the people. Also, he said he will give top priority to maintaining sanitation in the city. He said no citizen in all 64 divisions should face any inconvenience due to the poor maintenance of sanitation.

Further, he assured that he would strive to supply safe drinking water to the people. He would supervise and monitor the drinking water pipeline leakages in the side drains. Additionally, he said the VMC would take care of the usage of water by sewage treatment to improve it. Also, he spoke about reducing pollution by increasing the greenery in the city. It will in turn help people lead a healthy life, he added.

Meanwhile, he made it clear that the VMC is taking necessary steps to implement the projects from the State and Central governments. He would monitor the currently implemented schemes in the city after conducting a review



Municipal Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra greeting Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi at her chamber on the VMC premises on Thursday

with officials.

Later, Commissioner Dhyanchandra met Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi on a courtesy call. VMC officials met the new Commissioner.

Soon after taking charge as Commissioner,

Dhyanchandra visited the Anna Canteen that is getting ready to be inaugurated at Dharna Chowk near the Alankar Theater in the city. He asked the officials concerned to provide all necessary facilities in the canteen.

# Paderu Command Control Centres a boon during floods

PNS ■ PADERU

In the face of unprecedented floods that have wreaked havoc in the region, the Command Control Centres established in Paderu have emerged as a beacon of hope for thousands affected by the calamity. Under the astute leadership of District Collector A.N. Dinesh Kumar, these centres have been instrumental in coordinating relief efforts, saving lives, and providing essential support to the flood-stricken population.

Since July 21, the Collector has been personally overseeing the relief operations from Chintoor, ensuring a swift and effective response to the crisis. Command and Control Centres have been set up in Chintoor, Kunavaram, and V.R. Puram mandals, with a central hub in Chintoor. These centres are continuously monitoring the flood situation, including the water levels of the Godavari and Sabari rivers, and



District Collector A.N. Dinesh Kumar along with senior officials in flood relief operations

disseminating critical information to officials and the public. The district administration has mobilised its resources to address the pressing needs of the affected population. Over 149 rehabilitation centres have been established, providing shelter, food, and medical care to approximately 4,500 people. Essential supplies, including food, clothing, and medicines, are being distributed, and medical camps have been set up to prevent the outbreak of diseases.

The Collector has been holding daily teleconferences with officials to assess the situation on the ground and direct relief efforts. A comprehensive damage assessment is underway to determine the extent of losses and provide necessary support to the affected families. The commendable efforts of the district administration and the dedicated work of the Command Control Centres have been instrumental in mitigating the impact of the floods and providing succor to the distressed people of Paderu.

# Budget will stimulate growth, foster innovation, hopes CII

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Vijayawada zone, organised a post-budget analysis session here on Thursday. On the occasion, DV Ravindranath, Chairman, CII Vijayawada zone, said the budget marks a critical juncture in our journey, aiming to stimulate growth, foster innovation, and ensure sustainability. He opined that the budget is designed to address immediate needs while laying a robust

foundation for long-term development.

D Ramakrishna, past chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh, pointed out in his special address that digital technologies have a profound impact on the finance sector. Fintech plays a major role in our day-to-day lives, where a Fixed Deposit (FD) can be opened or closed through a few clicks on a mobile phone. He narrated how a street vendor used to have a service provider and a money collector

to manage financial transactions.

Venumadhavi, partner, EY, and Seshasayi V, Director, EY, made a detailed presentation on direct and indirect taxes and the implications of the Union Budget 2024-25 on industry across all sectors. Over 60 participants from across sectors participated in the session. Industry members actively participated and sought clarification and exchanged views on various aspects of the Union Budget.

# CREDAI discusses Vizag's progress with district authorities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The office-bearers of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI), Visakhapatnam chapter, including chairman KSRK Raju, president V Dharmender, honorary secretary V Sreenu, EC members, and Youth and Women's wing members, met District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad and Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) Commissioner P Sampath Kumar on Thursday to discuss

the association's vision and goals for the city's development.

During the meeting, Collector Harendhira Prasad emphasised the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in supporting the district's growth. He urged CREDAI to channel their resources and efforts towards the development of essential public facilities, including hospitals, schools, and hostels. The District Collector highlighted that these contributions would significantly enhance the quality of life for the residents of Visakhapatnam and ensure bet-



ter access to education and healthcare.

GVMC Commissioner P Sampath Kumar stressed on developing Visakhapatnam into



an eco-friendly and green city. He called for sustainable development practices and urged CREDAI to integrate eco-friendly measures in their projects.

He underscored the necessity of preserving the natural environment while fostering urban growth, promoting initiatives that support clean energy, waste management, and green infrastructure.

The office-bearers of CREDAI expressed their commitment to aligning with the district's developmental goals. They outlined their strategies to incorporate sustainable practices in their real estate projects and assured their support in various promotional activities aimed at uplifting the community.

# INTACH launches initiative to preserve 'heritage trees'

Trees that reduce air pollution and contribute to groundwater recharge are considered heritage trees

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has embarked on a commendable eco-friendly project to conserve the city's heritage trees. This initiative aims to safeguard these living monuments, ensuring their survival and ecological benefits for future generations. Preliminary assessments by INTACH indicate the presence of a potentially vast urban forest within the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) limits. There could be upwards of 20,000 heritage trees scattered across an impressive 500 square kilometers.

So, what makes a tree a heritage tree? Professor K. Kameswara Rao, a retired environmental science professor from Andhra University and a key player in the initiative, explains, "We have specific criteria. Trees that significantly reduce air pollution and contribute to groundwater recharge are considered heritage trees. We believe there are at least 20,000 such trees in Visakhapatnam."

Public participation is crucial for the project's success, emphasises INTACH Convener Rajasekar Reddy. "If you know of a heritage tree, contact INTACH with its location on Google Maps if possible. Our team will visit the site



to identify the tree and assess its heritage value," he says. Reddy encouraged everyone to get involved, sharing his contact details: "You can reach me at 9866290915 or intachvizag@gmail.com"

A dedicated team of Visakhapatnam's environmentalists is actively involved in identifying these heritage trees. These veterans, ranging from 50 to 300 years old, hold immense cultural, historical, and ecological significance. They have silently witnessed Visakhapatnam's growth, offering a shield against environmental threats. For instance, a 130-year-old tree standing near the Waltair Divisional Railway Manager's office at

Dondaparthi is recognised as a heritage tree, a testament to the city's railway history. Similarly, the giant banyan tree at Andhra University's Directorate of Admissions Office is valued for its remarkable environmental contribution, having absorbed an estimated 5,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.

INTACH is creating a comprehensive database of these heritage trees to raise public awareness about their importance and the necessity of their preservation. This initiative is a significant step towards safeguarding Visakhapatnam's ecological balance and rich cultural heritage for generations to come.

# 7<sup>th</sup> Class student sets hostel mates on fire, one critical

PNS ■ ELURU

A shocking incident occurred in a hostel where a 7th Class student poured petrol on his co-students and set them on fire while they were asleep. This incident took place in the early hours of Wednesday. One student sustained serious burn injuries, and another suffered minor injuries.

Three Towns SI Prasad reported that the students were asleep in the boys' hostel when the incident happened. The accused, a 7th Class student from a private school in Gudivada town, had returned to the hostel four days earlier, bringing a bottle of petrol with him.

After midnight, he poured petrol on the sleeping students and set them on fire. One student sustained severe burns on the back, legs, and



hands, while another suffered minor injuries. The hostel students woke up to the victims' screams and managed to douse the flames.

Hostel warden Kishore was informed immediately, but he responded late. The injured students were taken to the hospital around 7 AM. The parents of the injured boys alleged that the school management did not inform them about the incident until the afternoon.

The Three Town police have registered a case. The seriously injured boy was transferred to a private hospital in Vijayawada for better treatment. The motive for the incident is yet to be ascertained, according to the SI. MLC Chintamaneni Prabhakar visited the injured students in the hospital on Thursday.



## APSHCL MD Raja Babu takes charge

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Limited (APSHCL) Managing Director (MD) P Raja Babu took charge at the corporation headquarters at Gurunanak Colony in Vijayawada on Thursday. He previously served as Skill Development Corporation MD.

Soon after assuming the office, Raja Babu met Housing Corporation Special Chief Secretary Ajay Jain on a courtesy call. Later, he convened a meeting with key officials in the corporation and enquired about the ongoing schemes and projects.

# Road link to several villages in Eluru dist remains cut off

PNS ■ ELURU

Though the flood water in the River Godavari has started receding, the road connectivity to several villages remained cut off as floodwater was overflowing on the road.

The floodwater affected 20 villages in Velerupadu mandal and five villages in Kukkunuru mandal. Some of the villagers were shifted to relief camps and they are still in the centres since their villages were surrounded by the river Godavari water.

As the roads leading to some villagers were under flood water, the officials were operating 13 mechanized boats to reach the villages.

The residents of Lachigudem and Rudramkota villages were staying on a hillock in makeshift tents. The officials arranged a generator set to provide electricity to them. A medical camp was



also set up for them.

The flood victims told the media that every year when the river Godavari is in spate they face untold ordeals and they are forced to live on hillocks in makeshift tents. They appealed to the government to extend the R&R package to them also.

The officials set up four flood relief centres in Kukkunuru mandal in which over four hundred flood vic-

tims had taken shelter and were being provided rice, red gram and other commodities. The farmers in some villages told their woes stating that sand accumulated in their agriculture fields. Besides crop loss, the sand accumulation has come as an additional burden to them. If they want to sow the second crop they have to remove the accumulated sand and slush from the fields.

# Hundi collections touch 1.24 cr in Kanipakam temple

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The hundi collection has fetched Rs 1.24 crore for the famous Kanipakam Vinayaka temple. The temple management took up the counting of the temple's hundi collection on Thursday. The temple received Rs 1,24,41,336 cash through the coffer for 17 days. The temple also received 24 grams of gold, 440 grams of silver and 1350 US dollars.

Kanipakam Vinayaka temple AEO Ravindra Babu told the



media the money and the gold were being deposited in the bank. Temple staff, some devotees and Union Bank staffers were among those who took part in the counting of the huge collections.

# TG Budget sees highest ever allocation for agriculture sector

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka presented the Telangana State Budget amounting to Rs 2,91,159 crore for 2024-25, focusing on agriculture and trying to fulfil the six guarantees of the Congress government.

Presenting the first full Budget of the Congress government in the Assembly, Bhatti pegged revenue and capital expenditure at Rs 2,20,945 crore and Rs 33,487 crore respectively. The one-hour 48-minute speech of the Deputy CM had 10 quotations from Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Nelson Mandela and Dr BR Ambedkar.

In February, the Finance Minister presented a Rs 2.75 lakh crore vote-on-account Budget, while the current budget size is Rs 2.90 lakh crore. Public debt is estimated at Rs 52,112 crore and debt repayment is Rs 17,101 crore. Bhatti revealed that Telangana recorded a growth rate of 7.4 per cent during 2023-24 against the national growth rate of 7.6 per cent.

At current prices, Telangana's 2023-24 Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has been estimated at Rs 14,63,963 crore, 11.9 per cent higher than that of the previous year.

In 2023-24, the services sector contributed 65.7 per cent, the industrial sector 18.5 per cent, while agriculture and allied sectors contributed 15.8 per cent to Telangana's Gross State Value Added (GSVA).

The per capita income of



Telangana was Rs 3,47,229 in 2023-24, Rs 1,64,063 higher than the national per capita income of Rs 1,83,236.

"The substantial rise in debt relative to income growth suggests heavy dependence on borrowing to fund expenditure, potentially endangering fiscal sustainability. The persistent rise in debt far outstripping income gains suggests that without stringent fiscal reforms, Telangana's financial health could be at risk, necessitating measures to balance expenditure with revenue generation and reduce dependence on borrowing," Bhatti said.

He also said that when the Congress government took over in December 2023, the state had a loan burden of Rs 6,71,757 crore. Since then, the government has raised loans of Rs 35,118 crore and repaid loans of Rs 42,892 crore.

"In effect, we have repaid a higher amount of Rs 7,774 crore than the loans we have taken, demonstrating our sincerity

towards the people. The BRS admin reduced the government to such a sorry state that loans had to be taken to repay loans," the Finance Minister said.

He also said that despite the extremely difficult financial situation, the government has not ignored public welfare and is spending Rs 34,579 crore on various schemes.

"We introduced the Mahalakshmi Scheme which provides free transport to women in TGSRTC buses. We are also providing free electricity up to 200 units, assistance to farmers under Rythu Bharosa, subsidy on rice, etc. We have also made a capital expenditure of Rs 19,456 crore," he said.

The Finance Minister also made major allocations to implement poll promises in agriculture, Backward Classes welfare, panchayat raj and rural development, municipal administration and urban development.

The allocation for the agriculture and cooperation department

has gone up to Rs 49,383 crore from Rs 28,594 crore in 2023-24. The allocation for the Backward Classes Welfare Department has more than doubled to Rs 9,200 crore. The allocation for the welfare of minorities and tribals have also increased substantially.

The Finance Minister proposed Rs 723 crore for the Rs 500 crore LPG cylinder scheme and Rs 2,418 crore for supplying free electricity up to 200 units (Gruha Jyothi Scheme).

Referring to the recently launched scheme for waiving farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh, Bhatti said that despite financial problems, the government is raising the Rs 31,000 crore needed for the scheme.

Claiming that the new government has so far issued appointment orders for 31,768 posts, the Finance Minister said the government is committed to creating new jobs in government and government-owned corporations/societies.

# TDP govt to reinstate crop insurance scheme

Minister Atchannaidu says scheme was successfully implemented between 2016 and 2019

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Cooperative, Marketing, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries, K Atchannaidu, has announced that a crop insurance scheme, which was successfully implemented between 2016 and 2019, will be reinstated by the State government starting next year. This year, implementation was delayed due to issues in formulating the necessary rules, he said.

As part of the Assembly sessions, MLCs Paruchuri Ashok Babu, Panchumarthi Anuradha, BT Naidu and other members raised the question about the crop insurance scheme and said insurance has not been paid to farmers during 2019-24. In reply, Minister Atchannaidu said the crop insurance claims under Free Insurance - Pradhana Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana after Rabi 2022-23 are yet to be paid to the farmers.

Further, he said the PMFBY claims totalling Rs.1,393.61 crore is yet to be paid to the farmers, of which Rs.105.80 crore is for 2022-23 and Rs.1,287.81 crore for Kharif, he added. To settle the above pending claims, the balance State share of Rs.1,251.70 crore is yet to be released and paid to the concerned insurance com-

panies. Of this, Rs.464.80 crore is for 2022-23 Rabi and Rs.787.10 crore for 2023 Kharif season, he added.

Meanwhile, the Minister alleged that the previous YSRCP government implemented Free Crop Insurance, however, it did not collect premiums from the farmers and told them that they were payable by the government. However, the YSRCP government neglected the farmers and crop insurance scheme, he alleged. At this stage, the TDP-led NDA government is committed to implementing the crop insurance scheme in the State and added that farmers are ready to pay their premium amounts.

Additionally, he said that the Cabinet Sub-committee has decided to pay the pending crop insurance premium of approximately Rs 1,287 crore to the insurance companies. This decision aims to assist the farmers who would have otherwise benefited from the insurance coverage under the scheme, he said. Also, he assured that the best crop insurance scheme was successfully implemented between 2016 and 2019 next year. Although he has given assurance to the members that his government would strive to implement it from the Rabi season.

# BSE, mammography can help reduce breast cancer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In recent years, researchers have demonstrated that integrating mammography with breast self-evaluation (BSE) lessens breast cancer death rates by 41 per cent as well as trims down incidences of advanced breast cancer by 25 per cent, which shows how early spotting improves chances of survival through the use of breast self-evaluation.

Early tumor detection is one of the advantages of breast self-examination (BSE), many of which can be treated surgically. However, when cancer is discovered at later stages, there may be the need for surgery together with other treatment options like radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Even though it does not stop the condition

from occurring, BSE makes it possible to identify the disease while still young, eventually leading to the reduced number of deaths from the disease, said Dr Ramakrishna V, Consultant, Radiation Oncology, Manipal Hospitals, Vijayawada.

He said: "During the breast self-examination (BSE), women are advised to be aware of common symptoms including the presence of any lump on their breasts, any discharge from their nipples especially if it contains blood, any changes in their nipples, any skin changes, any pain over a lump and swelling under their arms (axilla). If a woman sees one or more of these warning signs, she must inform her doctor as quickly as possible."

# Mount pressure on Centre for SCS to AP: CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation led by CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao has urged Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to mount pressure on the BJP-led NDA government to get the Special Category Status (SCS) for the State, as TDP is part of the NDA

alliance. After bifurcation, the Central government did injustice to the State by not fulfilling the assurances such as SCS and the special package for the backward districts, the delegation said.

The CPM delegation led by V Srinivasa Rao, MA Gafoor, Y Venkateswara Rao, Ch Babu Rao



and K Prabhakar Reddy met Chief Minister Chandrababu

Naidu and submitted a representation on Thursday. Later, the CPM State office released a press statement in this regard. At the time of the State bifurcation, the Central government had announced several schemes and projects for Andhra Pradesh. However, many of them have not been fulfilled even 10 years after

the bifurcation. Major ones are: Polavaram project, rehabilitation and resettlement for the displaced people, capital Amaravati construction, Kadapa Steel Plant, Visakhapatnam Railway Zone, and Central Educational Institutions besides the Special Category Status, the delegation said.

# Two killed as APSRTC bus hits auto-rickshaw



PNS ■ NANDYALA

Two youths were killed when the auto-rickshaw in which they were travelling was hit by an APSRTC bus near Bharat Petrol filling station at Brahmanakotkur village in Nandikotkur mandal on Thursday.

Police said that the deceased Veeranna (24) and Hari Krishna (21) were going to Satana Kota village. A speed-

ing RTC bus which was going to Nandikotkur from Kurnool hit the auto rickshaw killing the deceased instantaneously.

One of the deceased Veeranna got married seven months ago and he took his wife Hymavati for a medical checkup. While going back to their village, he was killed in an accident. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for post-mortem.

# Combing intensified to check red sanders smuggling: SP

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Task Force in-charge SP L Subba Rayudu has clarified that combing and conducting raids are being intensified in the forest areas to curb the red sander smuggling.

Task Force SP Subba Rayudu inspected the Task Force official at Kapila Theertham on Thursday. He inquired with the officials about the performance of the task force.

He spoke to the operational teams and knew the procedure of combing. He advised them to adopt more strategies to prevent the red sander smuggler from the Seshachalam forest. He appreciated the task force teams for their combing, conducting raids in the forest, seizure of red sander logs and arresting smugglers.



The Task Force SP emphasised the need to use advanced technology to track the smugglers in the forest. The SP saw the premises of task force offices and seized red sander

logs. DSP Chenchu Babu, RI (Operations) Suresh Kumar Reddy, ACF Srinivas and CIs Srinivasulu and Suresh Kumar were among those who were present.



# Reopening of Ongole Dairy demanded

PNS ■ ONGOLE

AP Rythu Sangham (APRS) State president Gujjula Eswaraiah has demanded that the government take steps to reopen the Ongole Dairy.

A round table conference was organised by the CPI here on Thursday in which leaders of various parties and organisers demanded the reopening of Ongole Dairy. Speaking on the occasion, AP Rythu Sangam State president Eswaraiah said that the Ongole Dairy was the second largest dairy on which 1,500 families are dependent.

"The Ongole Dairy was flourishing in 1994 with 2.50 lakh litres of milk procurement. However, it was stuck in Rs 48 crore debts in 2006. The NDDB took over the dairy in 2012 and turned it around. However, the Ongole Dairy was incorporated in the Cooperative Dairy Act after 2014 which pushed the dairy into crisis," Eeshwaraiah said.

The previous government headed by Jagan Mohan Reddy had handed over the dairy to the Amul. Most of the machinery of the dairy is not functioning now. The Ongole Dairy has about Rs

1,000 crore worth of properties and the dairy farmers of the region are demanding the reopening of the dairy, he stated.

He said that a delegation would meet Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to submit a memorandum urging to reopen the Ongole dairy. Ongole Dairy former president Rama Rao, CPM district secretary Sd. Hanif, CPI-ML district secretary DVN Swamy and CPI-ML New Democracy district secretary Chittipati Venkateswarlu and AP Rythu Sangham district secretary K Veera Reddy also spoke.

INDIA CORNER

### Indo-Bangla border centre in Assam's Salmara reopens after 4 yrs

The border trade and immigration centre along the India-Bangladesh boundary, closed for the last four years since the outbreak of COVID-19, reopened formally on Thursday in Assam's South Salmara district, an official said. Mankachar's AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam along with senior district officials were present on the occasion. Islam said the closure of the centre had led to great difficulties for students, traders and even patients coming for medical treatment from the neighbouring country to the state. During the last four years, the people from the lower and central part of Assam had to go to Bangladesh either via Meghalaya's Dawki or through Kolkata, which caused immense inconvenience to them, he said. Assam has two immigration centres for Bangladesh - one at Sutarkandi in Karimganj district, which was also closed during the pandemic but later reopened, and the other at Mankachar.



### Flight delays impacted 11 lakh passengers this year till May

As many as 11 lakh passengers were impacted by flight delays this year till May, and airlines shelled out nearly Rs 13 crore for providing facilities to them, according to the Civil Aviation Ministry. In 2023, as many as 22.51 lakh passengers were impacted due to flight delays and carriers spent over Rs 26.53 crore for them. The count stood at 14.83 lakh in 2022, and the amount shelled out by airlines in this regard stood at more than Rs 15.87 crore. The data was provided in a written reply to the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol on Thursday. As per the data for this year till May, the flight delays hit 11 lakh passengers, and airlines spent a little over Rs 12.85 crore to provide facilities to them. In 2021, as many as 8.03 lakh passengers were impacted and the amount spent by airlines stood at Rs 3.91 crore.



### Term 'stray' will no longer be used for cows in Rajasthan: Minister

The term 'stray' will no longer be used for cows in Rajasthan, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Minister Joram Kumawat has said. Replying to a debate on the grant demand of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department in the Rajasthan Assembly on Wednesday night, Kumawat said that from now on the term 'nirashrit' (destitute) will be used to refer to stray cows. The minister said that "the state government is committed to making cattle rearers economically self-reliant by 'developing valuable animal wealth and increasing livestock production'. The state government is also working sensitively for the protection and promotion of cows and bulls," he added. Following the discussion, the assembly passed the grant demands of the department by voice vote. Kumawat said that Chief Minister Animal Husbandry Development Fund will be constituted in the state with a provision of Rs 250 crore.



### JAISHANKAR MEETS CHINA'S WANG IN LAOS

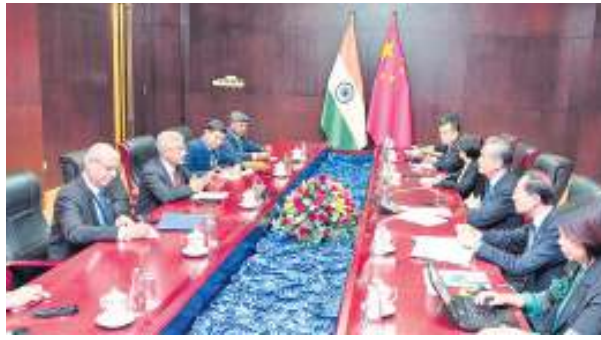
## EAM: Ensure 'full respect' for LAC and past agreements

PNS ■ VIENTIANE (LAOS)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Thursday met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi here and emphasised the need to ensure "full respect" for the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and past agreements to stabilise the bilateral ties.

The two leaders, who met for the second time this month, also agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process.

"Met with CPC Politburo member and FM Wang Yi in Vientiane today. Continued our ongoing discussions about our bilateral relationship. The state of the border will necessarily be reflected on the state of our ties," Jaishankar said in a post on X after meeting with Wang on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings here. The Jaishankar-Wang talks



came amid the dragging border row in eastern Ladakh that entered its fifth year in May.

"Agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process. Must ensure full respect for the LAC and past agreements. It is in our mutual interest to stabilise our ties. We should approach the immediate issues with a sense of purpose and

urgency," he added. The two leaders met earlier this month in the Kazakh capital city of Astana on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in

**Agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process. Must ensure full respect for the LAC and past agreements. It is in our mutual interest to stabilise our ties**

a standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points. The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

### Four women die after giving birth to healthy babies

PNS ■ DAMOH

Four women who gave birth to healthy babies on the same day at the district hospital at Damoh in Madhya Pradesh have died over the last three weeks, prompting an inquiry. After one of the women died at the Jabalpur Medical College and Hospital during treatment on Wednesday, her family members protested, bringing all four cases to the fore.

Lakshmi Chaurasia (29), Harshna Kori (30), Nisha Parveen (28) and Huma Khan (30) were admitted to the district hospital here for delivery on July 4, officials said.

Chaurasia's relatives claimed that the doctors had said she would have a normal delivery, but at the eleventh hour they opted for a caesarean section.

After giving birth, she complained of severe pain in the stomach and died at night on July 4, said her husband Sachin, accusing the hospital staff of negligence.

### PM MODI TO BJP MPS FROM MAHARASHTRA

## Counter opposition propaganda against govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked BJP MPs from poll-bound Maharashtra to step up public contact and counter the opposition propaganda against the government.

Modi met members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra and also spoke to first time members about their experience in Parliament.

The BJP has four first term Lok Sabha members - Murlidhar Mohol, Anup Dhote, Hemant Savara and Smita Wagh.

The prime minister asked the BJP MPs to take the schemes and initiatives announced in the Union Budget to the masses and stub out the opposition attempts to spread misinformation about the government, a parliamentary source said.



"The prime minister also asked us to outstrip the opposition propaganda against the government and reach out to every voter at the booth level," a BJP MP who attended the meeting said.

Union ministers and senior BJP leaders Nitin Gadkari and Piyush Goyal were also present at the meeting on Thursday afternoon.

The BJP managed to win nine of the 28 seats it contested in the recent Lok Sabha elections. In the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections, the BJP had won 23 seats.

BJP ally Shiv Sena, led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, won seven seats out of the 15 it had contested, while Ajit Pawar-led NCP emerged victorious on one of the four seats it had put candidates on.

The assembly elections in Maharashtra are scheduled to be held in September-October and the BJP has announced that it will contest the polls along with its allies Shiv Sena and NCP.

## Tri-services on threshold major reform: CDS Anil

Hails Kargil bravehearts on eve of 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Kargil Vijay Diwas, CDS Gen Anil Chauhan said Thursday the sacrifices made by soldiers in the 1999 war will "not go in vain" and asserted that the tri-services are on the "threshold of a major reform".

The chief of defence staff has conveyed his felicitations and wishes to all ranks of the armed forces on the occasion of the 25 years of the Kargil war, the defence ministry said in a statement.

Gen Chauhan underlined that the "tri-services are on the threshold of a major reform, that range from organisational, structural, conceptual to cultural".



"The underlying aim of these reforms is to improve fighting efficiency and keep the armed forces battle-ready at all times. We must be prepared to shed obsolete practices and adopt new ones. The shape and contour of reforms must reflect the uniqueness of the Indian environment and challenges," he

said. Recalling the valour of Kargil bravehearts, Chauhan stressed that the "lessons learnt by shedding blood must not be forgotten, the mistakes must not be repeated, and the right lessons must be reinforced".

In his message, the CDS also underscored that the supreme sacrifices made by the bravehearts in the Kargil War would not go in vain.

"It will continue to inspire and motivate future generations of not only soldiers but also the youth of the nation," he said.

Highlighting the uniqueness of the Kargil War, the general said, there were lessons in the war for not only the military but for all those who deal with national security.

## Stoppage of trains subject to traffic justification, operational feasibility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trains are operated and stoppages are provided as per network requirements, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, adding that stoppage of trains is an ongoing process subject to traffic justification and operational feasibility.

He was replying to a question on not having any stoppage for 11 pairs of trains in the Malappuram district (Kerala) on the Shornur-Mangalore line.

Vaishnaw's response came when M P Abdussamad Samadani, a Member of Parliament from the Indian Union Muslim League, asked, "Whether the government is aware of the difficulties faced by passengers due to 11 pairs of trains not having any stoppage in the Malappuram district on the Shornur-Mangalore line."

"As the Railway network straddles across state/district



boundaries, trains are operated and stoppages are provided as per network requirements, across such boundaries. Important stations like Kuttippuram, Tirunnavaya, Tirur, Tanur, Parapanangadi and Vallikkunnu stations, located in the Malappuram district, are being served by 41 trains, 12 trains, 87 trains, 26 trains, 39 trains and 17 trains respectively," Vaishnaw said. He added, "Besides, stoppage of trains is an ongoing process on Indian Railways subject to traffic justification, operational feasibility, etc."

## Budget took 'zero action' to restart wage growth: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday claimed that "stagnant wages" had dragged down consumption growth and disincentivised the private sector from investment, and said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman took "zero action" to restart wage growth.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the Economic Survey confirmed the "worst-kept secret of the non-biological PM's government" -- real wages were stagnating in rural areas.

"Stagnant wages have dragged down consumption growth and disincentivised the private sector from investment. It's directly responsible for the cycle of low GDP growth of the last decade," he said in a post on X.

The finance minister's budget has taken "zero action" to restart wage growth, Ramesh said.

### INDIA ON US CRITICISM OF ITS TIES WITH RUSSIA

## All countries have 'freedom of choice'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday rejected Washington's concerns over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Moscow as it asserted that all countries have the "freedom of choice" in a multipolar world and everyone should be mindful of such realities.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India has a long-standing relationship with Russia which is based on "mutuality of interests." "In a multipolar world, all countries have the freedom of choice. It is essential for everybody to be mind-

ful and appreciate such realities," he said. "India has a long-standing relationship with Russia that is based on mutuality of interests," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

His response came when asked about US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu's comments on Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia earlier this month.

Lu told a Congressional hearing on Tuesday that the US was disappointed by the "symbolism" and "timing" of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia.

The Biden administration official especially highlighted



that the Indian prime minister paid the visit to Moscow Washington was hosting a summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

"I share your concern about this visit...and we are trying very hard to communicate

those concerns directly to the Indians," Lu said after Republican Congressman Joe Wilson raised concerns about Modi's visit.

At the same time Lu, referred to Modi's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy in June.

On the outcomes of Modi's trip, Lu said: "We did not see any new major defence deals. We saw no major discussion of technology cooperation."

"In addition, you have Modi having said in front of Putin, on live television, his feeling that the war in Ukraine could

not be won on the battlefield and the pain that he felt watching the death of children in war." Following Modi's visit to Moscow on July 8 and 9, several other Biden administration officials expressed concerns over India's ties with Russia.

On July 11, speaking at an event, US ambassador Eric Garcetti too appeared to be critical of Modi's trip to Russia.

The US envoy said that "strategic autonomy" cannot apply in times of conflict and India and the US must work towards upholding principles when there is breach of rules-based order or violation of sovereign borders.

## Employment rose to 64.33 crore over last six fiscal years: MoS Karandlaje

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The employment in the country increased by more than 35 per cent over the last six fiscal years to 64.33 crore as of March 2024, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

The total increase in employment from 2017-18 to 2023-24 is around 16.83 crore, Minister of State (MoS) for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje said in a reply to Rajya Sabha.

As per the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest KLEMS data, employment in the country increased to 64.33 crore in the year 2023-24 compared to 47.5 crore in 2017-18, she



added. The KLEMS (K: Capital, L: Labour, E: Energy, M: Materials and S: Services) database, published by the RBI, provides employment trends at all India levels. The manufacturing sector (formal and informal entities)

saw an increase of 85 lakh employment opportunities from 2017-18 to 2022-23, the minister added.

On the issue of child labour, Karandlaje, in a separate reply said, it is an outcome of various social economic problems such as poverty, economic backwardness, lack of access to basic services, illiteracy, etc.

The government is pursuing a multipronged strategy to eliminate child labour and has taken comprehensive measures which include legislative actions, rehabilitation strategy, providing the right to free education and promoting general socio-economic development.

## Security forces launch anti-tunnelling ops along International Border in Samba

PNS ■ JAMMU

Amid concerns about infiltration attempts by terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir, security forces have launched an operation along the International Border (IB) in the Samba sector to detect underground and cross-border tunnels, police said on Thursday.

Scores of police and security personnel equipped with specialised gear are meticulously scanning border areas, focusing on dense bushes and forested regions as part of this operation, the police said.

"A comprehensive anti-tunnel exercise has commenced to ascertain the pres-

ence of any cross-border tunnels," said a police officer involved in the operation.

The search operations also involve deployment of drones and is being conducted daily in response to the ongoing security threats posed by potential terrorist infiltrations, he said.

"Security forces are clearing dense bushy areas to eliminate the possibility of existence of tunnels," the officer added.

Police recently said that Pakistan-sponsored terrorists have infiltrated into Jammu and Kashmir via the International Border and have been involved in terrorist attacks in the region.

## 'Super-Jupiter' detected, could be coldest planet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A nearby "super-Jupiter" exoplanet -- about 12 light years away from Earth -- was detected and could be one of the coldest, according to an international study, including researchers from IIT Kanpur.

Estimating the temperature on the planet at two degrees Celsius, the authors said that Epsilon Indi Ab is colder than any other imaged exoplanet -- planets existing outside of our solar system. The closest one is Proxima Centauri b at about

four light years from Earth, according to NASA, the US space agency.

Images of Epsilon Indi Ab were captured using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.

Previously imaged exoplanets tend to be the youngest, hottest exoplanets that are still radiating much of the energy from when they first formed, according to the authors of the study published in the journal Nature.

As planets cool and contract over their lifetime, they become significantly fainter and, therefore, harder to image, they said.



The US space agency has confirmed the existence of about 5,000 of the billion exoplanets in our galaxy.

Orbiting the star Epsilon Indi A, Epsilon Indi Ab has been dubbed a "super-Jupiter". "It is a little warmer and more massive, but is more sim-

ilar to Jupiter than any other planet that has been imaged so far," lead author Elisabeth Matthews of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, Germany, said.

The "back-and-forth wobbles" of the star Epsilon Indi A that the researchers observed suggested hints of a possible planetary body.

However, the planet did not match their modelled predictions, they said.

"It's about twice as massive, a little farther from its star, and has a different orbit than we expect-

ed. The cause of this discrepancy remains an open question," Matthews said.

The planet's atmosphere too was found to differ from the predictions. "The planet's atmosphere appears to have an unusual composition that indicates a high metal content and a different carbon-to-oxygen ratio than we see on our own solar system planets," study author Prashant Pathak, an assistant professor at the department of space, planetary and astronomical sciences and engineering (SPASE), IIT Kanpur, said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Reaching out

### Netanyahu seeks support for Gaza war during US Congress speech, despite many senators skipping it

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called for US solidarity in his address to Congress, despite declining popularity and increasing opposition in his own country. In an address to the United States Congress, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to rally American lawmakers behind Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza. The speech, delivered amidst a backdrop of escalating violence and rising civilian casualties, underscored Netanyahu's determination to secure unwavering support from Israel's most powerful ally. He emphasised the existential threats faced by Israel from militant groups operating in Gaza, particularly Hamas. The Prime Minister framed the military actions as a necessary response to ongoing rocket attacks and acts of terrorism that have plagued Israeli communities. However, Netanyahu's speech did not address the mounting international concerns regarding human rights violations in the Palestinian territories. Reports from various human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have highlighted a range of human rights violations.



The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has been further exacerbated by a blockade that severely restricts the movement of people and goods, leading to shortages of essential supplies such as food, water, and medical care. The present Gaza offensive, which has gone over 250 days, has left a spree of death and destruction. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, at least 34,000 people have been killed, and more than 77,000 have been wounded in Israeli attacks. About 72 per cent of those killed are women and children. United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk has gone on record saying that a child in Gaza is killed or wounded 'every 10 minutes.'

Israel's actions violate international law and constitute collective punishment, disproportionately affecting innocent civilians and deepening the humanitarian crisis. The United States, as Israel's primary ally, plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This support has also placed the US under scrutiny, with calls for it to leverage its influence to promote peace and uphold human rights. The very weaponry provided by the US is being used by Israel against the civilian population in Palestine which is undergoing a horrendous time. There is growing advocacy within the US, both among the public and some members of Congress, for a more balanced approach. The US is urged to take a firm stand against human rights violations and to support diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a sustainable and just resolution to the conflict. A sustainable peace can only be achieved through a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. The US has a moral and strategic responsibility to advocate for human rights and justice in the region. The US can play a pivotal role in paving the lasting peace in the region by telling Netanyahu to comply with the UN directives on Gaza and stop bombing the civilian targets to minimise civilian casualties.

### PICTALK



Members of the State Disaster Management Authority perform rescue operation during a mock drill, in Prayagraj PTI

## Union budget 2024: A major thrust on agriculture

### The budget's focus on sustainable agriculture and innovation highlights the Government's commitment to support the farmers and ensuring food security

Union budget 2024 - a thrust on agriculture for a visit Bharat Biju Dharmapalan In the Union Budget 2024 presented by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, great emphasis has been placed on agriculture and space. Both are essential pillars for transforming our country into a developed nation. The latter is futuristic, and the former is the lifeline of the present generation. No nation can survive without the farming community, and they are the 'Annadata'. In the changing global climate and environmental conditions, the traditional farming sector would not be sufficient to feed the population. The government has allocated Rs.1,51,851 crores for the agricultural and allied sectors. Stress has been given to agricultural research to increase productivity and release 109 new high-yielding and climate-resilient varieties of 32 field and horticulture crops. Climate-resilient crops have become essential under the prevailing global climatic conditions. During the past few years, we have noticed changes in the climate in



various parts of the country. We had severe summers even in high altitudes of the Himalayas and a deficit in rain during the monsoons. This has badly affected the agricultural sector, where most of our crop cultivation is based on climatic patterns. Farmers are forced to grow temperate plants like apples and grapes in plains. People are even trying to grow rain-fed crops like paddy in garden pots. Change in agricultural patterns is inevitable. Climate change affects agriculture in numerous ways. Heat stress triggers alterations in respiration and photosynthesis, resulting in a reduced life cycle and decreased plant yield. Additionally, higher temperatures can lead to increased evapotranspiration, necessitating more water for crops when water resources

are scarcer. Experiencing drought-like situations in several parts of the country due to climate changes has badly affected the soil health, making the farmland unhealthy for future farming. Moreover, the frequency and severity of droughts are expected to rise, particularly in regions that are already water-stressed. Drought conditions reduce crop yields and affect soil health, making it more difficult for future crops to grow. On the other hand, excessive rainfall and flooding, becoming more common, can destroy crops, erode soil, and wash away essential nutrients. Extreme weather patterns will not only affect crop productivity and microbial biodiversity, which keeps our planet healthy. In addition, it will expedite the emergence of new pests and diseases that may affect crop growth and productivity. The emergence of new diseases may even lead to a pandemic affecting several crop species across the globe. This may jeopardise our food security. Developing resilient crops for the next century is a challenging task. It requires significant investment in research and devel-

opment. Our laboratories in the agricultural universities need thorough transformation. They need to be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that can handle molecular breeding programmes and large crop phenomics facilities that can speed up the development of new crop varieties. Our scientific community should acknowledge the farmers and share the benefits of the genes taken from traditional varieties for developing resilient crops. By promoting healthy soils, biodiversity, and resilience, natural farming has the potential to support long-term food security and environmental health. Agriculture is not merely an occupation; it is the bedrock of our food supply and a critical component in balancing the health of our planet. So, we need to promote and incentivise our farmers who take up new technologies so that farming remains a viable and respected profession for youngsters.

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



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

## Pushpa Kamal Dahal falls from grace

### The new coalition, dominated by the pro-India Nepali Congress, will now be led by the communist leader Oli who will have a daunting task of ensuring political stability

Politicians have been grabbing the power by following Machiavillian principle of showing complete disrespect to means, the morality and values. This is true of Pushpa Kamal Dahal who fell from the grace after facing humiliating defeat while seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament. While seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament, Prachanda faced the worst type of humiliating defeat as he got 63 votes (Rashtriya Swatantra Party-21, CPN(US)-10 and his party-32) as against 194 votes of new coalition combination of Nepali Congress (89 MPs) and Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (78 MPs) which also got support from other smaller parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Janata Samajwadi Party (Upendra faction) etc. in the house of 275 where majority mark was 138 only. Oli has staked claim after president Ram Chandra Poedel invited the political parties having strength to form the government.

In a positive move, Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, the Foreign Affairs Department chief and a Standing Committee member of the CPN-UML emphasized that CPN-UML believes that Nepal's progress or the welfare of its people can be achieved only by adopting a Pro-India stance. He made it clear that the party's chairman, KP Sharma Oli, is keen on taking Nepal-India relations to new heights thereby aligning with the requirement and urgency of the modern era.

Due to fragile nature of democracy in Nepal, unabated and persistent instability has been trademark of the government which is evident from 16 time change of guards in the span of 13 years thereby hitting the interests of the common people in the country besides pushing the country into financial crisis and debt liabilities especially huge loans advanced by China.

In a midnight swoop and a dramatic turn of events on July 9, a secret deal was clinched between two former Prime ministers viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepali and K.P.S. Oli of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) which sealed the fate of current PM, Pushpa



Kamal Dahal, Prachanda. In this manner, yet another coalition of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Nepali Congress came into existence today following the humiliating defeat of Prachanda, a diehard loyalist of China' on the floor of house. New regime will be headed by Ex PM, Oli which had preceded withdrawal of the support to current PM, on July 3, 2024 thereby reducing it into minority. The Janata Samajwadi party led by Ashok Rai having 7 PMs also withdrew the support and recalled three ministers from Prachanda government. The coalition government will be dominated by Pro India, Nepali Congress, though a die-hard communist leader, former PM, Oli will be heading it for a term of one half year which will be followed by a takeover by former PM, Deuba of Nepali congress as agreed by two coalition partners.

Foreign policy experts say that major factors responsible for the collapse of coalition of Prachanda-Oli, duo, included Power Struggle, style of functioning of prime minister, Policy Differences, Coalition Dynamics and Coalition Dynamics which may lead to more stable dispensation comprising of Nepali Congress, Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Janata Samajwadi party. Amidst the toppling game,



OLI AND DEUBA COMBINE WILL BE UNDER COMPULSION TO KEEP EQUI-DISTANCE WITH TWO REGIONAL POWERS VIZ INDIA AND CHINA WHICH HAVE GOT GEO-POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE AFFAIRS OF NEPAL

midnight power sharing agreement between two former Prime ministers, viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Nepali Congress and K.P.S. Oli chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) was signed on July 5, 2024 thereby leading to a sudden change of regime in Nepal. New coalition government of Oli and Deuba is bound to face multiple challenges which will be key to success otherwise its fallout could be midterm polls. The fragile nature of the new government consisting of the communists (Pro China) and Nepali Congress (Pro India) having opposing ideologies could pose a major challenge to keep them in unison and amalgamated.

Oli and Deuba combine will be under compulsion to keep equi-distance with two regional powers viz. India and China which have got geo-political and strategic interests in the affairs of Nepal. Oli's previous stint as PM was marked by his extreme Anti India action of redrawing the map which had shown Indian territories including Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani as part of Nepal. It had exasperated India which rejected this misadventure thereby terming it as baseless besides being an attempt to spoil ties. Now, as dominant partner in the coalition, the onus of checking this tendency will lie on Deuba to prevail upon Oli to come



K S TOMAR

out of Anti-India mentality and protect age-old relations between two nations.

The communists regimes led by Prachanda always gave clear indications about the commitment to China which will expect new government to go ahead with Belt and Road (BRI) initiative especially when outgoing PM has approved the proposal which had been signed between two countries on May 12, 2017.

It will be an uphill task for Oli to stick to his predecessors' resolve to toe China's line about BRI as Nepali congress is totally opposed to it hence chances of any progress seem to be remote. It will be a test of the new government to deal with India's Agnipath scheme which is one of the major irritants so far. Nepal's border issues with India, including disputes over territories require a multifaceted approach. Strengthening the Nepal-India Joint Boundary Commission to expedite the resolution of boundary issues through technical and diplomatic means may yield positive results. The survival of the coalition will depend solely on mutual trust of partners and balanced diplomatic strategy and refrain from offending two regional giants which had been lacking in the past.

(Writer is a senior journalist and a political analyst; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BUDGET REACTIONS

Madam — Apropos the news headline "Less Tax, More Jobs" (July 24). Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman's 2024 Union budget should be the budget of the whole country, but the FM has presented it as if it is the NDA's budget. To make matters worse, taxpayers have to foot the bill for the NDA government's political survival. There is nothing wrong when the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi criticizes the NDA government's Union Budget, claiming it undermines India's federal structure. He highlights neglect towards other states and vows to advocate for equal justice. INDIA protests against the 'Kursi Bachao' Budget in Parliament.

Interestingly, FM Sitharaman, elected from Karnataka, provided nothing in the budget for her state, which is ruled by the Congress. In her Purvodaya scheme for the all-round development of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, only Bihar and Andhra Pradesh benefit significantly. For instance, Rs 11,500 crore was allocated to Bihar for flood mitigation, while West Bengal, one of the worst flood-affected states, is crying for help. Salaried employees in the new tax regime will save up to Rs 17,500 in income tax. Corporate tax rates on foreign companies were reduced to 25%. Family pensions were enhanced from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000. However, nearly 60 lakh EPF pensioners have been receiving Rs 920 to Rs 1000 per month since 1995 without any increase. The government deserves praise for exempting three cancer medicines from custom duties and allocating Rs 2.2 lakh crore to make housing more affordable. It's also commendable that FM Sitharaman has introduced an internship program similar to Congress' Nyay Patra. Overall it is a mix bag but could have addressed the pressing issues on priority.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

### Tragedy at Tribhuvan International Airport



It is deeply shocking that eighteen people have lost their lives in a deadly plane crash at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu. The plane, a twenty-year-old Bombardier CRJ-200 regional jet owned by the

private airline company Saurya Airlines, skidded off the runway and crashed. It seems that the aviation industry in Nepal has fallen short of both standards and expectations, failing to keep pace with other countries in terms of modernization and sophistication. It is a pity that Nepal has not learned any lessons from past incidents, leading to a continuing series of plane crashes.

The aviation sector is crucial for Nepal's tourism and businesses. It is high time that the government of Nepal, along with private airline owners, collaborate to revamp the deteriorating aviation sector. They must pay due attention to improving passenger safety, modernizing logistics and infrastructure, and introducing new jets to avoid future accidents. Path-breaking reforms are essential. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar, Bagrakote

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Bagrakote

### CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS

Madam — The Telangana-cadre IAS officer Smita Sabharwal is being criticized for questioning the need for a disability quota in civil services. She asked the "rights activists" to examine why the policy was yet to be implemented in police services, foreign services, and the defense sector. By raising such questions, she violated the code of conduct for civil servants and is punishable under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and other relevant laws. Prominent coach and mentor of civil services aspirants in Hyderabad, Bala Latha Mallavarapu, challenged Smita to sit for the UPSC examination again and beat her score. The Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of Pankaj Kumar Srivastava, a 100 percent visually impaired candidate who cleared the Civil Services Examination in 2009 but was denied an appointment. This ruling marks a significant milestone in the fight for disability rights in India. Inappropriate remarks.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

### BIDEN WITHDRAWS FROM THE RACE

Madam — Joe Biden Withdraws from Presidential Race. Accepting the views of prominent Democratic leaders, including former President Barack Obama, President Joe Biden has announced his withdrawal from the presidential race. Age is not on his side, and Donald Trump, after surviving an assassination attempt, has gained momentum. Vice President Kamala Harris is likely to take on the aging Donald Trump. In India, Kamala Harris' presumptive nomination elicited only lukewarm enthusiasm. During the 2019 election campaign, she criticised Prime Minister Modi's policies on Kashmir, saying, "We have to remind Kashmiris that they are not alone in the world." The possibility of tension in relations between the two countries, despite statements of warm friendship, cannot be ignored.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

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**FIRST COLUMN**  
**BUDGET BALANCES FISCAL DISCIPLINE AND EMPLOYMENT**

Union budget takes definitive steps to create jobs for India's youth



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The eleventh full-term budget under Modi 3.0 walks the fiscal discipline path, despite being a coalition government, he is heading. The surprise results from June 4th, which threw in a coalition government for Prime Minister Modi, perhaps for the first time in his career, did not stop his budget proposals, political with sound economics in the background. In the run-up to the budget, many had expected, that the Finance Act would be populist keeping in mind the state elections of Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand scheduled later this year. However what came out from Nirmala Sitharaman's tab, was a document that chose to focus on core areas of long-term growth and decent infrastructure spending, without giving in to populist demands. The key theme as highlighted by Government is Employment.

Questions have been raised in post-budget analysis regarding the feasibility of the schemes announced for creating lakhs of jobs for the youth of the country. The apprentice scheme promising a government stipend for lakhs of youth per year, in some of the largest companies of India, may only be a game changer if these young interns are attentively skilled to be formally absorbed into jobs, once their tenure is over. There are serious concerns regarding the abundant availability of a relatively unskilled workforce, hanging around in large offices, without learning any meaningful skills.

Similar questions have been raised regarding the EPFO-linked new job incentivisation scheme, which has various blindspots, possibly pushing a well-thought-out policy push into a dark corner. It may be said that the policy push is primarily to bring more youth employed in the informal sector within a formal standard workforce and instil a financial literacy discipline in them early on. However, this financial literacy falls flat when one looks at the changes made in the tax structures for any investor punting in the speculative equities market. The increased rate of capital gains tax and a general push to the new income tax regime, seem to be at cross purposes of the financial literacy programme, the government wants youth to undertake to avail of full benefits of INR 15,000, as a first month's salary subsidy. The earlier tax regimes instilled a sense



of financial responsibility for any youth entering the formal job sector, with several choosing at least one product, as a means to save and claim tax rebates in the future. This set them off for a long financial discipline path during their tenure as working professionals, which now seems to be slowly being eased out. The counter-argument the government may have is, that they want the consumer economy to grow first, led by the youth, who may be more willing to spend on food items, entertainment etc, with the monthly salaries they would be drawing in their new jobs. However, it prevents them from getting into a habit of savings, which are useful during rainy days or Covid type crises. Yes, the government, did well to maintain the fiscal discipline glide path, buoyed by a better than expected GDP growth, and lumpy dividend payouts from the central bank. Overall inflations, except for food are also within tolerable levels, giving the government, a cushion for spending on welfare projects, it feels are essential. Union budget 24-25 is an attempt woo back disgruntled voters.

The lesson BJP appears to have taken from the June 4 results is, that the youth are excited about huge temples, few smart glitzy trains, and cheap mobile data in their 'Made in India' phones, but they are increasingly getting anxious to earn money, have an engaging occupation, which feeds into their aspirational upwardly mobile lifestyle. Then there are pulls and pressures of coalition politics, with NDA's two partners TDP and JD(U) having their wish lists for catering to their core constituencies. A long-term dice has been rolled, perhaps NDA 3.0 with this budget has achieved the goldilocks balance.

*(The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)***Budget 2024: A blueprint for long-term growth**

DEEPAK SOOD

The Union Budget 2024-25 reaffirms the Govt's dedication to long-term growth. India is well-positioned to harness its immense potential for rapid development



In a pivotal move aimed at strengthening India's economic prowess, the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 has made significant strides in assuring continuity of progressive reforms. There is cheer in the MSME, E-commerce and start-up worlds, which have been extended additional support as the country progresses on the road towards a Viksit Bharat. The Finance Minister made various announcements to empower the Garib, Mahila, Yuva and Kissan. The announcements made under this budget are timely and set to propel the Indian economy to new heights during the Amrit Kaal, enhancing its resilience in an ever-evolving global landscape.

**A booster for MSMEs**

The budget rightfully supports the bottom of the industrial pyramid by offering much-needed ease of credit for the MSME segment. India has 633.9 lakh MSMEs, where over 99% of them qualify as micro-enterprises that make up 630.5 lakh enterprises. One of the critical reasons why micro enterprises (with investments up to INR 10 million) do not graduate to being small or medium enterprises is the lack of access to formal credit. By doubling the MUDRA loan amounts and setting up new SIDBI branches, credit will now be more accessible to these organizations. Other steps (mandatory Trade Receivables Discounting System) have improved liquidity, while Industrial parks will provide the much-needed digital support that MSMEs usually cannot afford for growth. Additionally, the new credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs offers term loans without collateral or third-party guarantees, significantly easing the financial burden on small business owners and fos-

tering entrepreneurship. Such positive support for this crucial sector is bound to give it the confidence to shed its risk-averse nature and grow with ambition on the road to 2047.

**Skilling and Job Creation**

With this budget, the Government has responded positively to the need for job opportunities and skill development among youth in our country. The continued emphasis on skilling will allow training institutions and large corporations to participate in creating a pool of professionally trained manpower that would be readily absorbed by them and the larger MSME ecosystem, which is often strained for funds for training purposes. Meticulous implementation will, however, be key to setting the ball rolling in the right direction of creating jobs. Rural Economy

**The rural economy**

continued to receive support from the government, as strengthening this segment will be crucial for the sustained economic growth of the country. Budget 2024 had some big announcements for them that would increase productivity and food security in grains and oilseeds. Such measures will go a long way in creating new economic clusters that will support sustained growth. With 1 crore farmers to be trained in natural farming, marketing, certification, and brand-

ing, organic farming is all set to receive a big stimulus. The focus on addressing the impact of climate on our food basket showcases the government's long-term vision towards building resilience in the ecosystem.

**Start-ups and E-Commerce**

There is general cheer in the start-up ecosystem across India over the abolition of the angle tax, proposed in the budget. Angel tax, introduced in 2012, was imposed on the capital raised by unlisted companies through the issue of shares to Indian investors if the share price exceeded the fair market value (FMV) of the company. Traders and artisans using e-commerce sites got a lift up in this budget when TDS was not just reduced but TDS delays were decriminalized.

E-commerce exports, \$2 billion now, are expected to be \$350 billion by 2030. With revised custom duties, the Government hopes to give the required fillip to these artisans/traders who sell their wares using websites, in line with its Make in India strategy.

**Energy security**

India is a fast-developing economy and our energy needs are rising rapidly. By encouraging private investment in setting up small nuclear energy reactors and encouraging R&D into newer forms of nuclear energy, the budget aims to achieve India's goals of energy security. With regular energy audits across

clusters, larger commercial thermal plants and a pumped storage policy, the budget aims to help India cope with the rising demand without missing a step. However, our green economy targets are very ambitious and much more needs to be done to ensure our transition to green fuels.

**Digitization of Land Records**

This one step is perhaps the most impactful step the budget has outlined for the growth of India's economy. Vast tracts of our land, especially in rural India, are often embroiled in disputes with no proper documentation. This is a key hurdle in land acquisition for major projects. By digitising these records across India, the Government will end middlemen and reduce the number of land cases in the legal system. Overall, the Union Budget 2024-25 reinforces the Government's commitment to sustained long-term growth.

With strategic investments and forward-looking policies, India is poised to navigate global challenges while harnessing its immense potential for socio-economic development. The road towards Viksit Bharat could have its set of challenges, especially given the global dynamics, but the sustained vision and progressive policy support will help realise the dream of a Viksit Bharat.

*(The writer is secretary general of ASSOCHAM; views expressed are personal)*

THERE IS GENERAL CHEER IN THE START-UP ECOSYSTEM ACROSS INDIA OVER THE ABOLITION OF THE ANGEL TAX, PROPOSED IN THE BUDGET

**Commemorating 25 years of Kargil victory: A tribute to India's bravehearts**

As we remember the 527 soldiers who laid down their lives, we celebrate the enduring legacy of their heroism and dedication to the nation

Visitors to Drass, a town situated at an altitude of 10,760 feet (3,279 metres) in India-administered Kashmir, are greeted with a signboard that says at -60 degrees Celsius on January 9, 1995, it was the second-coldest inhabited place on the planet. Drass, located in Kargil district, has an additional claim to fame. In the summer of 1999, it was on its western edge with rocky and barren Himalayan peaks that India and Pakistan fought their last war.

That year, Pakistan's military and Kashmiri rebels occupied strategic positions on the Indian side of the de facto border between them (known as the Line of Control or LoC), prompting a counter-offensive by India. While



RAHUL KAMBLE

Pakistan had named its move to take over the control of Indian posts along the LoC as 'Operation Badr', India called its offensive 'Operation Vijay'. It was a war fought in the era of satellite news channels. The battles were broadcast directly to homes in both countries, making Drass and Kargil as a whole, a symbol of India's nationalism, inspiring a raft of jingoistic Bollywood movies. This July 26 is the 25th Kargil Vijay Divas. On this day in

1999, the Indian forces threw out the Pakistanis from the incursion points in the general area of Kargil, which they had illegally occupied, bringing to a close a two-month war. It was a tough war, fought on sheer grit and courage, as gutsy young officers, most of them in their twenties, led equally brave soldiers up naked rock faces and managed to evict the enemy within weeks. Names such as Tiger Hill, Tololing, Point 5140, Point 4700, Three Pimples, Chorbat La, Point 5203, Point 4875, Khalubar, and Jubar Top became household names across the country. On 26 July 1999, the Kargil conflict officially came to an end. The Indian Army announced the complete eviction of Pakistani intruders, but a price was paid

for it in blood and tears. We lost 527 of our brave soldiers; 1363 came back wounded. The Indian army has marked July 26 - the day the Kargil war ended - as "Vijay Diwas" (Victory Day). Every year for the past 25 years, the whole nation celebrates proudly on this day. Army also undertakes commemorative treks on the icy features, where our Braves became invincibles. What seemed an impossible task to the world, was accomplished in a mere 50 days, with all the features lost, back under our control. The '50 Day War' as it is fondly called, was a record in itself. Whenever the story of Kargil is told, it shall be incomplete without paying homage to the steely resolve and cold



courage of these young men who went to fight for their nation knowing that they might never return. Barely out of the academy, they fought against all odds, with single-minded devotion, and set new benchmarks in heroism. Their spirit and daring will be difficult to replicate. The war will always be remembered for its strategic and tac-

tical surprise, the self-imposed national strategy of restraint in keeping the war limited to the Kargil-Siachen sector, military strategy and planning, and the dedication, determination and daring junior leadership at the tactical level. In fiercely fought combat actions, on the most difficult terrain that gave immense advantage to the enemy, we were able to evict Pakistani troops from most of their surreptitiously occupied positions. The Pakistani leadership was forced to sue for a ceasefire and seek the withdrawal of its troops from the remaining areas. Operation Vijay - the Indian codename for the war - was a blend of strong and determined political, military and diplomatic actions, which enabled us to transform an

adverse situation into a military and diplomatic victory. As two prime ministers of Pakistan later acknowledged, 'Kargil war was Pakistan's biggest blunder and disaster'. A reflection on the Kargil War can never be complete without a mention of the brilliant junior leadership that we witnessed during battles. Such acts by young officers and men can never be forgotten. They make us proud. Commanding officers of many infantry battalions displayed steely resilience and single-minded devotion to duty. There were actions by young artillery forward observation officers and battery commanders who took over infantry companies when their company commander colleagues were killed. A victory in war is

achieved when battles are won. Battles are won when soldiers put duty before themselves. Soldiers who put their lives at stake in wars and war-like situations and expect nothing in return. But what the nation owes to them is recognition and gratitude. For every single brave deed noticed and recognized, many went unnoticed in the fog of war. These legendary tales deserve mention not only in our military history books but also in school textbooks to serve as inspiration for young people. This success shall not be taken for granted. With heights averaging 15000 feet, bone-chilling temperatures and a dominating hostility, the Kargil war in itself is a global legend.

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

MONEY MATTERS

## Govt eases norms for EPCG license holders

The government on Thursday eased certain norms for licence holders of the Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme as part of its ease of doing business efforts. The EPCG scheme facilitates import of capital goods for producing quality goods and services and enhances India's manufacturing competitiveness. It allows import of capital goods for pre-production, production and post-production at zero customs duty. The duty benefit is subject to meeting export obligations. "With a view to enhance ease of doing business and reduce the compliance burden, certain provisions of chapter 5 related to the EPCG Goods scheme of the Handbook of Procedures, 2023 are amended for EPCG authorisations issued under the foreign trade policy," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a public notice. As per the changes, the licence/authorisation holder can now submit the certificate from customs authorities.



## Amazon records biggest-ever Prime Day event in India

Amazon India - which hosted the 8th edition of its annual shopping fiesta Prime Day over the last weekend - on Thursday said it has received the highest engagement and recorded a peak of 24,000 orders per minute during the two days, making it the biggest-ever Prime Day in India. The shopping extravaganza witnessed the highest number of Prime members who ever shopped during any Prime Day, it said. "24 per cent more prime members in India shopped vs Prime Day 2023...Prime Day 2024 also witnessed the highest-ever Prime membership signups in the two and half-weeks leading up to Prime Day. "Peak of 24,196 orders placed by Prime members in a single minute; Prime members purchased more items than any previous Prime Day shopping event," it said in a statement. More than 65 per cent of small and medium businesses.



## States propose new names for 22 airports, says Murlidhar

The civil aviation ministry on Thursday said it has received requests from 10 state governments with proposals for renaming 22 airports. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said in general, airports are known by the name of the city where they are located. Otherwise, a specific name is proposed by the respective state government, supported by a resolution passed in the state legislative assembly, which is then considered in consultation with other ministries /departments and then sent to the Union Cabinet for final approval, he added. Giving a list of requests, the minister said 10 state governments have proposed changing the names of 22 airports. The states are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.



## Goyal sets US\$ 50 bn exports target for leather, footwear industry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has asked the leather and footwear industry to target USD 50 billion worth of exports by 2030. Interacting with the industry here on Wednesday, the minister said the ministry will address the sector's concern over quality control orders (QCOs) to make the certification procedure smooth and flexible. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has notified two QCOs in March for the leather and footwear sector, which will become effective from August.

Interacting with the industry here on Wednesday, the minister said the ministry will address the sector's concern over quality control orders (QCOs) to make the certification procedure smooth and flexible.



Manufacturers were given a chance to declare old stock before August 1 and sell the declared stock by June 30. Micro and small units and imports of soles for making footwear for export purposes are exempted from the purview of the order. "The minister encouraged

the industry to aim for a bigger vision and scale up the leather and footwear industry to the tune of USD 50 billion by 2030," the ministry said in a statement. The interaction saw the participation of more than 120 stakeholders, including representatives from bodies

like the Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI), Council of Leather Exports (CLE), and Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI). Some of the prominent industry heads/leaders who attended the interaction included Puma, Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Bata, Skechers, Liberty, Metro Shoes, Red Tape, and Reliance. India stands as the second-largest producer of footwear, contributing 10.7 per cent of global production. The sector contributes around 2 per cent of India's GDP, generating employment for about 4.42 million people, consisting mainly young age population and women workforce.

## Govt launches scheme to facilitate skill loans of up to Rs 7.5 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday launched the revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme to facilitate loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh with a guarantee from a government-promoted fund. The Budget unveiled earlier this week by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the Model Skill Loan Scheme will be revised. The measure is expected to help 25,000 students every year. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the launch, Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary said the skill loan limit earlier was only up to Rs 1.5 lakh, which has now been increased to Rs 7.5 lakh. Moreover, earlier only scheduled banks were included, whereas now Regional Rural



Banks, NBFCs, etc, have also been linked to the scheme, the minister said. "Major milestone for MSDE with the launch of the Model Skill Loan Scheme. This empowers youth with financial support for

advanced skillings, includes a range of eligible courses, collateral-free loans upto Rs 7.5 lakh; NBFCs, NBFC-MFIs, and Small Finance Banks also eligible lenders," he said in a post on X

## IDBI BANK PRIVATISATION RBI's nod expected soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The potential investors in IDBI Bank have received necessary security clearance from the Home Ministry and a nod from the Reserve Bank is expected to come in soon, an official said on Thursday. The government along with LIC is selling a nearly 61 per cent stake in IDBI Bank. This includes a 30.48 per cent stake of the Government of India and 30.24 per cent of LIC. In January 2023, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said it received multiple Expressions of Interest (EOI) for buying a stake in IDBI Bank. The bidders who have shown interest through EOI have to get two sets of clearances -- one from the home ministry for security.

## NHAI not facing any financial crises: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) is not facing any financial crises and has drawn up a plan to service its debt through improved inflows of toll revenue and asset monetisation, Parliament was informed on Thursday. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said, "NHAI is not facing any financial crises which is evident from the fact that NHAI has pre-paid bank loan to the tune of Rs 15,700 crore through InvIT monetisation proceeds - Rs 6,350 crore in the



last financial year and Rs 9,350 crore in July 2024," he added. NHAI's debt stands at Rs 3.35 lakh crore. Gadkari said the government has not man-

dated NHAI to raise funds since FY2023-24. "Thus, the debt reduction has started," he said. The minister also said that NHAI has drawn up a plan to service its debt through improved inflows of toll revenue and asset monetisation. "The amount raised through the InvIT mode is used exclusively for debt repayment," Gadkari said. Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is an instrument on the pattern of mutual funds, designed to pool money from investors and invest in assets that will provide cash flows over a period of time.

## Rupee slides to fresh all-time low of 83.78 against dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee dropped by 7 paise to close at an all-time low of 83.78 against the US dollar on Thursday, dragged down by month-end dollar demand and foreign fund outflows. Forex traders said foreign fund outflows from Indian equities following the government's decision to hike the tax rate on capital gains weighed on the local currency. Analysts said the RBI, which was keeping the rupee steady by two-way support,

may allow the rupee to weaken slightly to unwind the slightly real effective exchange rate and keep the currency competitive. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.72 and touched an intra-day high of 83.66 and a low of 83.78 against the dollar during the session. It finally settled at record closing low level of 83.78 against the American currency, down 7 paise from the previous close.



## Gold tumbles Rs 1,000 to 70,650 per 10 grams on sluggish demand, global cues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices continued to fall for the third day and tumbled Rs 1,000 to Rs 70,650 per 10 grams in the local market here on Thursday amid heavy selling by jewellers, triggered by a fall in rates in overseas markets. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal prices had closed at Rs 71,650 per 10 grams in the previous session on Wednesday. Continuing its slide for the third day in the national capital, gold of 99.9 per cent



and 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 1,000 each to Rs 70,650 per 10 grams and Rs 70,300 per 10 grams, respectively. Silver prices also fell sharply by Rs 3,500 to Rs 84,000 per kg. It had ended at Rs 87,500 per kg in the previous session.

The precious metal has declined Rs 5,000 per kg in the past three sessions since July 23 when it had fallen Rs 3,350 to end at Rs 72,300 per kg -- marking the biggest fall this year -- after the government on Tuesday decided to slash customs duties on a range of products, including gold and silver. The customs duty on gold and silver was cut from 15 per cent to 6 per cent. Traders said gold prices declined on persistent selling by local jewellers amidst weakening trend in the international markets.

## Adani Energy Solutions posts Rs 1,190 cr loss in Q1



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Adani Energy Solutions Ltd on Thursday reported a net loss of Rs 1,190.66 crore for the April-June quarter of 2024-25 mainly due to exceptional losses related to the divestment of an asset. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 181.98 crore during the April-June period of 2023-24, the company said in a regulatory filing. The total income rose to Rs 5,489.97 crore in the quarter under review from Rs 3,772.25 crore in the year-ago period. Expenses surged to Rs 4,443 crore from Rs 3,124.69 crore a year ago. The company reported profit before tax of Rs 1,046.97 crore for the quarter under review against a PBT of Rs 496.35 crore in the year ago period. In a separate statement, the company said, "Honoring its ESG commitment it has decided to divest Dahanu thermal plant resulting an exceptional item in line with Ind AS 105, of Rs 1,506 crore." Adani Electricity Mumbai Limited (AEML), a subsidiary of the company, is in the process of divesting Dahanu Thermal Power Plant.

## Markets extend losses for 5th session

□ METAL, BANK STOCKS MAJOR DRAG

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty stayed on the back foot for the fifth straight session on Thursday as investors offloaded metal, banking and finance stocks amid a lacklustre trend in global markets.



Heavy foreign fund outflows after a hike in securities transaction tax and short-term capital gains tax also impacted markets' sentiment negatively, traders said. However, strong buying in oil & stocks, energy and auto shares helped the indices offset some losses,

they added. After a sharp fall in intra-day trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex managed to recover some of the lost ground to settle 109.08 points or 0.14 per

cent lower at 80,039.80, as a sharp rally in Tata Motors and Larsen & Toubro restricted its fall. During the day, it tanked 671 points or 0.83 per cent to 79,477.83.

## India financial system looks stronger than in the past: RBI dy guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian financial system looks stronger than in the past and the country's economy is an outlier even as strong headwinds globally, Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao said. Delivering the J P Morgan India Leadership Series Lecture here, the RBI official also highlighted that India has achieved the highest climate change performance index (CCPI) score among G20 members in 2024, which reflects the country's unwavering commitment to this cause. "This also shows that by aligning economic policies with climate action, we can spur green investments, enhance energy efficiency, and foster sustainable development

Rao said the global financial system is facing strong headwinds from various quarters, including high levels of public debt, stretched asset valuations, economic and financial fragmentation, geopolitical tensions, and risks arising from increasing cyber threats



across the sectors," he said in the lecture on 'Climate Change -- The Emerging Challenge'. Rao said the global financial system is facing strong headwinds from various quarters, including high levels of public debt, stretched asset valuations, economic and financial fragmentation, geopolitical ten-

sions, and risks arising from increasing cyber threats. "Amidst these global challenges, the Indian economy is an outlier which shows strong macroeconomic fundamentals. Economic activity is growing steadily, supported by a financial system that looks stronger than in the past," he said at the

event held last week. He further said the Indian banking sector, in particular, has demonstrated significant improvement in key metrics such as capital adequacy, asset quality, and profitability, supported by robust macroeconomic fundamentals and business confidence. There has been sustained growth in credit expansion, primarily driven by personal loans and loans to services sector. "However, despite the financial system exhibiting strong performance and healthy financials, as a regulator and supervisor, we need to remain vigilant to the risks on the horizons. We have been flagging our concerns on strong credit growth in certain segments of unsecured retail loans.

## Indian garment factories follow sustainable manufacturing practices: AEPC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian garment factories follow sustainable manufacturing practices by increasing the usage of renewable energy, and zero-liquid discharge, AEPC said on Thursday. As the world is moving towards zero-carbon emission, demand for eco-friendly products are increasing in the global markets. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC), which has taken a big delegation to Tokyo for the India Tex Trends Fair, said the aim is to increase exports from India to Japan and to encourage and invite investment in the Indian ready-made garments (RMG) sector.



Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC), which has taken a big delegation to Tokyo for the India Tex Trends Fair, said the aim is to increase exports from India to Japan and to encourage and invite investment in the Indian ready-made garments (RMG) sector

"Indian garment factories are by and large ESG (environmental, social, and governance) compliant. Indian garment factories are going high on usage of renewable energy, adoption of solar energy, zero liquid discharge," AEPC

Chairman Sudhir Sekhi said. He informed that India has come out with its own cotton brand in the name of Kasturi, which would enable global customers to track the entire textile value chain via traceability managed through block

chain technology. "We have the capacity to cater to all kinds of orders, big and small, from small-size customised orders to large orders," he said. With Indian apparel having duty-free access to Japan under Indo-Japan free trade agreement as against 9 per cent.

## EQT Private Cap Asia exits RBL Bank Sells entire stake for Rs 1,091 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

EQT Private Capital Asia, formerly known as Baring Private Equity Asia, on Thursday exited RBL Bank by selling its entire 7.89 per cent stake in the private sector lender for Rs 1,091 crore through an open market transaction. EQT Private Capital Asia through its vehicle Maple II BV sold shares of RBL Bank through a bulk deal on the BSE. As per the data available on the BSE, Maple II BV sold 4,78,40,700 shares, amounting to a 7.89 per cent stake in RBL Bank. The shares were offloaded at an average price of Rs 228.08 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs 1,091.15 crore.



Meanwhile, Societe Generale and Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore Pte bought 1,95,99,054 shares or 3.23 per cent stake in RBL Bank. The shares were purchased at an average price of Rs 228 apiece, taking the deal value to Rs 446.85 crore. Details of other buyers of RBL Bank's shares could not be ascer-

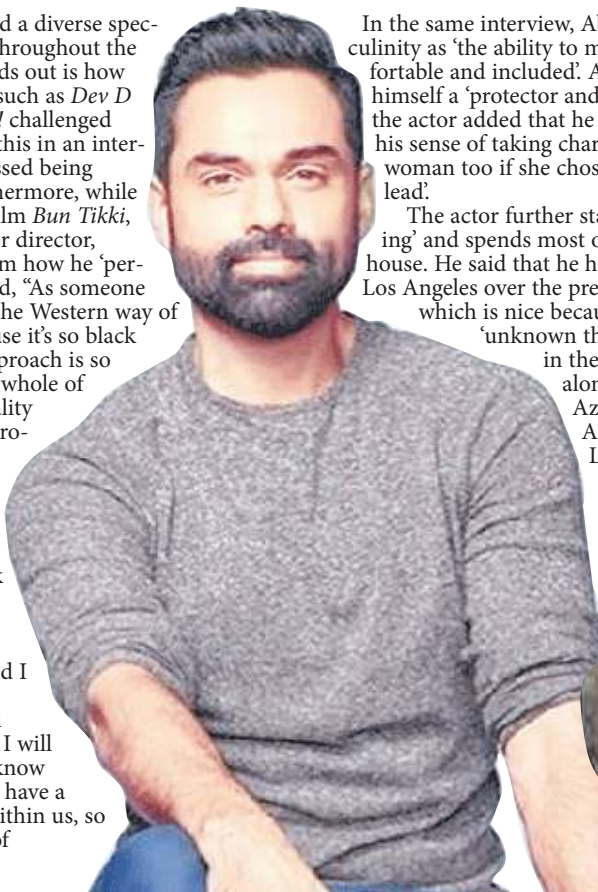
tained. The scrip of RBL Bank fell 2.95 per cent to close at Rs 230.40 per piece on the BSE. Last week, RBL Bank reported a 29 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 372 crore for the June 2024 quarter. The bank's core net interest income grew 20 per cent to Rs 1,700 crore on the back of a 19 per cent rise in advances.



# ABHAY DEOL DEFIES SEXUALITY

Abhay Deol has played a diverse spectrum of characters throughout the years, but what stands out is how many of his roles in films such as *Dev D* and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* challenged stereotypes. He discussed this in an interview. The actor also discussed being 'politically incorrect'. Furthermore, while discussing his comeback film *Bun Tikki*, a non-binary, openly queer director, Faraz Arif Ansari asked him how he perceives sexuality. Abhay said, "As someone on the spectrum, I refuse the Western way of identifying sexuality because it's so black and white. The Eastern approach is so different; it recognises the whole of us. I don't define my sexuality and this might sound controversial, but for me, it's not something that I think can be defined."

He added that, in his opinion, "we are all they/them", saying, "I think it's more for the other person's comfort, so that they can put you in a box and neatly slot you. Why should I define myself in Western terms? I have embraced all experiences in my life and I will continue to do so. I don't know how to label that. All of us have a masculine and feminine within us, so in my opinion, we are all of them."



In the same interview, Abhay described masculinity as 'the ability to make people feel comfortable and included'. As a male, he considers himself a 'protector and provider'. However, the actor added that he would 'gladly give up his sense of taking charge and leading to a woman too if she chose to take charge and lead'.

The actor further stated that he is not 'hiding' and spends most of his time at his Goa house. He said that he has spent a lot of time in Los Angeles over the previous nine years, which is nice because he can be 'unknown there'. Abhay will appear in the film *Bun Tikki* alongside Shabana Azmi, Zeenat Aman and Lin Laishram.



## PHIR AAYI HASEEN DILRUBA TRAILER DROPPED!

The much-awaited movie *Phir Aayi Haseen Dilruba* is scheduled for release on August 9. The makers dropped the intriguing trailer on Thursday and it has taken the internet by storm. The Dinesh Pandit Universe is yet again set to keep us on the edge of our seats and glued to our screens. As the trailer released on Thursday, writer-producer Kanika Dhillon penned a heartfelt note and actor Taapsee Pannu dropped a hilarious comment on the same.

Kanika penned, "This story is very special—very close to my heart. Started writing in 2019—Rani Rishu and Dinesh Pandit—and now the 'gharwali' feeling has come with them.. The character has been made a jute gaye caravan. This time we are coming to your presence with even more special guests. Dinesh Pandit is presenting from my side for you. This is the story of love and I hope this time you will listen to it with great love. Because it's very personal!"

Taapsee Pannu meanwhile commented, "Humari bina mooch wali Dinesh Pandit! Now we have to take this story ahead because it has become very personal." Taapsee and Kanika have been collaborating professionally and they are also very good friends. The duo recently came together and announced their future collaborations post *Phir Aayi Haseen Dilruba*.

It will be a visual treat to dive into the Dinesh Pandit world once again on August 9th and unravel all the mystery and thrill with Rani and Rishu. *Phir Aayi Haseen Dilruba* stars Taapsee Pannu, Vikrant Massey, Sunny Kaushal and Jimmy Shergill in pivotal roles and is produced by Aanand L Rai, Himanshu Sharma, Kanika Dhillon and T-Series.

# HUGE CAST JOINS ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING

Only *Murders in the Building*'s highly anticipated fourth season is set to premiere on Hulu soon and fans are excited to see Charles-Haden Savage, Oliver Putnam and Mabel Mora return to investigate crimes in their apartment building. The lead trio of Steve Martin, Martin Short and Selena Gomez will undoubtedly make a return in the new season. Meanwhile, the cast of *Only Murders in the Building Season 4* has expanded with some interesting new additions. Here is everything you need to know about the

show's new cast and characters. Molly Shannon, Eva Longoria, Eugene Levy, Zach Galifianakis, Kumail Nanjiani, Melissa McCarthy, Desmin Borges, Lilian Rebelo, Siena Werber, Daphne Rubin-Vega, Catherine Cohen, Jin Ha and Richard Kind have joined the cast of the film. In addition, Meryl Streep and Paul Rudd will reprise their roles as Loretta Durkin and Ben Glenroy, respectively, from the third season. *Only Murders in the Building Season 4* will air on Hulu on August 27, 2024.



## GIGI UPSET OVER SUKI'S REMARKS ABOUT BRADLEY

Gigi Hadid is reportedly furious over comments made by former friend Suki Waterhouse after the model-turned-actress disparaged her boyfriend, Bradley Cooper. According to sources close to Hadid, tensions have risen, resulting in a breakdown between the erstwhile pals. The supermodel is claimed to be particularly offended by Waterhouse's disparaging remarks about the Oscar winner, who once dated Pattinson's fiancée. "They've fallen out and there's no indication that things will ever be the same for them," a source told.

Gigi is said to have been seeing Bradley Cooper for some months and while the couple has not made their romance public, they have been sighted together several times. "Gigi is totally right Bradley and taking this up as her own cause," the insider added, stressing that "she isn't about to let this go."

Suki, who recently had her first child with Robert Pattinson, dated Cooper in 2013 before splitting in 2015, characterising the breakup as a 'colossal grief'. In a *Vogue* cover story interview in 2024, the 32-year-old did not mince words while recounting the 'dark and painful' chapter of her 20s with the director. The supermodel, who has supposedly been dating Cooper since October 2023, is said to be outraged that her ex-friend would portray the *A Star Is Born* star so poorly.

## STANDALONE

First shown at Hyundai FDCI India Couture Week, in partnership with Reliance Brands Limited, were ASAL and Mard by Abu Sandeep. Celebrities Wamiqa Gabbi and Taha Shah Badusha were the most amazing models for the up-and-coming labels. In an olive silk tissue long kurta shimmering with crystal-encrusted flying birds, Taha Shah Badusha stole hearts. It was worn with easy-going yet elegant brocade flared pants.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



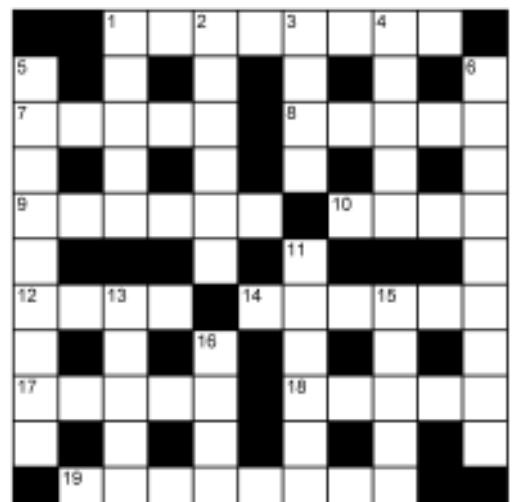
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

- Very good indeed
- A leader of a tribe
- Chefs
- A religious holiday every year
- A large continent
- A ship's tall pole
- The country just north of the USA
- A female relation
- A wild dog from Australia
- Opposite of strength

### DOWN

- Worshipped statues
- Yelling loudly and shrilly
- A moving staircase
- A rider's seat on a horse
- Part of a stage play
- Opposite of uncles
- A pointed top of a mountain

SOLUTION

D	I	S	E	A	S	E	S	
T	O	C	L	K				
F	O	R	K	A	T	O	M	
F	E	A	R	A				
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N	L	S	R	I	N			
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R	N	I						
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## FROM FICTION TO REALITY

# Reliving slice of Julia Roberts' PIZZA MOMENT FROM EAT, PRAY, LOVE

AARTI SREENATH

Forget the postcard-perfectness of travel brochures. Close your eyes and imagine a world where wanderlust bleeds into wandering women. That is Jane Serena Chintha for you! Marketing whiz by day, intrepid explorer by wanderlust, she is a kaleidoscope of energy. She weaves well-being into everything she touches, even her wildly popular podcast, *Stay Sane with Jane*. Each episode is a captivating yarn woven with threads of laughter, heartwarming stories and maybe a tear or two—all straight from her travelogue of life. And let us not forget her viral reels! They are a visual feast, especially for her Telugu fans, taking them on breathtaking tours that leave you yearning to ditch the guidebook and get gloriously lost.

TRAVELOGUE

Buckle up, because Jane's just back from a European adventure and she is about to spill the wanderlust-inducing tea. Her latest escapade took her to the enchanting streets of Europe. "My recent trip to Europe was unforgettable. I spent two days in Barcelona and seven days in Italy," she recounts. "Among all the places I visited, Naples stood out the most. I absolutely loved Naples—the vibe, food and people. There is something raw and relatable about this city that makes it incredibly special. I felt a strange sense of belonging there, something I did not experience anywhere else during my travels. I would love to live in Naples someday, maybe for a year or two, to really soak in everything the city has to offer. It's a place that feels like home in a way no other place does."

Naples, with its bustling streets and never-ending energy, made a lasting impression on Jane. "Naples is incredibly lively, with streets that are always buzzing. You can see steam rising from little espresso cups at any time of day because the city never stops. Before my trip, I created a mood board for my European wardrobe. I wanted to radiate feminine energy, so I featured lots of whites, flowery dresses and skirts. I'm very happy with how my holiday wardrobe turned out."

Her travels are rich with cultural experiences and local interactions. One incident in Barcelona stands out. "When I first landed in Barcelona, I was very nervous since I didn't know the language. On my second morning, I went out to get coffee at a nearby café. I tried to stick my phone on someone's door to take a picture of myself and an older man came up to me and asked if he could take the picture for me. A sane person would probably say no and not give their phone to a stranger, especially with all the stories about pickpocketing in Barcelona. But I handed him my phone and ended up with some nice pictures! I also asked other tourists to take pictures of me because I was by myself and everyone was very sweet."

Her stay in Naples was made even more special by a local friend, who introduced her to the city's hidden gems. "I stayed with a friend and I'm so grateful for that, as it allowed me to discover the city through local eyes. They took me to a quaint little shop run by an elderly man named Mario. I never quite caught the shop's real name, but we called it Mario's. With its great-value drinks, especially the 1-euro spritz and a lively atmosphere of dancing and singing, Mario's quickly became a favourite spot. Those evenings spent there, soaking up the easy-going Neapolitan vibe, are memories I'll always treasure."

When asked about a unique place in India, her eyes light up. "Every state in India is culturally rich and uniquely distinct, but I have a special fondness for Hyderabad. After living there my entire life and taking time to travel and experience the world, I'd still choose to return and call it home. There is nothing about the city I dislike; it strikes the perfect balance between modernity and tradition. Hyderabadis, with their generous plates of *Biryani* and even bigger hearts, make the city feel like home in the most comforting way."

Jane prefers the coziness of Airbnbs when travelling solo, but hotels occasional-

ly find their way into her itinerary. "It's always important to check reviews before making a reservation, as they can be incredibly helpful. Also, make sure the place has all the essentials you need. I remember staying at a hotel in London that didn't provide fresh toiletries, which surprised me since I had always assumed that all hotels offered these basics."

For rejuvenation, Jane turns to serene landscapes of Scotland. "I live in Scotland, where the pace is relaxed and the scenery is calming. Sometimes, life here feels like it's straight out of a movie and I absolutely love it. When I feel the urge to escape, I head to the Highlands. There's something about the mountains that just revitalises me—taking a road trip through the Highlands is like a remedy for everything. Even though life can get a bit monotonous at times, the natural beauty here always brings back a sense of wonder."

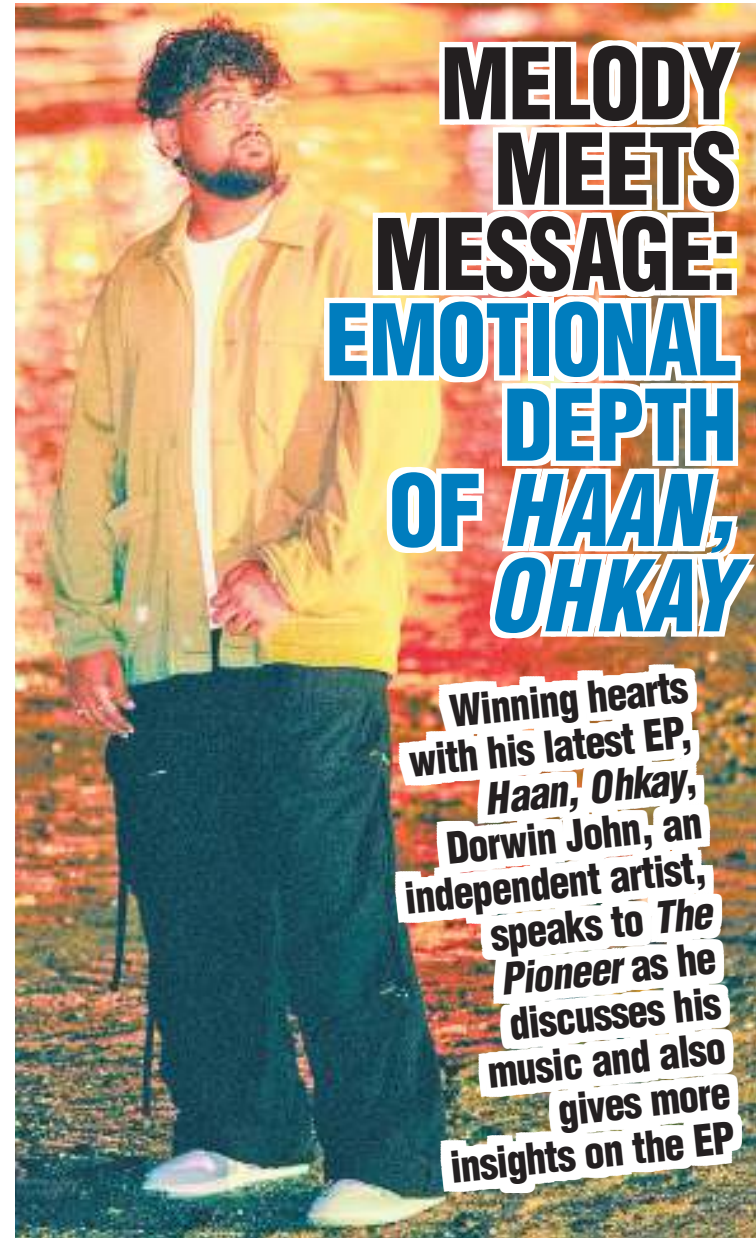
Her travels are filled with unexpected adventures and cultural surprises. "I've been travelling alone quite a bit recently, whether for work or vacations and booking an Airbnb can be pretty daunting. I've been nervous more times than I can count—like when I first arrived in Aberdeen, stayed in a tiny room in Barcelona, or rented a flat for myself in Scotland. It's a mix of fear and tranquility to be on your own like that. In those moments, I find comfort in praying to God and trusting that I'm protected and nothing will happen to me."

The content creator also shared a funny cultural misunderstanding she encountered in Scotland. "In the early days of settling into Scotland, I cooked chicken curry for my friends and later, my English friend decided to try making it himself. A month later, when we were both hungry and debating what to eat, he suddenly suggested chicken curry. I warned him it might take a while to cook, but he replied, 'No, I froze the chicken curry from last time. We can just eat that.' I was shocked! The idea of eating curry that was a month old was hard to digest, but he insisted it was perfectly fine since it was frozen. That was definitely my biggest culture shock."

Her European adventure was as much about food as it was about exploration. "You absolutely must try Neapolitan pizza. There's nothing like it! The first time I had it, I was incredibly hungry and my friend took me to the place where Julia Roberts had pizza in *Eat Pray Love*. It turned out to be the best pizza I've ever had. Plus, the food is incredibly affordable."

Reflecting on her travels, she says, "I think the trip was incredibly self-reflective. I learned a lot about myself, including the kind of holiday I enjoy and the lifestyle I prefer. Solo travel is something everyone should experience at least once. It's not only liberating but also offers valuable lessons about the world and about oneself."

When it comes to souvenirs, she has a charming habit. "Nothing strange so far, but I have a habit of picking up little gifts for friends and family when I travel. My family always encouraged me to bring something special for loved ones. I remember when my parents bought me a set of handcrafted pens during a trip to Agra to give to my friends at school. I keep that habit alive, collecting small souvenirs that I think my friends would enjoy. It struck me as odd that not everyone shares this practice; I felt a bit strange when a colleague returned from a holiday without a souvenir for me, haha. But then I realised, I was just raised a bit differently."



TEJAL SINHA

Winning hearts with his latest EP, Haan, Ohkay, Dorwin John, an independent artist, speaks to The Pioneer as he discusses his music and also gives more insights on the EP

*Moze* is all about finding your peace, chilling in your own space and just existing. The title track, *Haan, Ohkay*, is about embracing the good times and the bad times, no matter how rough it gets. It's about loving your people fiercely, flaws and all."

Visually, these tracks are strong. He pictured them in his head as he wrote them. All three came together in his living room; he wrote 'em down and recorded 'em fresh out of the oven. "For *Naksha*, I got stuck on the bridge for months, like a creative traffic jam. I finally broke through in Goa and finished the whole EP right after that trip. *Moze* was the first track I wrote for the EP. For all three, the writing process was like a burst of inspiration. I came up with the music first, then built the lyrics and vocals on top. Honestly, I wasn't sure about using "moze" at first, which means socks, but then I realised it's a unique metaphor for love, you know? The sound for *Moze* definitely draws on *Blink-182's* guitar vibes, but the drums are full-on drum and bass. I wasn't necessarily planning a drum and bass track, but it just fit, so I rolled with it."

Meanwhile, talking of the title track, it starts with that classic iMessage typing sound; you got to hear it! The whole track is this driving, four-on-the-floor groove. At first, the demo was called *Manzoor*, but he changed it because *Haan, Ohkay* is like the ultimate text-speak for acceptance in our generation. "It's catchy, simple and sticks in your head—perfect for a track name and the whole EP title. This one came together fast—I wrote it in two days, then spent a week polishing the production," enunciates the *Gaya Gaya* singer. "With *Haan, Ohkay*, I had a bigger vision and that somehow made working on all three tracks at once way smoother. It was like everything clicked. While I was finalising the production on *Moze*, I was already diving into the lyrics for *Naksha*. And by the time *Naksha* was shaped up, *Haan, Ohkay* was bubbling up in my head. It was this wild, mixed-up process, but it flowed great and totally opened my eyes to how I can create. This EP was my first big artistic statement."

His musical influence stretches beyond the boundaries of indie music. His extraordinary voice served as the soundtrack for Netflix India's official promotional film for the fifth and final season of the global blockbuster *Money Heist*, demonstrating his flexibility as a vocalist.

With his music constantly evolving, *Haan, Ohkay*, he says, was a big learning experience and he is already itching to explore new sounds. "I'm a huge admirer of artists who can blend genres seamlessly, so I might head down that path. Maybe some soulful electronic vibes, or even incorporate some traditional Indian instruments—who knows?"

New music, he says, is definitely on the horizon! Dorwin John's distinct blend of musicality and storytelling promises to captivate audiences all around the world as he continues to hone his craft and explore new creative frontiers. The EP is a compelling introduction to this budding musician, providing a glimpse into the aural cosmos he is about to build.

The expression "Haan Ohkay" or "yes okay," as we say in SMS jargon, is one that many of us use to concur with what the other person has said. Are we talking about this, though? We are discussing the most recent EP by independent musician Dorwin John, titled *Haan, Ohkay*. This three-track EP, which displays Dorwin's amazing talent and captivating lyrics, is a significant step forward in his evolving musical career.

The EP includes a compelling collection of tracks, including *Naksha*, *Moze* and the title track, *Haan, Ohkay*. Each track promises a distinct audio experience, bursting with Dorwin's trademark blend of current Indian music and poignant narration.

So, what are we waiting for? Let's bring to you some exclusive insights from the talented artist. "*Haan, Ohkay* came straight from the real stuff in my life," begins the *Parinaam* singer on a quick exclusive chat with *The Pioneer* as we discuss *Haan Ohkay*. Basically, there was

a time when he realised that true love meant accepting people, flaws and everything else, making it the core message of the EP. Dorwin, who is only 24 years old, has already established himself in the Indian independent music scene. His intriguing melodies and unusual voice have earned him a devoted following, eager to witness his creative progression. Dorwin made a breakthrough in 2023 when he released his debut singles, *Aasha*, *Jaga De*, *Gaya Gaya* and *Parinaam*. These fascinating compositions have received over 1 million streams on Spotify alone, demonstrating his capacity to connect with listeners on a large scale.

*Haan, Ohkay*, is made much more appealing by the beautiful artwork created by the great Rishik Raj. Going ahead as we discuss the tracks *Naksha*, *Moze* and the title track named *Haan, Ohkay*, the *Aasha* singer shares, "Each track in the EP definitely has its own flavour. For all three, the songwriting and composing flowed from an idea of love and acceptance. *Naksha* is about being lost and searching for the right connection. Maybe even try to forget a bad one.

## Reduce risk of hernia by managing constipation & urinary retention

There is an important relation between constipation, urinary retention, and chances of developing a hernia. It is important to manage constipation and urinary retention effectively to lower the risk of developing a hernia.

### Understanding hernias and its relation to constipation and urinary retention

Hernia is a medical ailment in which an internal organ or other body tissue passes through a weak spot in the muscular wall or tissue area. Hernias typically occur in the abdomen and can cause serious pain or complications if not treated properly. Genetics, heavy lifting, obesity and disorders that increase intraabdominal pressure, such as constipation or urine retention, are all risk factors for hernia development.

Hernias and constipation or urinary retention are related as both constipation and urinary retention are conditions that elevate intra-abdominal pressure. Efforts or attempts during defecation exert too much pressure on the walls of the abdomen, which might lead to a hernia. In a chronic state, constipation will cause repeated efforts; an enlarged prostate in males and similar dysfunctions of the pelvic floor in females may have similar effects, with urinary retention.

### 1- Managing constipation

#### • DIETARY ADJUSTMENTS

- 1. High fibre:** Eating a fibre-rich diet helps in maintaining bulky, soft stool consistency, which is easier to evacuate. Natural sources of fibre are fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.
- 2. Stay hydrated:** Adequate hydration is a simple way that constipation can easily be avoided. Water is required to keep the stool soft and for passage through the intestines.
- 3. Avoid foods high in fat and sugar:** Some foods high in fat and sugar can worsen constipation. A reduction in these foods can aid regularity.

#### • CHANGES IN LIFESTYLE

- 1. Routine physical activity:** Routine physical activity stimulates the intestines by causing them to contract better and push stools through the colon. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- 2. Establish a routine:** Try to have a bowel movement every day at approximately the same time. This may help your body develop a regular schedule for bowel movements.
- 3. Listen to urges promptly:** Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement can result in

constipation. Listen to your body and act accordingly.

#### • MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS

- 1. Laxatives:** Over-the-counter laxatives may help to some extent, but they should not be relied on for long-term management.
- 2. Prescribed medications:** If the constipation is chronic, the healthcare provider prescribes medications to regulate bowel movements.

#### 2- Strategies to facilitate bladder emptying

- 1. Timed voiding:** Develop a schedule for patients to use the bathroom at regular intervals to prevent the bladder from becoming too full.
- 2. Double voiding:** Once you are finished urinating, wait a few minutes, and then try to urinate again to completely empty your bladder.
- 3. Warm baths:** You can sit in warm water in the bathtub to relax the muscles around your pelvis for easier urination.

#### 3- Underlying causes for constipation and urinary retention

- 1. Prostate health:** Some men experience relief through medications for an enlarged prostate to reduce its size, or to relax the muscles of the bladder neck.
- 2. Pelvic floor dysfunction:** A woman with urinary retention from pelvic floor dysfunction can derive maximum benefit from physical therapy involving pelvic muscle exercises.

You should consult your nearest doctors if you have no improvement with treatment and still suffer the following symptoms-

1. Constipation
2. Bloating
3. Blood in the stool
4. Unintentional weight loss

Management of constipation and urinary retention is important not only for comfort and overall health but also for preventing hernia development. By diet modifications, lifestyle changes, and relevant

medical interventions, the patient will largely reduce elevated intra-abdominal pressures that lead to a hernia. Of course, it is possible to get more personalised counselling and treatment programs after consulting your health provider.

(The author, Dr. Mriganka Sekhar Sharma, is a consultant, Department of General Minimal Access and Bariatric Surgery, at Manipal Hospital.)

Jane Serena Chintha, an avid traveller, takes *The Pioneer* straight out from her pictures to her travelogue experiences in a quick chat for our Travelogue segment.



# GAMBHIR'S FIRST HEADACHE: PANT OR SAMSON FOR T20I SERIES

PTI ■ COLOMBO

New India head coach Gautam Gambhir will have the onerous task of choosing between Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson during the three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka starting from Saturday. While most of the key stars of the T20 World Cup winning side sans the retiring duo of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are in the Island nation, the choice between two flamboyant wicketkeeper batters Pant and Samson won't be an easy one. Worse, even with two slots vacant, one can't fit in both the hard-hitting batters. Pant with 171 runs was the third highest run-getter for India in the T20 World Cup in the Americas but Samson, though was part of the team, didn't get into any game. A bilateral series against Sri Lanka, of late, has become a low-stakes affair with the two countries often engaged in inconsequential series, some of which India plays to help other international cricket boards stay afloat. One such series was supposed to be the upcoming one against Sri Lanka but it has assumed greater significance



after Gambhir took over as the coach and Hardik Pandya, a sure-shot candidate for captaincy was surpassed by Suryakumar Yadav. In this backdrop, the presence of Gambhir, a fiercely opinionated former India opener and a successful franchise-level mentor, will certainly have a broader say in the team composition, something that will be built over two years in the run-up to the next T20 World Cup. The choice of a keeper-batter



in T20Is hasn't exactly been a straight forward one for India, especially during the time Pant was out of action due to a horrific car accident in December, 2022. Ishan Kishan was around for some time before he fell out of favour after leaving the tour of South Africa midway. Samson has featured in some games, so has Jitesh Sharma and Dhruv Jurel in the interim. Samson, one of Pant's contemporaries, has so far played 28 T20I games with a

couple of fifties and strike rate of 133 plus. But it will be fair to say that 27 of those matches have come in the period between 2020 to present, having made his debut back in 2015. So in three and half years, 27 matches sporadically isn't a lot of games to build on confidence. While average is a slightly less important aspect in the shortest format, the Kerala star would himself admit that 21.14 doesn't do justice to his immense potential. On the

other hand, Pant from his 74 T20I games has three fifties and a strike-rate of a shade below 127. Samson's average is thus pretty similar to the Delhi Capitals skipper, who scored at 22.70 per game. In terms of sheer numbers there is not much to choose between the two. Both are audacious stroke-makers, Pant's falling pull shots are fascinating while Samson on his day can hit the fastest of bowlers over extra cover for maximums.

It will also purely depend on what the new team management feels. When it came to Rohit Sharma, he has blind faith in Pant's capabilities and Samson despite being in the squad wasn't even up for discussion during the T20 World Cup. However, in the next tour following the T20 World Cup when most first XI boys were rested, Samson played the last three games in Zimbabwe and was also appointed vice-captain to Shubman Gill. In terms of keeping, Pant is a far better keeper to spinners like Ravi Bishnoi but in T20Is, keeping skills aren't that important as there are very few balls that would pose trouble for the glovesmen. Gambhir was Pant's first first-class captain and has seen him as an 18-year-old even before he played for the India U-19s. But he has also been a big advocate of Samson's T20 prowess and vocal about his inclusion during his days as a TV pundit. It will be a very tough choice and even if Pant is picked for the series, he knows that he would have to not only score quick but also play a few big innings to stack up the numbers and keep Samson at bay.



## F1 driver Esteban to join American Haas team from next season

AP ■ KANNAPOLIS (US)

Frenchman Esteban Ocon will drive for Haas from next season as a replacement for Kevin Magnussen, the American Formula 1 team said on Thursday. Details of the deal were not announced, with Haas only saying that the 27-year-old driver committed to a "multi-year contract starting with the 2025 FIA Formula 1 World Championship." Ocon, the only driver to win a race for Alpine since it rebranded from Renault at the end of 2020, has picked up just three points this season and had already announced he was leaving the French-owned team. His Alpine contract is expiring at the end of the season. Ocon made his F1 debut in 2016 with Manor and joined the then-Renault team for 2020. His sole career win

came at the Hungarian Grand Prix in 2021 for Alpine after a crash in wet conditions took out much of the field. "I am thrilled to embark on this new chapter in my Formula 1 career," Ocon said. "I'll be joining a very ambitious racing team, whose spirit, work ethic, and undeniable upward trajectory has really impressed me." Haas announced last week that Magnussen would leave Haas at the end of the season when his contract expires. On the eve of the Belgian Grand Prix, team principal Ayao Komatsu said Ocon will bring crucial experience to the team after 19-year-old Oliver Bearman also joined. The British driver will take the seat vacated by German driver Nico Hulkenberg, who is joining Sauber at the end of the year ahead of its rebranding to Audi for 2026.

## Djokovic, Nadal could meet in 2nd round at Paris Olympics, Swiatek faces Begu first

AP ■ PARIS

Top-seeded Novak Djokovic could meet his longtime rival Rafael Nadal in the second round of the Paris Olympic tennis tournament. Djokovic was drawn Thursday against Australian Matthew Ebden and Nadal faces Hungary's Marton Fucsovics, with the winners of those matches meeting in Round 2. The 38-year-old Nadal won a record 14 of his 22 major trophies at the French Open. He won gold in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc López at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. "Roland Garros as everybody knows is the most special place in tennis for me. I am enjoying the fact I am back for the Olympics," Nadal said on stage after the draw. "I am just trying to enjoy every single moment." French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz takes on Lebanese player Hadj Habib. Top-ranked Iga Swiatek of Poland faces Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania in the opening round of the women's draw with second-seeded American Coco Gauff taking on Australian Ajla Tomljanovic. Gauff is the reigning US Open champion and is making her Olympic debut. She is a flag bearer for the US team at Friday's opening ceremony along with basketball star LeBron James.



She will be the first tennis athlete to carry the US flag. Djokovic and Swiatek have not won Olympic gold. Djokovic owns 24 Grand Slam trophies, more than anyone else in tennis apart from Margaret Court, but his only Olympic medal was a bronze in Beijing in 2008. Swiatek has won the French Open four of the past five years on the same clay courts at Roland Garros. Four-time major winner Naomi Osaka of Japan takes on three-time major champion Angelique Kerber of Germany. Men's and women's first-round play begins Saturday, and the top-ranked man won't be playing. Jannik Sinner pulled out on Wednesday because of tonsillitis. The 22-year-old from Italy posted on X that he took medical advice to sit out the Summer Games. Tokyo Games champion Alexander Zverev of Germany plays Australian Alex de Minaur.

## WOMEN'S ASIA CUP SEMI-FINAL India start firm favourites against Bangladesh

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Shafali Verma will be aiming to come out all guns blazing while Smriti Mandhana will be more than motivated to get a big one as India start overwhelming favourites against Bangladesh in the semi-final of the women's Asia Cup here on Friday. Shafali, with 158 runs, has been the second highest run-scorer in the tournament so far and against Nigar Sultana's team, which has a host of slow bowlers, she will have to give India a good start. The 'Women In Blue' pummeled the opposition in all three games -- winning by seven wickets against Pakistan, 78 runs against UAE and by an 82-run margin against Nepal.

However, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur knows that in Asia Cup, it is only the semi-final and final matter the most and they would not miss the fact that Bangladesh on select days can be a dangerous side. The start will be very important for India and Shafali will want her senior opening partner Mandhana to also fire in unison. The elegant left-hander was in great nick during her 45 against Pakistan, which could have been a bigger one in terms of volume. With UAE and Nepal being two of the three opponents during the group league stage, the Indian team would certainly face a sterner test against a bunch of decent slow bowlers in the Bangladesh



ranks. Slow left-arm orthodox Nahida Akhter and young leg-spinner Rabeya Khan have both claimed five wickets apiece. While Nahida with a parsimonious economy rate of 3.25 would like to build the pressure on an experienced batting line-up while leg-break bowler Rabeya is likely to push for wickets.

The medium pace department comprises veteran Jahanara Alam along with Ritu Moni, who also has chipped in with three wickets. However, with Harmanpreet, Richa Ghosh and Jemimah Rodrigues coming in the middle-order and all-rounders Deepti Sharma and Puja Vastrakar to complement them, India have a lot of quality

in their ranks. With pitches at the Dambulla Stadium slowing down considerably during the second half, India would like to defend a total on the big day. The semi-final will, however, be an afternoon game. Off-spinner Deepti has been very consistent with the ball taking eight wickets in three games so far. The economy rate of 4.66 has been equally impressive compared to Radha Yadav, who has been on the slightly expensive side. The Indian new ball duo of Renuka Singh Thakur and Vastrakar have been on target during the games. For Bangladesh, they haven't had too many impactful batters and if India can post anything in the range of 140-plus, it

could well be enough for a place in the final. **TEAMS** **INDIA:** Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Jemimah Rodrigues, Renuka Thakur, Dayalan Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajeevan. **BANGLADESH:** Nigar Sultana Joty (C), Shorna Akter, Nahida Akter, Murshida Khatun, Shorifa Khatun, Ritu Moni, Rubya Haider Jhelik, Sultana Khatun, Jahanara Alam, Dilara Akter, Ishma Tanjim, Rabeya Khan, Rumana Ahmed, Marufa Akter, Sabikun Nahar Jesmin.

## Former AICF chief Sanjay Kapoor elected FIDE India zone president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former All India Chess Federation (AICF) chief Sanjay Kapoor has been unanimously elected the president of FIDE India Zone, the sport's apex body in the country said on Thursday. The announcement was made during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of AICF in Ahmedabad. Kapoor has been elected as the zone president for four years, and FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich congratulated the Indian

administrator. Kapoor's new role marks a pivotal moment for chess governance in India, entrusting him with the responsibility of overseeing the game's growth and development across the globe. Speaking on his appointment, Kapoor said, "It is an immense honour to be elected as the FIDE India Zone President. I am committed to the growth of chess in every corner of our country and ensuring that we produce Grandmasters from each and every state." "My experience with the 44th

Chess Olympiad has shown me the incredible potential we have, and I am excited to work towards a bright future for chess in India and internationally," he added. Kapoor has been at the forefront of successfully staging the 44th edition of the Chess Olympiad in India. He was the AICF president when India hosted the event. Meanwhile, On International Chess Day (July 20) last week, FIDE also launched its Guinness World Record attempt for the most games played online and over-the-board in 24 hours.

## Indian athletes' confidence has reached new high: Gagan

PTI ■ PARIS

Olympic medallist shooter Gagan Narang said Indian athletes' mindset has changed over the years and their confidence has touched unprecedented levels, encouraging them to set their sights on a gold medal. The London Games bronze medallist, who is serving as India's Chef-de-Mission at the Paris Olympics, felt the Indian athletes are now not intimidated by their counterparts from other countries. "There is a huge change in the motivation and the level

of thinking our athletes have today. We used to feel scared, under-confident because other countries were better. But slowly that's changed, the mindset (has) changed," Narang told reporters here. "People started watching sports, playing it, then we had great performances. The confidence is at a new high. Today's athletes don't go just to participate, they go to perform. "Someone in the top 8 or 5 wants to win a medal today and not just any medal but a gold. That's the difference in thinking of the athletes today.

"They don't think anyone is above them. They rate competitors at par and that's a very positive sign for Indian sport," Narang added. The 41-year-old said there has been an "unprecedented coordination" between the Sports Ministry, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the national federations. "The support we have got from the government (this time) we never got before. The support has increased in the past few years, TOPS' players have increased, they have got all the facilities they wanted.

# Paris aims to reset Olympics with audacious games and wow opening

AP ■ PARIS

Paris has long been a city of dreamers: Just look at the Eiffel Tower, for decades the world's loftiest structure. Audacity also underpins the French capital's plans for its first Olympic Games in a century, which open Friday with an opening ceremony on the River Seine that even French President Emmanuel Macron says initially felt like "a crazy and not very serious idea" — kicks off 16 days of competition that promise to be ground-breaking, with nearly every corner of the city hosting some aspect of competition. After two toned-down, pandemic-hampered Olympics, expect a bold celebration. The heady marriage of sports and

France's world-renowned capital of fashion, gastronomy and culture could also help secure the Olympics' longer-term future. Olympic organizers were struggling to find suitable host cities for their flagship Summer Games when they settled on Paris in 2017, enticed by its promise of innovations and the potential for the city of romance to rekindle love for the Olympics, especially with younger audiences that have so many other entertainment options. But Paris' challenges are huge, too. Past and present sorrows hang over the Games. The city that has been repeatedly struck by deadly extremist attacks has to safeguard 10,500 athletes and millions of visitors. The international context of wars in Ukraine and Gaza add layers of complication for the gargantuan security effort. French elite special forces are



part of the security detail for Israel's delegation. Still, if all goes well, Paris hopes to be remembered as a before-and-after Olympic watershed. The first Games with nearly equal numbers of men and women, an advance that's been a long time coming since 22 women first got accepted as Olympians 124 years ago, also in Paris, will take another step toward aligning the Olympics with the post-#MeToo world.

Paris also hopes to reassure climate-conscious Generations Z and beyond by staging Games that are less polluting, more sustainable and more socially virtuous than their predecessors. Many of the sports venues are temporary, because Paris didn't want to repeat the mistake of previous Olympic host cities that built new arenas and then had no use for them. With iconic Paris monuments as backdrops — beach

volleyball in the Eiffel Tower's shadow — and breakdancing added to a growing list of Olympic sports that target young audiences, expect plenty of viral moments on Instagram, TikTok and elsewhere. Crowds will be back for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic forced Tokyo to push back its Games to 2021 and keep spectators away, and the Beijing Winter Games in 2022, when China was locked down. Prize-winning French theater director Thomas Jolly is turning central Paris into an open-air stage for the opening ceremony that will run through sunset and showcase France, its people and their history. The 330-meter-tall (1,083-foot-tall) Eiffel Tower will surely feature prominently. Hundreds of thousands of people, including 320,000 paying and invited ticket-holders, are expected to line

the Seine's banks as athletes are paraded along the river on boats. During the extravaganza, a no-fly zone extending for 150 kilometers (93 miles) around the capital will close Paris' skies, policed by fighter jets, airspace-monitoring AWACS surveillance flights, surveillance drones, helicopters that can carry sharpshooters and drone-disabling equipment. Helping Parisians move past the attacks of 2015 Showcasing and celebrating Paris could be joyously cathartic for the city that was plunged into mourning by extremist attacks in 2015. Guesses about the identity of the person or people who might get the honor of lighting the Olympic cauldron include soccer icon Zinedine Zidane and other French sporting heroes, but also survivors of Islamic State-group gunmen and suicide bombers who killed

130 people on Nov. 13, 2015. Paris is also taking gambles in hopes of leaving an indelible impression on the Olympics' global audience of billions. The decision not to stage the opening ceremony in the traditional setting of France's biggest stadium — the Stade de France that was among the 2015 attackers' targets and is now the venue for Olympic track and field and rugby sevens — and to host skateboarding, archery and other sports in temporary arenas in the heart of Paris have made safeguarding the Games more complex. Rights campaigners and Games critics worry about the broad scope and scale of Olympic security, including the use of AI-equipped surveillance technology. Paris' reach stretches to the Pacific. The furthest venue is on the other side of the world in the French Pacific territory of Tahiti, where Olympic surfers

will compete on famously giant waves that first form in storm belts off Antarctica. Up to 45,000 police and gendarmes, plus 10,000 soldiers, are safeguarding Paris and its suburbs that together are hosting most of the 32 sports that will crown Olympic champions in 329 medal events. The gold, silver and bronze medals they'll hand out are inlaid with a hexagonal, polished chunk of iron taken from the Eiffel Tower. The Seine's banks and riverside roads and more than a dozen of its bridges were fenced off nine days ahead of the opening ceremony, creating a no-go zone for people who haven't applied in advance for passes and making it tough for Parisians and visitors to get around and see the sights in the city of 2 million. Owners of restaurants and other businesses inside the security fence are howling about fewer customers.

# RAKSHIT ATLURI ON BRINGING THRILLS, TRANSFORMATION TO BIG SCREEN

Actor Rakshit Atluri, all set with the global release of his upcoming film *Operation Raavan*, interacts with *The Pioneer* as he shares some interesting insights about the film.

K. RAMYA SREE

In the heart of the bustling film industry, where creativity meets ambition, Rakshit Atluri stands poised to captivate audiences once again. Known for his compelling roles in films like *Palasa* and *Narakasura*, Atluri now ventures into the realm of suspense thrillers with *Operation Raavan*, set for a global theatrical release on the 26th of this month. Directed by Venkata Sathya and produced under the keen eye of Dhyani Atluri, the film promises to redefine the genre with its innovative storyline and stellar cast.

In an exclusive interview, Rakshit Atluri shared insights into the making of *Operation Raavan*, shedding light on the film's origins and his transformative journey within it.

"The concept of *Operation Raavan* took root during the Covid-19 lockdown," he revealed, reflecting on the genesis of the project. "After the success of *Palasa*, discussions at Sudhas Media revolved around crafting a thriller that would resonate deeply with today's audience."

Under the guidance of his father, Dhyani Atluri, a seasoned storyteller in his own right, Rakshit Atluri embraced the challenge

of portraying Anand Sriram, a pivotal character in the narrative. "Working under my father's direction has been a unique experience. His vision and attention to detail have shaped every aspect of this film, from script development to the intricate dynamics of each scene," shared the *Palasa* star.

One of the film's highlights is the character 'Psycho', played by Sangeethana Vipin, whose portrayal Atluri believes will leave a lasting impression. "To engage the audience further, we've launched a special initiative tied to the character 'Psycho', viewers who identify Psycho and reach out to us will receive a specially minted silver coin, a gesture aimed at connecting deeply with our audience," he shared enthusiastically.

Reflecting on the challenges and rewards of his role, Atluri expressed his ambition to diversify his on-screen persona. "While

*Operation Raavan* doesn't seek to preach, it explores the complexities of its characters and their ideological conflicts. This film has been a journey of personal growth for me, pushing me to explore new dimensions in my acting," the actor explained.

From action-packed sequences to moments of introspection, Atluri's dedication to his craft shines through. "I sustained an injury during one of the action scenes. Every challenge has been an opportunity to evolve as an actor."

With Radhika Sarath Kumar's formidable presence and the cinematic finesse of director Venkata Sathya, *Operation Raavan* promises a theatrical experience unlike any other. "The immersive sound and visuals are integral to the storytelling. This film is crafted for the big screen, where audiences can truly immerse themselves in its world," he affirmed.

Looking ahead, the actor remains focused on his craft, with upcoming projects like *Sasivadane* and *Palasa 2* on the horizon. "Each film is a chance to connect with audiences in new ways," he concluded with a smile. "I believe *Operation Raavan* and its successors will bring me closer to the hearts of viewers, sparking conversations and leaving a lasting impact."



## Sanjay Dutt begins dubbing for *Double ISMART*

Sanjay Dutt, the iconic Bollywood star, has ventured into Telugu cinema with a pivotal role in the highly anticipated Pan-India film *Double ISMART*. This blockbuster project marks his first full-length role in a Telugu film, directed by the dynamic duo of Ustaad Ram Potheni and acclaimed director Puri Jagannadh.

Dutt has not only portrayed his character with vigour but has also personally lent his voice by dubbing in Hindi for authenticity and impact. The film is currently in its final stages of post-production, with promotional activities already generating tremendous excitement. The teaser and two songs released so far have received an overwhelming response, particularly resonating with the masses.

*Double ISMART* promises a double dose of mass appeal, action-



packed sequences, gripping drama, and high-octane entertainment. Produced under the banner of Puri Connects by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur, the movie features Kavya Thapar opposite Ram Potheni as the leading lady.

The music score is crafted by the legendary Mani Sharma, while the cinematography is handled by Sam K Naidu and Gianni Gianneli, ensuring a visually stunning experience. Scheduled for a grand release on Independence Day, August 15, *Double ISMART* will hit theatres worldwide in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi languages. PrimeShow Entertainment, led by Niranjan Reddy and Chaitanya Reddy, is overseeing the global distribution across all five languages, adding to the film's monumental anticipation and reach.

## AKASH PURI CHANGES HIS NAME

Akash Puri, known for his early success as a child artist in several blockbuster films directed by the prolific Puri Jagannadh, has officially changed his name to Akash Jagannadh. This announcement coincided with his special birthday celebration.

As a lead actor, Akash gained prominence with roles in diverse films like *Andhra Pori*, *Mehbooba*, *Romantic* and *Chor Bazar*, where he showcased his versatility and acting prowess. Taking to social media, Akash shared his decision to adopt the name Akash Jagannadh, signaling a new chapter in his career.

Expressing his enthusiasm, Akash Jagannadh revealed plans to embark on several exciting projects with compelling narratives, promising more details to be unveiled soon.

Recently, Akash Jagannadh also took on the role of brand ambassador for RC Trend Setters, reflecting his growing influence and popularity in the industry.

Wishing the young actor a joyous birthday and continued success in his endeavours.



## THANGALAN MAKERS EYE FOR HISTORIC KGF



The creators of *Thangalaan* are preparing for a spectacular event at the iconic Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), blending the narrative richness of Pa. Ranjith's ambitious project with the historical allure of Kolar's heritage.

The film, deeply rooted in the legendary gold mines of Kolar, unfolds a tale of history, courage, and unwavering dreams. A close source from the production recently unveiled plans for a grand event at KGF, stating, "The makers of *Thangalaan* are gearing up to host a grand event at the Kolar Gold Fields, the heart of the film's narrative. This event promises to be a celebration of creativity and culture like never before."

The upcoming event at KGF aims not only to celebrate but also to honour the enduring spirit of creativity and the vibrant tradition of Indian storytelling. Featuring captivating performances that embody the essence of *Thangalaan* and immersive exhibitions highlighting the craftsmanship behind the film's production, every aspect of the event is crafted to enthrall and inspire.

As excitement mounts for the film starring Chiyaan Vikram and Malavika Mohanan, all eyes are on Kolar Gold Fields, where *Thangalaan* breathes new life amidst echoes of history and the promise of a bright future. *Thangalaan*, which also stars Malavika Mohanan in a significant role, is scheduled for a worldwide release on August 15, 2024, in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The film's music is composed by GV Prakash Kumar, adding to the anticipation surrounding this epic tale set against the backdrop of KGF's storied legacy.

## Sundarakanda makers celebrate Nara Rohith's b'day with new poster release

As Nara Rohith gears up for his landmark 20th film *Sundarakanda*, directed by Venkatesh Nimmalapati in his directorial debut, the excitement is palpable. Produced by Santhosh Chinnapolla, Gowtham Reddy and Rakesh Mahankalli under the banner of Sandeep Picture Palace (SPP), the film promises to be a delightful rom-com.

Celebrating Nara Rohith's birthday, the makers revealed a special poster that captures the essence of the film. In the poster, Nara Rohith exudes charm in a stylish attire, complemented by a vibrant and scenic backdrop. The tagline "No Two Love Stories Are The Same" hints at a unique love narrative, promising something fresh and engaging for audiences. Anticipation builds further as the teaser for the film is set to be released soon.

Opposite Nara Rohith, Vriti Vaghani stars as the leading lady, supported by Sri Devi Vijay Kumar, Naresh Vijaya Krishna, and Vasuki Anand in pivotal roles. *Sundarakanda* is set to resonate with viewers through its colorful and relatable nuances. Pradeep M Varma handles the cinematography, capturing the film's visual splendor, while Leon James composes the music to enhance the storytelling. Sundeep serves as the executive producer, with Rajesh Pentakota contributing as the art director.



## Pranitha Subhash all set to welcome her second baby

Pranitha Subhash, celebrated for her versatile roles in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam cinema, has joyfully announced her second pregnancy. Taking to Instagram on Thursday, the actress shared the delightful news with her fans and followers, accompanied by pictures showcasing her baby bump.

Pranitha humorously captioned, "Round 2... The pants don't fit anymore!" Her announcement sparked an outpouring of congratulatory messages from admirers and well-wishers, showering her with love and best wishes.

On the professional front, Pranitha was last seen in the Kannada romantic comedy *Ramana Avatara*, directed by Vikas and Vinay Pampathi. Released on May 10, 2024, the film also starred Rishi, Shubra Aiyappa, Arun Sagar and Anirudh Acharya in pivotal roles.

Pranitha tied the knot with businessman Nitin Raju in a private ceremony on May 30, 2021. The couple welcomed their first child, a baby girl, in June of the following year, marking a new chapter of happiness in their lives. Now, after three years of marital bliss, Pranitha and Nitin are eagerly anticipating the arrival of their second child, embarking on another joyous journey into parenthood.

## Vamsi Nandipati acquires AP&TG theatrical rights of Kiran Abbavaram's KA

Successful producer Vamsi Nandipati, known for his knack for successful projects, has acquired the Telugu States rights to the epic period thriller *KA*, starring the talented young hero Kiran Abbavaram. He secured these rights for Rs. 12 crore on an NRI basis. The film's rights for theatrical and non-theatrical distribution in other languages are expected to fetch around Rs. 18 crore. Notably, the pre-release business for *KA* has already reached Rs. 30 crore.

These impressive figures underscore the buzz that *KA* has generated within trade circles, reaffirming the adage that content is king. Nayan Sarika and Tanvi Raam play pivotal roles as heroines in *KA*. Presented by Chinta Varalakshmi and produced under the banner of Srichakraas Entertainments by Chinta Gopalakrishna Reddy, the film boasts high production values. Directors Sujith and Sandeep are crafting *KA* as a village-set action thriller.

The film is slated for a grand theatrical release not only in Telugu but also in Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada.



## Krishnasai's Jewel Thief teaser gives suspense thrills

Telugu cinema is gearing up for another gripping suspense thriller with the upcoming release of *Jewel Thief*, featuring Krishnasai and Meenakshi Jaiswal in lead roles.

The teaser and audio launch event was held at Prasad Labs in Hyderabad, marking a significant milestone for the film directed by PS Narayana and produced under the Sri Vishnu Global Media banner by Mallela Prabhakar.

The event saw guests including Central Reserve Police Force DIG Anil Minj, AP and Telangana Income Tax Commissioner IRS Officer Jeevan Lal Lavidiya and actress Esther, who unveiled the teaser and songs amidst

much anticipation. Hero Krishnasai, inspired by Superstar Krishna, shared his excitement about the project. "This suspense thriller is tailored for the current generation. The music by MM Srilekha is impressive, and working with veteran actress Prema has been a dream come true," he enthused.

Director PS Narayana highlighted the film's journey from concept to completion in a short span, emphasising the stellar contributions of the entire cast and crew. "This is a film that will captivate everyone, featuring renowned senior actors in significant roles," he assured.