





# Will develop Manginapudi Beach as major tourist spot: Minister

District administration to constitute Beach Development Committee soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra has stated that the State government will develop the Manginapudi Beach near Machilipatnam as a prominent tourism spot. "The government will develop the beach on par with the Brindavanam Garden," the Minister said, adding it is his long-pending dream.

Minister Ravindra, Krishna District Collector DK Balaji, his wife Prudhvi Kalyani, Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma, and others participated in the Manginapudi Beach cleaning programme on Sunday. They cleaned the beach by collecting the waste, and later attended a yoga session organised on the occasion.

Ravindra said that in the coming days, Manginapudi Beach will be developed as a tourism centre. "After the State bifurcation, during the TDP regime, the government initiated several development activities on the beach. A wall was constructed along the seashore, besides a road. For that, the then government first sanctioned Rs. 5 crore, and later Rs. 10 crore. However, after the change of the government, those works were stalled," he said.

Further, he said that during



Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra and Krishna District Collector DK Balaji participating in the Manginapudi Beach cleaning programme on Sunday

the auspicious occasion of Kartika Pournami, irrespective of religion, scores of people visit the beach to take a holy dip in the sea. So, drinking water, a room for changing clothes and other infrastructure facilities are needed there. Toilets and bathrooms also need to be constructed on the beach, he said. "People of Hyderabad are in search of a spot to enjoy their weekends. Manginapudi Beach is the apt choice for them to spend some time with their loved ones. So, the government is planning to provide all infrastructure facilities near the beach," he said.

Minister Ravindra

announced that he will soon constitute a Beach Development Committee comprising some of the prominent political leaders. Also, he said several multinational companies (MNCs) are coming forward to set up beach resorts in Manginapudi. Furthermore, he said efforts are underway to boost temple tourism in Manginapudi Beach. The Minister added that MP Vallabhaneni Balashoury is striving for the development of Manginapudi Beach. A 'Beach Festival' was organised during the TDP regime from 2014 to 19. Boat riding and cultural programmes were organised grandly. Today, 6,000 to 7,000



Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra, Krishna District Collector DK Balaji and Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma performing yoga asanas on the Manginapudi Beach on Sunday

people visit the beach every Sunday and so, the government is planning to organise yoga sessions and cultural activities on Sunday evenings, he added.

The district administration also mulls extending the visiting hours to 8 pm. Now, visitors are not allowed after 5 pm. However, priority should be given to providing lighting facilities and security, he said.

DRO K Chandrasekhar Rao, DPO K Nageswar Naik, Tourism Officer Ram Lakshman, Survey Records AD Manisha Tripathi, I & PR DD Venkateswara Prasad, Collectorate AO Nacharaiiah and others were present.

## Rs.220 cr for potable water supply

Meanwhile, Minister Ravindra conducted 'Praja Darbar' at the party office in Machilipatnam and assured that the government will provide drinking water facilities spending Rs.220 crore by implementing the Jal Jeevan Mission, a Central government scheme.

Also, Rs.160 crore will be spent for constructing roads, drains, compound walls to burial grounds and other infrastructure facilities.

These funds have been sanctioned under the Upadhi scheme, he added.



Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sanghala Samanvaya Samithi leaders burning copies of the budget at the Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on Sunday

# Allocation for agriculture not up to expectations: APRSSS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leaders of the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sanghala Samanvaya Samithi (APRSSS) protested against the Union Budget by burning its copies, at the Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on Sunday. They said the budget allocations for the agriculture sector were not up to their expectations.

Speaking on the occasion, APRSSS convener and former minister Vadde Sobhanndeeswara Rao commented that the budget allocated meagre funds to agriculture. However, the BJP-led

NDA government allotted more funds to big industrialists and provided incentives to the corporate, in addition to redemption of the loans, he alleged.

Further, he came down heavily on the Central government saying that mud was stuffed in the mouths of farmers, who provide rice to the people of the country. There is a reduction in the budget allocation for even the Upadhi scheme. There were no funds for irrigation works under the scheme. As a result, rural people have migrated to other areas seeking a livelihood, he

added. He added that the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, constituted during the Congress rule, have not been implemented in the country. Even though BJP bagged less number of seats this time due to the peasants' agitations, the party's attitude has not changed, he said.

APRSSS leaders Y Kesavarao, P Jamalalah, M Haribabu, M Yamamanda Rao, PV Anjaneyulu, M Prasad Babu, P Krishna, M Nageswara Rao and others were present.

# Good response to 'Liver Walk' in Port City

Stress on need for public awareness about liver diseases and how a healthy lifestyle can control them

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A sea of humanity descended upon the picturesque RK Beach Road on Sunday as thousands of people from all walks of life participated in the 'Liver Walk' organised by the Department of Gastroenterology at Andhra Medical College. The event, held in the run-up to World Hepatitis Day, aimed to shine a spotlight on the silent epidemic of liver disease. The walk saw a diverse crowd including medical professionals, students, and concerned citizens. District Collector MN Herendhira Prasad graced the occasion as the chief guest.

Collector Prasad emphasised the critical need for public awareness about liver diseases and how adopting a healthy lifestyle can help control them. "Liver diseases such as hepatitis B and C are a growing concern," he stated, highlighting the severe long-term health issues they can cause if neglected. "Millions of people succumb to liver infections worldwide each year, and it is essential to administer the hepatitis B vaccine to newborns within 24 hours of birth."



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Prasad explained that alcoholics are particularly susceptible to liver diseases. "Hepatitis B and C can be transmitted through the consumption of infected blood products, sharing needles, mother-to-child transmission during birth, unprotected sex, injection drug use, and poor sanitation during tattooing or piercing," he detailed, advocating for a healthy lifestyle and regular medical check-ups as preventive measures. The District Collector also inaugurated a medical camp that provided free liver tests.

Medical experts, including Dr. G. Butchi Raju, Principal of AMC, highlighted that hepatitis B and C are prevalent among alcoholics and those who use unprotected syringes. He mentioned the Central Viral Hepatitis Control Programme, collaboration

with the Central Government at King George Hospital, which offers free hepatitis screening and medicines to prevent cancer and liver cirrhosis.

Renowned gastroenterologist Dr. Pedda Veerarraju painted a stark picture of the global burden of hepatitis and India's role in achieving the World Health Organisation's ambitious goal of eliminating the disease by 2030. "Sustained awareness campaigns and improved access to healthcare are crucial," he stressed.

The Liver Walk culminated in a pledge by participants to prioritise liver health and become ambassadors of hepatitis prevention. As the world marks World Hepatitis Day on Monday, the message from this event resonates loud and clear: early detection, prevention, and treatment are key to defeating this silent killer.

# Big catch: Bandar fishermen net 1,500 kg giant fish

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Fishermen from Campbelpet at Chinna Kara Agraharam in Machilipatnam made headlines with a remarkable catch: a colossal fish weighing approximately 1,500 kg. This extraordinary event, which occurred recently, came to public attention on Sunday.

The drama unfolded as a team of fishermen set out to fish near Gilkaladindi, unaware of the enormous creature lurking beneath the waters between Gilkaladindi and Manginapudi.

After deploying their nets and grappling for hours with the massive fish, the fishermen were astounded by the size of their catch. The sheer weight of the fish presented a formidable challenge, prompting them to



seek assistance. They eventually enlisted the help of a crane to hoist the giant fish out of the water. The catch, nicknamed the 'Bahubali Fish', attracted a crowd of curious locals who gathered to witness this rare

# Collector rushes aid to flood-ravaged areas

PNS ■ PEDERU

In the aftermath of the devastating floods that have wreaked havoc across the region, District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has spearheaded a comprehensive relief operation for the affected residents. While emergency supplies are being distributed, concerns have surfaced about the pace of relief efforts in Chintoor and Kunavaram mandals, which have borne the brunt of the disaster.

To address the immediate needs of the displaced population, the District Collector has overseen the distribution of essential commodities including rice, vegetables, and tarpaulins. Recognising the challenges posed by inaccessible areas, authorities have deployed boats and personnel to reach remote villages in Chintoor, Kunavaram,



VR Puram, and Etapaka mandals.

Collector Dinesh Kumar has embarked on field visits to assess the extent of damage and interact with affected families. During these inspections, he has prioritised the establishment of temporary shelters equipped with adequate healthcare and sanitation facilities to prevent the outbreak of diseases. Medical camps have been set up to provide immediate medical attention to those in need.

# Zoo park celebrates International Tiger Day

Students showcase artistic and photographic talents through works centered on tigers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) marked International Tiger Day with a competitive spirit as it hosted drawing and photography contests. The event, held on Sunday, drew 110 enthusiastic participants from schools and colleges, from Class I to postgraduate level.

Students showcased their artistic and photographic talents through works centered on tigers and their conservation. Themes such as 'Tigers and Cubs', 'Human Impact on Tigers', and 'The Impact of Climate Change on Tigers' provided a platform for young minds to express their understanding of the challenges faced by these



majestic creatures. Dr Nandani Salaria, IFS, Curator of IGZP, emphasised the event's significance, stating, "Such initiatives are crucial in cultivating a sense of responsibility towards wildlife conservation among the youth. By engaging them creatively, we aim to foster a deeper appreciation for tigers and their critical role in the ecosystem."

# Botsa seeks urgent action on drug container case

Also calls for probe into allegations surrounding Daspalla lands

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Former minister Botsa Satyanarayana has launched a fierce attack on the coalition government, demanding immediate and comprehensive investigations into the unresolved case of the drug container seized by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at the Visakh Container Terminal. The container, suspected to contain narcotic drugs mixed with approximately 25,000 kg of dried yeast. Additionally, he called for scrutiny of the scandalous allegations surrounding the Daspalla lands, valued in thousands of crores.

Addressing the media on Sunday, Botsa highlighted the alarming seizure of a massive drug container under Operation Garuda by the CBI, which still remains shrouded in mystery. "What happened to the drug container case from Brazil?" he demanded, urging the government to uncover the origins and far-reaching implications of this scandal.

Botsa did not stop there. Adding fuel to the fire, he brought attention to the allegations implicating the Sandhya Aqua Marine Company, purportedly linked to BJP president Daggubati Purandeswari. He issued a



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stern call to the MPs of North Andhra to confront this issue in Parliament, underscoring the staggering sum of Rs. 25,000 crore involved. "This is not a trivial matter. Those responsible must be identified and punished," he declared.

The former minister lambasted the timing of the drug container seizure, which coincided with the elections, allowing political distractions to overshadow this critical issue. He insisted on an exhaustive inquiry, asserting that every individual involved must be scrutinised without exception. Botsa also reiterated the urgency of investigating the allegations surrounding the Daspalla lands in Visakhapatnam. Turning his ire towards land misappropriations in

Visakhapatnam, particularly post-Hudud typhoon, Botsa condemned the handling of these issues. He demanded the immediate release of the SIT report on land misappropriations dating back to 2004 during the TDP regime. Despite his efforts, Botsa's attempts to obtain this report during the YSRC period were thwarted. "The SIT report must be made public, and the culprits exposed. Enough with misleading the public," he said.

Botsa issued a strident call for transparency and justice, demanding clear answers on whether drugs had indeed arrived at the Visakhapatnam Port and identifying those responsible. "The people deserve the truth," he asserted.

# Fury erupts over VPA hospital privatization proposal

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA)-owned hospital in Kailasapuram has become a focal point of controversy after the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways announced plans to privatize the facility. This move has ignited fierce opposition from local union leaders who are vehemently protesting the decision.

In a joint statement on Sunday, leaders of the Centre

of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) affiliated unions expressed their deep concerns over the potential negative impact of privatizing the hospital on employees and the local community. K. Satyanarayana, General Secretary of the United Port & Dock Employees Union, and B. Lakshmana Rao, General Secretary of the Dock Workers Union, warned of increased healthcare costs and reduced accessibility if the hospital is handed over to private entities.

The announcement to lease the VPA hospital through a public-private partnership (PPP) model was made by Ports Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Friday during a parliamentary session. The proposed deal, valued at Rs 222.43 crore, has drawn widespread criticism. "The privatization of the VPA hospital is a direct attack on the welfare of port employees and their families," said K. Satyanarayana. "This hospital has been a lifeline for the community, provid-

ing essential medical care. We cannot allow it to fall into the hands of private corporations."

B. Lakshmana Rao echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the importance of preserving the hospital as a public institution. "Privatization will compromise the quality of healthcare and undermine the rights of workers," he stated. "We demand the immediate withdrawal of this anti-people decision."

Unions are rallying support from various quarters and

planning protests to oppose the privatization. They argue that this move is part of a larger government push to privatize public assets, which often leads to reduced services and higher costs for citizens. The future of the VPA hospital remains uncertain as the battle between unions and the government intensifies. With the stakes high, the outcome of this conflict will have significant implications for the employees, their families, and the entire community.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Enough is enough

The tragic deaths of three students in basement flooding is a repeat story of administrative apathy and negligence

The incident is both tragic and surreal. It is difficult to comprehend that three students could lose their lives in a coaching centre operated in a basement that gets flooded. In a heartbreaking incident that has once again spotlighted the glaring deficiencies in urban infrastructure and governance, three civil service aspirants tragically lost their lives due to flooding in a basement. This avoidable disaster raises serious questions about official apathy, the flouting of safety norms, and the recurring nature of such incidents. On a fateful evening, heavy rains lashed the city, overwhelming the already inadequate drainage systems. The basement, where the students were studying, was rapidly filled with water. Despite desperate attempts to escape, the rising water levels led to the tragic drowning of the three young lives. The basement, meant for commercial storage, was illegally converted into a coaching centre. With no proper ventilation, emergency exits, or drainage systems, it became a death trap during the downpour. This



incident underscores a stark reality faced by many urban dwellers who are forced to live in substandard and unsafe accommodations due to high real estate costs and inadequate housing policies.

The deaths of these students could have been prevented had there been stricter enforcement of building codes and timely maintenance of drainage systems. However, the incident has laid bare the apathy of the authorities responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of citizens. Residents in the area had repeatedly complained about the poor drainage and the illegal conversion of basements into living spaces. Despite these warnings, no significant action was taken. The inaction of municipal authorities and the lack of accountability have resulted in yet another tragedy. After the death of three students, it is time for the crocodile tears to flood on the social media. A big section of political class would rather do nothing but just be concerned about such incidents. Indeed it is the nexus between the local politicians, bureaucrats and business owners of dubious credentials to indulge in flouting the norms and make a fast buck. They do not mind playing with the lives of innocent people. The incident is not an isolated one, similar incidents have happened in the past. This is part of a disturbing pattern where safety norms are routinely flouted by the powerful. Illegal constructions, unauthorized conversions, and poor maintenance of infrastructure are rampant in many urban areas including the capital city. Builders and landlords often bypass regulations, compromising the safety of residents for profit. Such incidents are alarmingly frequent, each time highlighting the same issues of poor infrastructure, negligence, and lack of accountability. Despite the public outcry and media attention that follows each tragedy, there seems to be little systemic change. Again, a customary enquiry would be instituted which would give its report when the incident is all but forgotten from the public memory and we as a nation wait for another one to happen.

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## PICTALK



'Kanwariyas' carry Ganga water during their pilgrimage in the holy month of 'Shravan', in Haridwar

# Honour the unsung heroes of operation Pawan



R S SIDHU

The lack of public commemoration for the 1,171 soldiers killed in action during Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka highlights a troubling apathy

India's future path to greatness shall be marked with supreme sacrifices by its warriors who if confined to the dustbin of state apathy, as reflected by the Government disinclination towards public commemoration of supreme sacrifice by 1171 Indian soldiers KIA during Operation 'Pawan' in Sri Lanka, may adversely impact the national will during inevitable future military confrontations. To recall Operation 'Pawan,' the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) operation in Sri Lanka, was the largest joint services military operation conducted by India, in the 1971 War. It led to the establishment of Headquarters IPKF, a Corps-size tri-service organisation with nearly 100,000 troops from the three services under its command. Had the proposed Maritime Theatre Command been in existence, Operation 'Pawan' would have come under its ambit. The intensity of this 32-month-long 'politico-military peace keeping' operation, undertaken from 29th of July 1987 to 24th of March 1990, is best gauged from the gallantry awards won and casualties suffered by this force. 1172 Indian soldiers were Killed In Action (KIA), and more than 3500 soldiers suffered grievous injuries. The IPKF was awarded 1 Param Vir Chakra, 6 Maha Vir Chakras, 98 Vir Chakras and scores of other gallantry awards. The ghost of the political failure to see through to the end of its first geopolitical foray in near abroad continues to impact Indian policy establishment even in the present times.

As of now, against the backdrop of a sustained Chinese presence in Sri Lanka, India is struggling to adopt a coherent strategy to deal with the continued intransigence by the Sri Lanka Government to implement the political solution of devolution to the Tamils enshrined in the Indian Sri Lanka Agreement (ISLA) of 29th of July 1987. India is bound to invite hostility from the dominant geopolitical forces in its neighbourhood. This will mandate it to be prepared for Out-of-area military operations to secure its economic and geopolitical interests. India's



future path to greatness therefore shall be marked with supreme sacrifices by its warriors who if confined to the dustbin of state apathy, as reflected by the Government disinclination towards public commemoration of supreme sacrifice by 1171 Indian soldiers KIA in Sri Lanka, may adversely impact the national will during the inevitable future military confrontations. The Government is very vocal in pronouncing its nationalist credentials but sluggish in putting money into building deterrent capabilities. Last week's defence budget was a green signal for China to take even further ahead under the illusion there will be no war. Still, policy pronouncements are not enough unless backed by a revitalised and reorganised military competent to safeguard its economic interests, all aspirational talk is mere rhetoric. Building National War Memorials is one thing; honouring the fallen braves appropriately is quite another matter regardless of the outcome because victory or defeat on the battlefield is never complete unless it is surrendered as in 1971.

This is where the IPKF comes into the picture because it was not permitted to complete its military mission. Its contribution to the preservation of Sri Lanka's territorial integrity is fully acknowledged; in Colombo especially. New Delhi must honour its sacrifices on 29 July as a tribute to



THERE IS ANGST AGAINST THE INJUSTICE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED FORCES NOT OFFICIALLY COMMEMORATING THE IPKF OPERATIONS AT THE NWM AS IS DONE FOR THE 1971 AND KARGIL WARS

the valour of the fallen brave. The political parameters of the ISLA had been achieved by the IPKF by December 1988. The ethnic Sri Lanka Tamil predominant Northern and Eastern Provinces were amalgamated into a unitary Northeastern Province, general elections to the North East Provincial Council were successfully conducted, with a duly elected EPRLF-led government sworn in. Had the IPKF stay been extended to tame the LTTE, the military mission could have created conditions for implementing a political solution short of Elam.

This would have secured national interest, but the new Indian government should not have endorsed the new Sri Lankan government's demand to withdraw IPKF from the island in August 1989. Ascribing the failure of ISLA to IPKF, which was just a corollary to ISLA, is unfair. The failures lay in the diplomatic and government policy, which the establishment wishes to cover up by laying the blame at the doorstep of its military. The ISLA had weak foundations. The contingency of Sri Lanka and LTTE renegeing on the ISLA was not thought through. The withdrawal of IPKF left India without decisive influence to oversee the implementation of the promised political package by Sri Lanka to remove the discriminatory state practices

against its ethnic Tamil minority, impacting Indian policy towards Sri Lanka even in the present.

The provision of weapons and allied support by R&AW to the LTTE even when militarily engaged against IPKF, and the availability of physical infrastructure support to LTTE in Tamil Nadu, was against national interests. Similar primacy to political interests can be sensed by the refusal of the Indian state to commemorate KIA of Operation 'Pawan.' There is angst against the injustice of the government and the armed forces not officially commemorating the IPKF operations at the NWM as is done for the 1971 and Kargil wars. Graves of some of the Indian soldiers killed during Operation 'Pawan' are still in Sri Lanka. It is hard to understand the dichotomy of the Indian leadership, both political and military, paying public tributes at the IPKF war memorial in Colombo, in the heart of Sri Lanka, but failing to honour those KIA during Operation 'Pawan,' at the NWM at New Delhi. The IPKF war veterans are ever hopeful that the Govt will realise the injustice and consent to a befitting annual national homage to 1171 of its Bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice during 'Operation Pawan.' (The writer won Sena Medal in an Operation 'Pawan' veteran; he is strategic thinker, and author; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PM MODI'S WARNING TO PAKISTAN

Madam — This refers to the report "Modi warns Pak on terrorism," The Pioneer, Jul 27. PM Narendra Modi, while addressing the 25th Kargil Diwas celebrations, has warned Pakistan against continuing its futile policy breeding and sponsoring cross-border terror. Both the message and the timing were perfect. PM Modi has given voice to the frustrations of most Indians, and was echoing the viewpoint of the entire Indian polity and the Parliament by expressing the national consensus that Kashmir belongs to India. No policy of terror or initiation of war-like action will ever deter India was his clear pronouncement. He also reflected our national resolve strongly that India would not think twice about doing all it takes to protect its territory and people. Nevertheless, as Mr Modi rightly said, Pakistan has not learnt its lessons. It continues to wage war in the garb of terrorism and proxy wars. And it still continues to be a sanctuary for anti-India terrorists, if the recent surge in attacks in Jammu is any indication. Indian leaders have time and again sought to mend relations with Pakistan and have made genuine overtures for peace. But each time we have received only deceit and backstabbing in return. In the last 25 years, the differential between India and Pakistan in terms of economic prosperity and global reputation has sharply widened. But Pakistan has still not grown out of its desire to be hyphenated with India and is, in the process, only harming its own people. N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

### EMPOWERING MINERAL RICH STATES

Madam — Due to historic verdict on mining royalty and taxes now the state government is empowered to levy taxes on mining companies and due to this reason concerning States will be hugely benefited and the financial state of these States will be improved, and it is due to a landmark judgment on July 25, a nine-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court which upheld the right of States to levy taxes on mining activities, recognizing that 'royalty' and

## The historic rise of women leaders



If Kamala Harris wins, she will become the first woman President of the USA. If Donald Trump wins, he will become the second president to serve non-consecutive terms (45th and 47th), following Grover Cleveland, who was the 22nd and 24th president. Franklin D. Roosevelt is the only U.S. president to have served three terms. Whether anyone will surpass that record remains a long-term puzzle. All eyes will be on

November 5th, 2024, ballot day in the USA. As of July 27, 2024, 29 nations around the world have women as heads of state or government (Presidents or Prime Ministers).

The history of women heads of state and government is fascinating. The world's first woman president was Maria Estela 'Isabel' Peron of Argentina (1974 to 1976). The first elected woman Prime Minister was Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka in 1960, who served three terms. In the 1970s, three women Prime Ministers—Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka), Indira Gandhi (India), and Golda Meir (Israel)—were known as the 'Iron Ladies Trio.' Later, Margaret Thatcher, the 'Iron Lady No. 4,' became the Prime Minister of the UK. P V Madhu Nivriti | Secunderabad

'taxation' are different recognizing both as separate. In the case of Mineral Area Development Authority vs Steel Authority of India, the nine-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court gave this decision in an 8:1 split. Eight judges including Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud voted in favor of this decision while Justice B V Nagarathana disagreed. The decision, pending for more than 25 years, finally clarifies that States can levy additional taxes on mining activities and land used for such purposes. The decision is a significant development in empowering States to generate more revenue, which can be used to meet local needs and mitigate the adverse effects of mining. The distinction between royalties and taxes was at the centre of the court's decision. Royalties are payments made by mining leaseholders to the lessee on the basis of a specific agreement as stipulated under Section 9 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDRA). These payments are made in exchange for the right to extract minerals and are thus seen as compensation for the

use of land and resources. Taxes, on the other hand, are more commonly imposed by governments and used to fund public services and infrastructure. Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

### MODI'S OLIVE BRANCH TO RSS

Madam — In the lead-up to its 100th year, Narendra Modi just gave a birthday gift to the RSS. Amidst speculations of a deepening rift between the RSS and the Modi-Shah-controlled BJP, the NDA government withdrew the order dated 1966 that prohibits government employees from participating in RSS activities. Is this an olive branch, considering the inexplicable statement made by J P Nadda, almost declaring independence from the RSS in the middle of the Lok Sabha elections? This comes on top of several grants and appointments going to people and organisations belonging to or close to the RSS. C K Ramanathan | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## How generative AI is transforming the workplace



ACHAL KHANNA

The rapid advancements in generative AI are revolutionising the workplace, reshaping job roles, and redefining the future of work

Automation has been at the core of human evolution since the beginning of time. Humans have always sought out ways to make their jobs faster and easier. From physical labour to mechanized tools and now artificial intelligence, the unprecedented rate at which this sector has evolved has been transformative. With every upgrade, the next set of expectations is demanded immediately. This leads us to the conclusion that the future of work is NOT in the future; It is NOW!



es. However, historical precedents show that technological advancements tend to transform rather than displace jobs. AI is no different. It will change how we work, introducing new methods and enhancing collaboration between humans and machines. According to a report by SHRM and The Burning Glass Institute on Generative Artificial Intelligence and the Workforce, the impact of Gen AI will be less about automation and more about augmenting workers' productivity and effectiveness. According to a Global Report by Thomson Reuters, 77% of professionals believe AI will significantly impact their work within the next five years. The 'War for Talent' Will Be Fought on Newer Terrains: The traditional paradigms of skills and talent acquisition

are evolving rapidly. Organizations must look beyond conventional talent pools to find the right candidates.

**Competitive Edge through Generative AI:** A growing number of organizations are already incorporating generative AI into their HR processes, and many are exploring its potential in other functions. Organizations have already introduced the use of Generative AI in their HR processes, and many organizations are exploring possible uses.

**Human Creativity:** The Ultimate Differentiator As generative AI becomes more accessible, human creativity and ingenuity will become even more valuable. While AI can process data and provide insights, it is human attributes such as creativity, empathy, and strategic thinking that will set organizations apart. The ability to connect disparate ideas and develop innovative solutions beyond AI's capabilities will be crucial. Human ingenuity will be the key differentiator in a world where AI is a common tool. The case for Reverse

Augmentation AI's potential is best realized when combined with human intelligence (HI). This synergy enables more effective and differentiated applications of AI, resulting in higher return on investments. By leveraging the strengths of both AI and HI, organizations can achieve superior outcomes and drive innovation. **Investing in Leadership Development:** As generative AI enhances operational efficiencies, the focus on developing leadership talent will become increasingly important. Leadership development will require targeted investments to ensure they are equipped to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing environment. Organizations must prioritize investments in both technology and human capability development to remain competitive. Organizations must stay agile, continuously adapting to the changes brought about by AI. The foresight to navigate these changes will be the key to sustaining growth and achieving long-term success. (The writer is CEO SHRM India, APAPC and MENA; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN A PATH TO PERSONAL LIBERATION

With unwavering determination and faith, one can conquer even the most persistent habits



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

What we repeatedly do, said Aristotle... If we have a look at the dictionary meaning of habit, then it says 'something that you do often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you are doing it'. To define it simply, habits can be described as involuntary actions. They are a kind of 'automatic behaviour' as it were, for one does not do them after much thought. There is no doubt in it that almost everyone in this world has one or other bad habit. Don't we all have? Like, many people have the bad habit of smoking. But, if you tell them that it is a bad habit, some of them will bring in a little bit of philosophy and some would try to support it with medical opinion also. They will say, "Smoking is very exhilarating. It is good for my brain because it brings me concentration." Others will say, "Smoking keeps my bowels free." Others still will confess that it is a bad habit that they find hard to give up. Little do most people realise that it is a bad habit that pollutes their physical system and the atmosphere and causes diseases like cancer. Similarly, some people have the habit of talking too much. They just can't keep quiet even for a couple of minutes. Little do these people realise that much breath and energy is wasted on useless talk.

This could usefully be spent in silent meditation. But the problem is that he who talks and talks is, today, considered as a smart, clever and wise person, and a person who talks less is thought to be lacking in general knowledge or to be deficient in the art of conversation! Such examples of bad habits can be multiplied, but, what we need to understand from these examples is that, in most cases, people do not realise that it is a bad or a harmful habit and where this truth is realised, there isn't the strong desire to get freed from its grip and that is why some people philosophically say; This habit of mine will die only when I die.

So what is the solution to get over one's bad habits? Is it practically possible? Yes! With a little effort and attention, it is indeed possible. To start with one needs great enthusiasm which is very essential for leaving bad habits. There is a well-known proverb in English: "Well-begun is half done". So, after realising that the habit which you have decided to give up is



really bad, you should put up a brave and enthusiastic fight against this evil. From the very outset, call forth all your latent energies not only to cut its root and branch but also to destroy its seed, for if the seed remains, the tree is likely to grow up again. When a house is on fire, how promptly and energetically the inmates react? At that time, they are fully concentrated and they use all the means to extinguish the fire.

Put your resolve into action immediately. Secondly, remove the words 'impossible', 'difficult', 'I cannot' etc. from your mind. These are the expressions of a weakling or a timid person. Cheer yourself up. Realize the truth that the evil habit is your own creation, you have given birth to it and nourished it to bring its growth and now you should not say with a weak will that it is difficult to control it.

Always remember! habits are not your original nature; they are your second nature. You have acquired them and you say that you cannot give them up? You are their Master and you believe yourself to be their slave? 'Faith, it has been rightly said, "can move mountains and this your habit is only a molehill. Therefore, rise and take up the bow of endeavour and become an instrument to the Divine to shoot this devil—your bad habit—for, God is with you as He always is on the side of the virtuous. But, remember! A mere wish or desire to eradicate evil is not enough. You must have pure and strong will besides a definite aim and purpose. Wish or desire is a small, temporary ripple in the lake of mind but Will is the power that executes the desire to fulfillment. There is nothing impossible for a man of strong willpower to achieve. So let's make a resolve that we will liberate ourselves in the true sense.

*(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist views are personal)*

# Budget is pro-growth but stability concern remains



UTTAM GUPTA

Major expenditure items may go out of control, raising concerns about the budget's feasibility; moreover, the Government's gross tax revenue target of Rs 38.40 lakh crore is overly ambitious



On top of a GDP (gross domestic product) growth of 8 per cent plus for three consecutive years, the Union Budget for FY 2024-25 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, has all the ingredients to sustain the momentum during the current year as well. For the current year, she has proposed capital expenditure at Rs 111,111 crore, which is 17 per cent higher than the revised estimate (RE) for FY 2023-24. In her Budget for 2019-20, she had laid a roadmap for catapulting the Indian economy to US\$5 trillion by 2024-25. In sync with this target, she had projected an investment requirement of over Rs 100 lakh crore to build the infrastructure over five years.

Out of this, 39 per cent or Rs 39,00,000 crore was to come from the Centre and states each and the balance was Rs 22,00,000 crore from the private sector. The Centre's capital spend during the previous four years was 2020-21: Rs 439,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 554,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 750,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 100,961 crore. This adds up to Rs 2700,000 crore. Add to this Rs 111,111 crore for 2024-25, the total over five years comes to Rs 3800,000 crore which is more or less close to the amount the Centre intended to contribute. The Central government has also been helping the states to boost their capital spend. During 2022-23, it provided them with 50-year Rs 100,000 crore interest-free loans. During 2023-24, such transfers were Rs 130,000 crore. For the current year, the transfers are kept at Rs 150,000 crore.

To promote investment in the private sector, the Centre has reduced the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new manufacturing enterprises and 22 per cent for existing enterprises. In this year's budget, the corporate tax rate on foreign firms has been reduced from extant 40 per cent to 35 per cent. With this and assuming that private consumption/demand remains strong (a relief of around Rs 17,500/- in personal income tax or PIT resulting from the change in tax slabs under the New IT regime and increase in a standard deduction by Rs 25,000/- will give some boost) besides exports getting a leg up, courtesy



THE GROSS TAX REVENUE TARGET OF RS 3840,000 CRORE IS OVER-AMBITIOUS AND THE BUDGET ASSUMES RECEIPTS OF RS 50,000 CRORE FROM DISINVESTMENT OF GOVERNMENT SHARES IN PSUs, A PROGRAM IT HAS DECIDED NOT TO PURSUE. EVEN MAJOR EXPENDITURE ITEMS COULD GET OUT OF CONTROL

rebound in the US economy, India could achieve growth even higher than 6.5 - 7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey for 2023-24. But, there is a flip side to it. This has to do with the fiscal deficit or FD (excess of total expenditure over total receipts). Sitharaman has set it at 4.9 per cent of the GDP which is 0.2 per cent less than a target of 5.1 per cent fixed in the interim budget. This has been made possible due to a mammoth dividend transfer of Rs 210,000 crore by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the Central Government from its operations during the FY 2023-24 which is Rs 130,000 crore higher than the provision of Rs 80,000 crore made in the interim budget. It won't be easy to achieve the 4.9 per cent target during the current year. This is because the gross tax revenue (GTR) target of Rs 3840,000 crore is over-ambitious and the budget assumes receipts of Rs 50,000 crore from disinvestment of government shares in PSUs, a program it has decided not to pursue. Even major expenditure items could get out of control as the year progresses.

For instance, the 'fertilizer subsidy' is budgeted at Rs 164,000 crore during 2024-25. This is based on the assumption that the declining trend in the international price of fertilizers and raw materials used in their production seen during 2023-24 continues during the current year as well. It takes a small disruption in the global supply chain (given the current highly uncertain geo-political situation, this is quite likely), for this assumption to go haywire. That apart, to go down from 4.9 per cent to 4.5 per cent next year set by the FM her 2021-22 budget (this by itself is far more generous than FD of 3 per cent that was to be achieved in 2020-21 as per the amendment to the FRBM Act, 2018) can be daunting, all the more when the

RBI is unlikely to repeat its bonanza/gift to the Centre. During an interactive with the press, Sitharaman alluded to the Centre's plan to design fiscal trajectory in a manner such that from FY 2026-27 onward, its debt to GDP ratio starts declining. Sans target setting, this may not instil confidence. Yet, she won't set the target as these are often missed. The Centre's debt-to-GDP ratio is currently around 57 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated for 2024-25 under the FRBM Amendment Act (2018).

Meanwhile, to address the concerns on employment, MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) and agriculture, the budget has proposed several initiatives. For MSMEs, it proposes a new credit guarantee scheme to facilitate term loans to enable them to purchase machinery and equipment without requiring collateral or third-party guarantees (a self-financing guarantee fund is mooted that could provide each applicant with guarantee coverage of up to Rs 100 crore); increase in the limit of Mudra (Micro Units Development Refinance Agency, a subsidiary of SIDBI) loans to Rs 2000,000 for those who have repaid previous loans; expanding SIDBI branches to provide the much-needed access to credit and additional support for further growth.

The initiatives on employment all aligned to the EPFO (Employees Provident Fund Organization) enrollments include Scheme A: a one-month wage payout of up to Rs. 15,000 per month (payable in three instalments) to first-timers in the workforce, with all formal sectors with an eligibility limit of a salary of Rs 100,000 per month. Scheme B: meant for creating 'additional' jobs in the manufacturing sector linked to first-time employees; it includes an incentive to employees and employers con-

cerning EPFO in the first 4 years of employment.

These schemes are expected to benefit 240 lakh youth. Scheme C meant support to employers to enable them to give additional employment in all sectors for those earning up to Rs 100,000 per month. The government will reimburse employers up to Rs. 3000 per month for two years towards EPFO contribution for each additional employee. This Scheme will benefit 50 lakh persons. To make the youth employable, Sitharaman has announced a new centrally sponsored scheme for skilling in collaboration with States and industry. 2000,000 youth will be skilled over five years under this scheme. One thousand industrial training institutes (ITIs) will be upgraded in the hub and spoke arrangement, with course content aligned to the skill needs of the industry. In agriculture, the measures include initiating 10 million farmers into natural farming in the next two years; releasing 109 climate-resilient new seed varieties across 32 field and horticulture crops in the next 100 days; Jan Samarth-based Kisan Credit Card in five States to give a boost to shrimp farming and export; launch a national cooperative policy; digital public infrastructure (DPI) to create a registry of 60 million farmers with the details of their land over the next three years; developing large-scale vegetable clusters closer to major consumption centres; promoting FPOs, cooperatives and start-ups for vegetable supply chains; pursuing the mission for pulses and oilseeds production etc. All the above announcements sound like the proverbial 'Many a slip between the cup and the lip'. For instance, on employment, Sitharaman clarified 'the government can only nudge private firms.'

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

## Flying towards sustainability: The aviation industry's tryst with carbon neutrality

Through technological innovation and green solutions like adoption of sustainable aviation fuel, the aviation sector is becoming environment friendly

The global aviation industry is undeniably a significant contributor to carbon emissions, accounting for about 2.5 - 3.0% of the world's carbon output. Recognising this impact, initiatives like IATA's "Fly Net Zero" are crucial steps towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Airlines are actively pursuing various strategies to reduce their environmental footprint, with fleet modernization being a cornerstone. One key pillar of the industry's sustainability strategy is investment in a modern, fuel-efficient fleet. Jazeera Airways, for instance, has invested in the Airbus A320neo aircraft, known for its 20% reduction in fuel consumption and emissions. The



ROMANA PARVI

airline was also the first to order over 2000 of the world's lightest aircraft seats from Expliseat. These seats will contribute to a weight saving of 1.2 metric tons per aircraft resulting in enhanced fuel efficiency and reduced emissions per flight. Beyond fleet upgrades, airlines are implementing carbon offsetting programs as part of their sustainability efforts. These programs allow passengers to mitigate the environmental

impact of their air travel by investing in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere. Jazeera Airways' carbon offsetting initiatives specifically support projects in renewable energy and reforestation, allowing passengers to contribute to environmental conservation efforts directly linked to their flights. Technological innovation also plays a pivotal role in enhancing operational efficiency and passenger experience. Airlines are increasingly adopting digital solutions such as paperless ticketing, digital baggage tracking, and personalized sustainable travel options. These technologies not only streamline operations but also minimize waste and carbon emissions associ-

ated with traditional paper-based processes. Addressing plastic waste is another important aspect of the industry's sustainability efforts. Airlines are replacing single-use plastics with biodegradable alternatives and exploring sustainable options like Palmade products made from palm leaves. Energy efficiency is another critical focus area for airlines, extending to both aircraft operations and airport infrastructure. State-of-the-art airport terminals are designed with sustainability in mind, incorporating energy-efficient lighting, climate control systems, and renewable energy sources. The airline industry is actively leading the way towards a more sustainable future for



travel, setting a precedent for environmentally responsible practices that extend beyond its operations. The adoption of CORSIA (Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation) marks a substantial advancement in its commitment to mitigating environmental impact and combat-

ing climate change. CORSIA ensures that international aviation contributes to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while continuing to support global connectivity and economic growth. Additionally, the development and adoption of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and the utilization of

advanced software solutions like those offered by NAVBLUE are critical milestones in the airline industry's efforts to achieve net-zero emissions and address climate change.

Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 requires collaboration among airlines, governments, and passengers. Through ongoing innovation, investment in sustainable technologies like SAF, reduction of plastic waste, and improvements in operational efficiency, the aviation industry is actively leading the way towards a more environmentally friendly future for air travel. These efforts not only aim to reduce the industry's carbon footprint but also set a precedent for sustainable practices

that can inspire broader global initiatives beyond aviation.

Aviation industry today is dedicated to collaborating closely with partners, passengers, and communities to foster a greener and more sustainable future for air travel. This commitment drives us to innovate and implement initiatives that reduce our environmental footprint, promote sustainable practices, and contribute positively to the global effort against climate change.

Together with our stakeholders, we aim to lead by example and inspire lasting change in the aviation industry and beyond.

*(The writer is regional manager South Asia - Jazeera Airways; views are personal)*





# SONAKSHI AND VIJAY'S 'DOUBLE WIN' AT TOIFA

The Times of India Film Awards, honoured exceptional accomplishments in the Bollywood industry, particularly highlighting OTT films and series from 2023. The event acknowledged outstanding skills in different areas such as acting, content creation and technical knowledge.

The event saw double the excitement for both Sonakshi Sinha and actor Vijay Varma at the recent TOIFA. Sonakshi's latest projects, *Dahaad* and *Heeramandi*, have been very well received. Now with things going great on the work front, Sonakshi bagged two awards at TOIFA.

The actress bagged the Acting Excellence (Female) award for *Dahaad*. She also won the People's Choice Award. On the other hand, her portrayal of Fareedan in *Heeramandi* is still lauded by the audience.

Meanwhile, Vijay Varma, who has often showcased a distinctive personality to viewers by effortlessly embodying his characters, won the Acting Excellence in a Negative Role award for his web series *Dahaad*, where he displayed his versatility and perfectly portrayed the character Anand with his exceptional acting skills. Furthermore, he also received the Acting Excellence in a Supporting Role award for his performance in *Jaane Jaan*. This acknowledgment showcases his talent for succeeding in various roles, solidifying his status as one of the industry's most outstanding actors.

Lady Gaga received backlash for the technical issues during her performance at the Paris Olympics Opening Ceremony. Numerous people expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of audibility of the singer's voice, raising doubts about the functionality of the audio equipment. Nevertheless, after facing criticism, Gaga decided to use X as a platform to share a statement. It is evident that she refused to allow the negativity to impact her mood. "I feel so completely grateful to have been asked to open the Paris @Olympics 2024 this year. I am also humbled to be asked by the Olympics organising committee to sing such a special French song—a song to honour the French people and their tremendous history of art, music, and theatre," Gaga wrote. Gaga stated that Zizi Jeanmaire, a French ballerina born in Paris, sang the song. She performed the well-known song *Mon Truc en Plumes* in 1961. "And this is not the first time we've crossed paths. Zizi starred in Cole

# Lady Gaga advances criticism for her performance at Paris Olympics



Porter's musical *Anything Goes*, which was my first jazz release. Although I am not a French artist, I have always felt a very special connection with French people and singing French music. I wanted nothing more than to create a performance that would warm the heart of France, celebrate French art and music and, on such a momentous occasion, remind everyone of one of the most magical cities on earth—Paris," Gaga wrote.

# The Rings of Power brings out new trailer

San Diego was transformed into Middle-earth as Prime Video showcased the highly anticipated second season of the epic series, *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*. Showrunners J.D. Payne and Patrick McKay were joined on the iconic Hall H stage by over a dozen cast members for a lively and insightful conversation moderated by Emmy-nominated actress and renowned genre fan Yvette Nicole Brown.

The ensemble cast thrilled the 6,500 fans who packed the massive convention center hall by unveiling a brand-new exclusive trailer for the upcoming season. The action-packed trailer focuses on the long-feared reemergence of the legendary villain Sauron, heralding the return of darkness and evil to Middle-earth after many years of hard-fought peace among all of its realms. The trailer also highlighted the creation of more of the titular *Rings of Power*, forged with the aid of Sauron's powers of deception and manipulation. The second season of *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* will premiere exclusively on Prime Video on August 29, 2024.

In season two of *The Rings of Power*, Sauron has returned. Cast out by Galadriel without an army or ally, the rising Dark Lord must now rely on his own cunning to rebuild his strength and oversee the creation of the *Rings of Power*, which will allow him to bind all the peoples of Middle-earth to his sinister will. Building on season one's epic scope and ambition, the new season plunges even its most beloved and vulnerable characters into a rising tide of darkness, challenging each to find their place in a world that is increasingly on the brink of calamity. As friendships are strained and kingdoms begin to fracture, the forces of good—Elves and dwarves, orcs and men, wizards and Harfoots—will struggle ever more valiantly to hold on to what matters most to them all: each other.

# Robert Downey Jr is back in Marvel's world

Marvel Studios came back to San Diego Comic-Con with Deadpool variants dancing and a choir, announcing news about the next two *Avengers* movies and surprise appearances by Harrison Ford and Robert Downey Jr. Robert will not reprise his role as Iron Man in Marvel's films!

Robert is set to portray the antagonist, Victor Von Doom, also known as Doctor Doom, in one of the forthcoming *Avengers* films. Downey started Marvel's winning streak with *Iron Man* and portrayed the beloved character in nine movies; however, on Saturday, he was seen sporting Dr. Doom's mask and a green cloak. Downey said to enthusiastic cheers that there is a new mask, but the task remains the same. The session did not talk about Jonathan Majors, who portrayed the antagonist Kang the Conqueror and was previously an important figure in Marvel's *Avengers* strategies. The studio terminated the actor following his



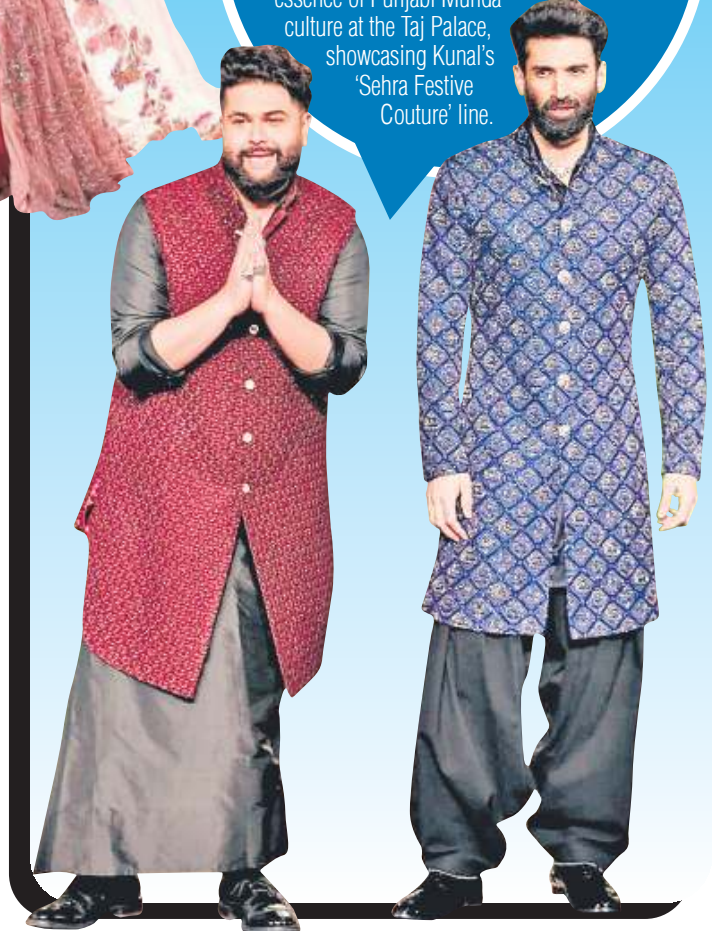
conviction in December for assaulting a former girlfriend. In April, he was given a one-year counseling program as punishment and managed to dodge prison. Both Robert Downey Jr and his *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Endgame* directors Anthony and Joe Russo, also known as the Russo Brothers, will make a comeback to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The upcoming *Avengers* films, *Doomsday* and *Secret Wars*, will be directed by them. The brothers led the *Avengers* series through its extensive plot, culminating in *Avengers: Endgame* in 2019, which featured the demise of Downey's character, Tony Stark, or Iron Man.



Actor Sonakshi Sinha graced the runway on Day 4 of Hyundai India Couture Week 2024, turning heads as the showstopper for acclaimed couturier Dolly J. The fashion event saw the unveiling of Dolly J's breathtaking collection, 'La Vie en Rose.'

Bollywood diva Malaika Arora and actor Rahul Khanna turned heads as showstoppers for ace designer Siddhartha Tytler on Day 3 of India Couture Week 2024.

As the show-stopper for Kumal Rawal's showcase at India Couture Week, Aditya Roy Kapur left a lasting impact, his charisma really lighting the place on fire. He had a slightly bushy beard that lent a sense of refinement to his deep blue sherwani, which he matched neatly with black dhoti-style pants. Aditya elegantly captured the essence of Punjabi Munda culture at the Taj Palace, showcasing Kumal's 'Shehra Festive Couture' line.



## FUN

### ARCHIE

OUT OF MY WAY! MY ALARM DIDN'T GO OFF!  
YOU'RE SEVEN MINUTES LATE!  
THAT'S NOT TOO BAD, CONSIDERING I ONLY HAD ONE SHOE ON!

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

EIGHT... NINE... TEN! HERE I COME, READY OR NOT!  
ALL RIGHT, GIVE 'EM BACK!

### GARFIELD

DO YOU LIKE MY NEW SHOES?  
UMMMM...  
WELL...  
LIE AND SAY YES  
LIE AND SAY YES  
THEY'RE KINDA...  
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LIE AND SAY YES  
PLAY BY THE RULES, DUMMY!

### REALITY CHECK

WE HAVE THE RESULTS OF YOUR PHYSICAL—IT TURNS OUT YOU DIED 8 YEARS AGO.

### SPEED BUMP

SHES SO RETRO.

### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	
6			7		8
9			10		
12	13			14	15
17				16	
				18	
				19	

### NANCY

CLASS, HOW WAS YOUR SPRING BREAK?  
I SAT AROUND AND PLAYED VIDEO GAMES AND WATCHED TV.  
NOW NANCY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT FOREVER.  
TWO DAYS EARLIER:

### SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

### CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Large printed words on a newspaper's front page
- One of the five senses
- Brush hard to clean
- Catch fish with these
- Opposite of youngest
- A cricket referee
- Clean with water
- The sound a horse makes
- A smell
- These are carried in rain
- What you get if you stay out in the sun too long
- Someone who sells meat
- A shooter of arrows
- A piece of glass that can make a rainbow
- A greets in Hawaii
- This covers a sheep

DOWN

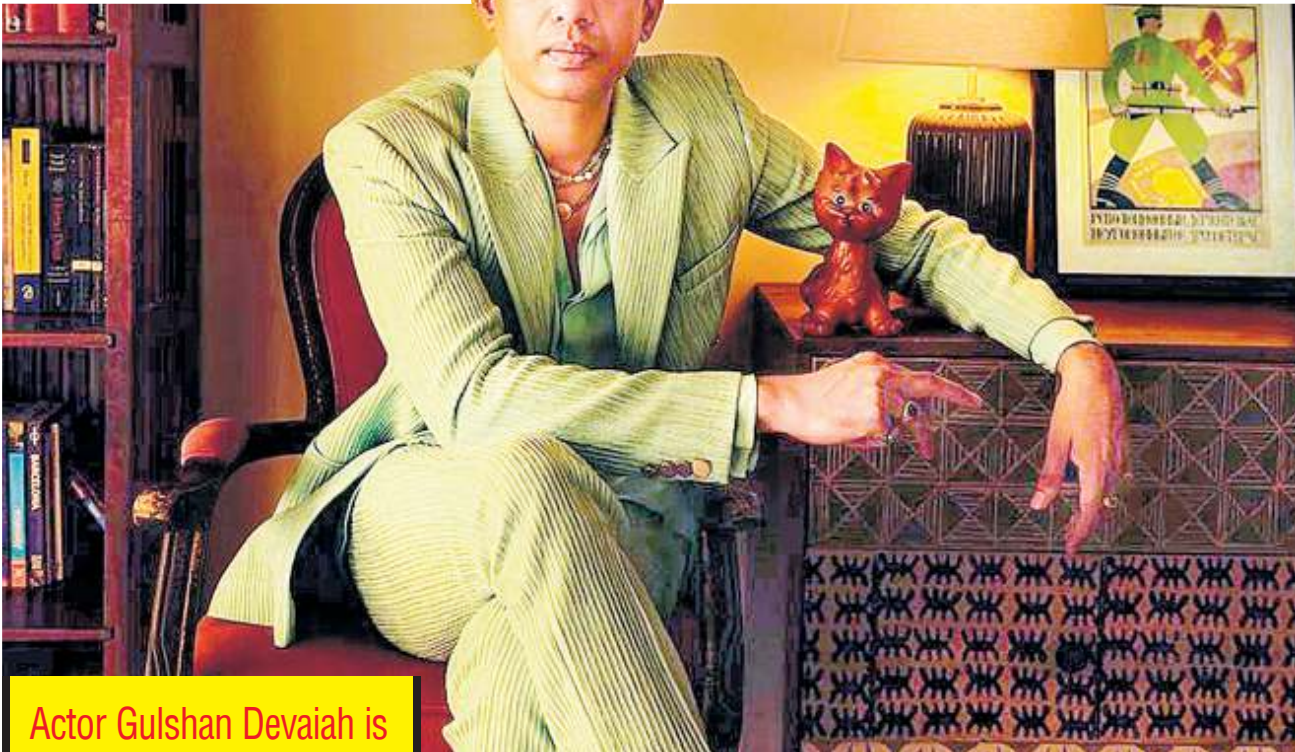
- The fourth even number
- A fruit on a palm tree
- A very rude remark
- Weird or uncanny

SOLUTION

S	M	A	N	D	E				
C	H	I	E	C	O	N	S		
H	E	A	R	E	G				
E	A	S	T	E	A	S	I	A	
M	A	S	T	E	C	A	N	A	D
I	C	P	D	U	T				
N	I	C	E	D	I	N	G		
G	N	A	L	L	T	R			
W	E	A	K	N	E	S			



# Vijayawada



Actor Gulshan Devaiah is currently making headlines for *Ulajh*, his next film. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, he talks about his friendship with Janhvi Kapoor on the set, *Ulajh*'s character traits, preparations and a host of other topics.

## 'IT'S NOT A CHALLENGE FOR ME TO SEPARATE 'REEL' AND 'REAL' LIFE'

is professional and hardworking as an actor."

On choosing his roles, he said, "I like to do different films, both consciously and unconsciously. I like to have diversity and versatility in my roles. *Ulajh* fulfills those factors and I thought the film was good for my career too."

Known for his intense and layered performances, he finds it easy to unwind and detach from his roles once a project is completed. "In life, I'm not that intense. I'm very laid-back and casual and I'm also lazy. It's not really a challenge for me to separate reel life from real life," he admitted.

Preparing for the physical demands of *Ulajh* involved some unique challenges, like, "I had to do pull-ups for a scene, so I installed a pull-up bar at home and practiced for two to three months. I still struggle with it, but the director wanted at least four or five pull-ups for the scene."

Working with various directors has also influenced Devaiah's acting process. He emphasised the importance of understanding each director's vision and sensibility. "Every director has a different style and approach. It's crucial for me to grasp that to serve the film or series better," he noted, adding that Sudhanshu Saria, the director of *Ulajh*, brought a unique vision to the project.

As Indian cinema evolves with the rise of OTT platforms, he envisions his career adapting to this new era. "One foot here, one foot there," he said about balancing between traditional cinema and digital content. When it comes to future roles, he remains open to surprises. "I want roles that are good for my career and interesting. Those are my main criteria."

Looking ahead, the *Blurr* actor has a diverse slate of upcoming projects, including *Little Thomas* and *Therapy Therapy*, where he stars alongside Rasika Dugal and Neha



Dhupia. *Little Thomas* is a children's film about a boy named Thomas Miranda and I play his father. *Therapy Therapy* is about a dysfunctional family running a sweet shop, with an incredible ensemble cast including Manoj Pahwa and Seema Pahwa."

Gulshan Devaiah's versatility and dedication continue to shape his dynamic career, making him a compelling figure in the ever-changing landscape of Indian cinema.

## MR INDIA WORLD 2024: Chennai's 'Siruvan' gazes upon international glory

TEJAL SINHA

After a glamorous event in Mumbai, Gokul Ganesan from Chennai was crowned the winner of the Mr India World 2024 competition. The high-ranking Mr India pageant is a prominent national competition for men that provides contestants with a life-changing chance to display their skills and potentially become India's global representative. Following a thorough online selection process and subsequent rounds, he was declared the well-deserving champion of Mr India World 2024.

This Chennai native is not only a fashion model but also a dynamic entrepreneur known for his innovative mindset and charming demeanour.

Gokul Ganesan is set to proudly showcase India at the Mr World 2024 grand climax on September 28, 2024, in Phan Thiet, Vietnam. His journey and accomplishments exemplify the essence of Mr. India, highlighting his strength, business skills and dedication to social issues. Rohit Khandelwal made history in 2016 by becoming the first and only Indian and Asian to be crowned Mr. World. Rahul Rajasekharan, a former Mr India champion and actor, will serve as the mentor for the Mr India World 2024 winner, assisting Gokul in his training for his upcoming international opportunity.

In an exclusive interview, *The Pioneer* interacts with him and he gleefully begins, "I feel ecstatic, honoured, humbled, grateful and hungry all at the same time. Because it's a surreal feeling. This has been in the making for the past four years. I envisioned myself representing India on an international stage and it has finally happened. This is my golden ticket to go to the world and show them what we're made of."

Growing up in a city of ancient temples, vibrant arts, natural wonders and a bustling culinary scene has played a major role in shaping his career choices. As we asked him more about it, he quickly asserted, "This transports me back to my early years spent in Chennai. My childhood was quite fun, frivolous and carefree. But one thing that really, really stuck with me—my learning, if I should say—would be to stay simple and humble. No matter what, your achieve-

ments are not hats. You don't wear them around like accessories. You just focus on what you have to do and keep moving forward."

Looking back at his journey into the pageantry world, he says it has been nothing short of amazing, with fantastic experiences and a lot of learning. To date, he has been part of three pageants and has managed to be victorious in all three. All of it, he has looked at it as more of a responsibility than an achievement.

"It all started with the love that I have for my country," shares the fashionista, who initially wanted to join the Indian Army. "I thought serving the nation was the noblest thing a person could do, but due to unavoidable familial reasons, I couldn't get through it. That's when I sat down and thought about three things that I'm most passionate about, which are fitness, fashion and my country. When I put all of that together, Mr. India justly aspired to be, and that's exactly how I got into

pageantry." Things hadn't really come towards him without any challenges and beyond any doubt, he had his own share of challenges too. To start with, "People couldn't understand the choices I was making or the risk factors they had. A lot of people from where I come from never even knew that there is an industry as such and the things that can be achieved and perceived in life."

Over time, he has managed his time well across different fields by getting his priorities right. "I am not a very structured person when it comes to handling work all at the same time because I am more of a 'take it as it comes' guy. But I do know how to manage and split work across different things and as for motivation, I believe in discipline because motivation is fluctuating and discipline is consistent," he shares. "Fitness is like breakfast to me; I don't see it as an option. It's a part of my lifestyle, something I need to do every day. It teaches me discipline, hard work, and patience. And, as the famous quote goes, 'no pain, no gain.'"

As we head towards the end of this chat, also an entrepreneur, Gokul concludes by sharing, "In my opinion, men's mental health awareness could be much better because, I think, a lot of people don't know how men feel because they are only celebrated or respected when they provide and otherwise considered losers in society. To break the stigma, I would first suggest people accept their emotional, vulnerable side because that's where it all begins."

Well, with all the pressure that has been coming his way, Gokul is keen and mentally prepared to create a niche for the Mr World 2024 pageant.



## Planet Earth III: Jaw-dropping views and heartfelt narratives

TANISHA SAXENA

In the grand tradition of its predecessors, *Planet Earth III* arrives with a fresh and compelling narrative that sets it apart. While the first two installments celebrated the sheer beauty and diversity of life on Earth, this third chapter takes a poignant turn, focusing on the profound changes wrought by human influence and the remarkable ways in which the natural world is adapting to survive.

**Plot:** *Planet Earth III* is a testament to resilience, showcasing a global mosaic of life forms that have ingeniously navigated the shifting landscapes of a planet increasingly dominated by human activity.

The first episode, *Coast*, transports viewers to Shipstern Bluff in Tasmania, renowned for its powerful, large waves and challenging reef breaks. The waves, driven by distant Southern Ocean swells, create dramatic, hollow barrels and steep faces. This spot is favored by advanced surfers seeking extreme and exhilarating conditions. We see a human first, and it's clear that this series will explore how humans have impacted diversity. Then it takes us to South Africa, Mexico, and Australia. The second episode dives into vibrant marine worlds, aptly titled "Ocean," starting with the tropics, where a clown frogfish preys on lionfish and dragonets. A tense scene showcases an angel shark's stealthy attack, revealing the horn shark's defensive spine. The deep ocean segment unveils the colossal siphonophore and the elusive purple *Musocotopus robustus*, thriving in extreme environments.

The third episode highlights the impact of drought on bowerbirds, the intensified effects of sandstorms and the biodiversity threats in the Cerrado grasslands. It concludes with a hopeful note on elephant population recovery in central Africa, featuring insights from a local ranger.



complemented by a sweeping musical score that enhances the viewing experience, creating moments of tension, wonder, and poignancy. Sir David Attenborough's narration is another significant asset. His voice, with its distinctive cadence and gravitas, lends authority and warmth to the storytelling. Attenborough's ability to convey complex scientific concepts in an accessible and engaging manner ensures that the series is not only informative but also deeply moving.

**The plus:** One of the standout features of *Planet Earth III* is its unparalleled cinematography. The series employs advanced filming techniques, including ultra-high-definition 4K cameras, drone technology and time-lapse photography, to capture stunning visuals that are both awe-inspiring and emotionally evocative. The imagery is

**The minus:** While *Planet Earth III* is an impressive series that effectively highlights human impact on the planet, it has some flaws. The intention to shift gears and address human influence is commendable, but the series could benefit from a



more structured approach. Certain portions feel either overly detailed or insufficiently explored. Some segments delve too deeply into specific topics, potentially overwhelming the viewer, while other important issues are only superficially addressed, leaving gaps in the narrative. A more balanced and cohesive structure would enhance the overall impact and provide a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of humanity's effect on the natural world.

**Technical aspects:** The technical execution of *Planet Earth III* is exemplary. The documentary's visual fidelity is unmatched, thanks to the use of state-of-the-art 4K cameras and innovative filming techniques. Drone footage offers breathtaking aerial views, while underwater cameras reveal the hidden wonders of the deep. Time-lapse photography captures the dynamic changes in natural environments, providing viewers with a unique perspective on ecological processes. The score, composed by Hans Zimmer and Jacob Shea, complements the visual splendor with a hauntingly beautiful soundtrack that underscores the emotional weight of the narrative. The music swells and recedes with the rhythm of the natural world, enhancing the viewer's connection to the unfolding drama on screen.

**Verdict:** *Planet Earth III* not only meets the high expectations set by its predecessors but also elevates the genre to new heights. Sir David Attenborough's timeless narration, combined with groundbreaking cinematography and a powerful environmental message, ensures that *Planet Earth III* will be remembered as a landmark achievement in nature documentaries.

**Presented by:** David Attenborough

**Composers:** Hans Zimmer, Jacob Shea, & Sara Barone

**Produced by:** Nick Easton, Will Ridgeon, Kiri Cashell, Charlotte Bostock, Sarah Whalley, Theo Webb, Fredi Devas, & Steve Greenwood

**Executive Producer:** Michael Gunton

**Streaming on:** Sony BBC Earth

**Total episodes:** 8

**Review based on:** 3 episodes

**Rating:** 3

# Suryakumar is a bowlers' captain, says Axar Patel

PTI ■ PALLEKELE



India all-rounder Axar Patel says new T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav is a bowlers' captain who allows them the freedom to execute their plans. The spin all-rounder also said that the team will look to maximise its batting combinations in the ongoing series against Sri Lanka. Suryakumar and India made a winning start to the three-match series here on Saturday when they crushed hosts Sri Lanka by 43 runs in a high scoring opening T20I. "I played in the last Australia series with Surya bhai (as captain). I know that he is a bowlers' captain. He gives you free hand (in a way) that you decide first," Axar said at the post-match press conference on Saturday. "Whenever you get hit, he comes and says that it was a good ball. He keeps giving you inputs. As a player, there is a good bond with him." Axar recalled the experience of playing under Suryakumar in the five-match T20I series against Australia in India late last year which the hosts won 4-1. "As a captain, I have also played with him in the last five matches (against Australia) and when I was playing today, I didn't feel

much change," he said. "In the first three overs when we were going for runs, he was telling me that we can do this or do that and how we can take a wicket. There is no problem if a four or six goes in it. As a bowler, you get confidence from that if the captain is backing you and telling you that you can do

this." Axar said India's batting lineup in the opening T20I which did not feature Rishabh Pant at the top was formulated with the idea that the team maximises its left and right-hand options. In the last assignment, the T20 World Cup which India won, Pant batted at No 3

whereas on Saturday skipper Suryakumar came out at the coveted spot and the wicketkeeper-batter dropped down to No 4. "Our team has four lefties and four righties. If there is a left-right combination (in the middle), it becomes very hard for the bowlers to maintain the line and lengths

consistently especially with rotations with singles." "Now if there are four lefties, how can you use them? If you have that chance (to ensure) that there are no two lefties or two righties (in the middle) at the same time." "If you have that chance, if you have those players in batting, then why not use

them? You also have to keep changing the batting order as per the bowling options that the opposition has got," he added. The spinner said the message from India's new staff under head coach Gautam Gambhir has been that the team will not experience a major overhaul in the way it operated. While fielding coach T Dilip has continued in his role, Abhishek Nayar, Sairaj Bahutule and Dutchman Ryan ten Doeschate are now a part of Gambhir's support staff for this tour of Sri Lanka as positions will be finalised after the tour ends. "I have been playing for 10 years. I have played with different coaches and captains. I don't think a lot will change in the team," he said. "When we were talking in the team meeting, they also said the same thing that the coach and captain keep changing but the team remains the same and the 11 or 15 players who stay, they have to do it," he said. "They have told us that we will play the way we have been playing. Obviously, the coach and his input can be different. The thinking can be different, they keep telling you here and there. But there is not much change in the team's atmosphere," he added.



## USA Cricket fulfils critical requirement, appoints Jonathan as CEO

PTI ■ NEW YORK

USA Cricket has fulfilled one of the two critical requirements to avoid being disqualified as an ICC Associate nations by appointing Jonathan Atkinson as its chief executive officer effective August 1. The USAC was 'put on notice' by the ICC earlier this month for breaching two norms. While not having a CEO was one, the other was USAC not fulfilling the governance norms which are set by the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC). As per the norm, it is necessary for every sport governing body to earn the National Governing Body (NGB) status which is needed for all sports added in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee during its 141st Session and Executive Board meeting in Mumbai last year had given its nod for the inclusion of cricket in the Los Angeles Games. "USA Cricket has announced the appointment of Johnathan

Atkinson as its new CEO, effective August 1st, 2024," the USAC said on its website. Atkinson most recently served as the Chief Operating Officer of USA Rugby. He joins USA Cricket with over 15 years of national governing body experience. "I'm honoured to join the team at USA Cricket. It's an incredible time for the sport here in the United States with the historic performance of the men's national team in the recent T20 World Cup, the completion of the second season of Major League Cricket, and the first opportunity to showcase cricket in the Olympics here on home soil during the LA28 games," Atkinson said. "Our goal is to build a world-class organisation to capitalise on that momentum, and firmly establish cricket's position in the American sporting landscape," he added. Atkinson is credited for leading USA Rugby through a financial restructuring in 2020 followed by a four-year period of rapid growth and development.



## US stays alive with 4-1 win over New Zealand in men's soccer

AP ■ MARSEILLE (FRANCE)

Djordje Mihailovic converted a penalty as the United States pounced early in a 4-1 victory over New Zealand to stave off possible elimination at the Olympics. Mihailovic calmly hit the penalty in the eighth minute after Nathan Harriel was brought down in the box by Matthew Garbett. Four minutes later, senior player Walker Zimmerman, a defender, made it 2-0 when he poked in a goal in a scramble in front of the net following a free kick. Gianluca Busio scored on a rebound at the half-hour mark and celebrated by dancing with teammate Kevin Paredes. Busio later left the game with what appeared to be a hamstring injury, but he said it was just a precaution. Paxton Aaronson added a fourth goal for the United States in the 58th and New Zealand avoided the shutout with Jesse Randall's late goal. New Zealand's 2-1 opening victory over Guinea had put the team in a strong position to advance. The OlyWhites, as they are known, started the day second in the group to France. The United States is set to play Guinea in its final group match Tuesday in Saint-Etienne. New Zealand plays France in Marseille. Mitrovic said he's not scoreboard watching. New Zealand advanced to the quarterfinals of the Tokyo Games three years ago. Ukraine 2, Morocco 1 There was no reprieve for Morocco this time. After the chaos and violence that marred the end of its 2-1 win over Argentina in the Olympic men's soccer tournament, Morocco conceded late again against Ukraine on

Saturday - and this time the goal stood. On Wednesday, Morocco fans rushed the field and threw bottles in protest when Cristian Medina appeared to score an equalizer in the 16th minute of stoppage time for Argentina - causing the game to be suspended for around two hours. That goal was later disallowed by VAR for offside. But there was no sign of a repeat of those scenes when Ihor Krasnopir scored in the eighth minute of stoppage time to seal a 2-1 win for 10-man Ukraine at Stade Geoffroy-Guichard. Morocco looked like it was edging closer to the quarterfinals after Soufiane Rahimi's 64th-minute penalty leveled the game at 1-1. The forward, who took his total to three goals for the Paris Games, won the spot kick when he was fouled by Volodymyr Saliuk. Saliuk was sent off for the offense. Ukraine had taken the lead in the 22nd through Dmytro Kryskiv. Ukraine's late win left all four teams in Group B tied on three points after Argentina shook off defeat to Morocco by beating Iraq 3-1. Argentina 3, Iraq 1 While Iraq threatened to pull off another surprise when the Aymen Hussein leveled the game 1-1 in first-half stoppage time, goals from Luciano Gondou and Ignacio Fernandez sealed victory for Argentina. Thiago Almada, who Argentina coach Javier Mascherano said had a watch stolen when the team's training base was robbed earlier this week, opened the scoring with a volley in the 14th at Stade de Lyon. Gondou's far-post header in the 62nd restored Argentina's lead after Hussein's goal and Fernandez curled in a long-range shot from the edge of the box in the 85th.

## Swiatek, Alcaraz and Djokovic start Olympics with win at French Open's site

AP ■ PARIS

Iga Swiatek and Carlos Alcaraz got the Paris Olympics tennis competition started with first-round victories under closed roofs at Roland Garros, the site of their French Open titles less than two months ago. Novak Djokovic also won in straight sets as he, like Swiatek and Alcaraz, opened a bid for a first Olympic gold medal. Djokovic's second-round opponent could be longtime rival Rafael Nadal, who was scheduled to play his opening singles match Sunday - but said he isn't sure whether he will remain in that event. "Tomorrow, I don't know

what's going to happen," Nadal said Saturday. "I don't know if I'm going to play or not." In Saturday's last match, Angelique Kerber defeated Naomi Osaka 7-5, 6-3 in a contest between two women who have been ranked No. 1 and own multiple Grand Slam titles. Kerber has said she will retire after representing Germany at these Games; Osaka was hoping for a deeper run than her third-round exit at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago after lighting the cauldron during the opening ceremony in her native Japan. Nadal, the Spaniard who won a record 14 of his 22 Grand Slam titles at the French Open

and owns two Summer Games golds, was a surprise torch carrier during the rain-soaked opening ceremony along the Seine River on Friday night. He won his doubles opener alongside Alcaraz on Saturday night. Nadal has not made entirely clear whether or not these Summer Games will be the final event of his career. He is 38 and has been dealing with injuries for much of the past two seasons. Nadal and Alcaraz never had played doubles together, but they got past the sixth-seeded Argentine duo of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni 7-6 (4), 6-4. The No. 1-ranked Swiatek claimed four of her five career



major championships in Paris and grabbed the last four games to beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 6-2, 7-5, while reigning French Open

and Wimbledon champ Alcaraz defeated Lebanon's Hady Habib 6-3, 6-1. Serbia's Djokovic, who is seeded No. 1 in the men's field after Jannik Sinner pulled out with tonsillitis, needed less than an hour for a 6-0, 6-1 win against Australia's Matthew Ebden - a doubles player participating in a tour-level singles match for the first time in two years. Ebden got into the singles bracket because he was in Paris to play doubles and thus available when 16th-ranked Holger Rune of Denmark withdrew with an injured wrist. Ebden's lone game came after he was already down 6-0, 4-0 - and he celebrated by pulling

the front of his yellow shirt over his head and baring his chest to roars from the flag-dotted crowd. The last time Djokovic was in Paris, early last month, he needed surgery for a torn meniscus in his right knee after getting injured during the French Open. He managed to not only play at Wimbledon but also reach the final before losing to Alcaraz. "I do feel more ready now than I was before Wimbledon and I really do feel better prepared," Djokovic said Saturday. "Olympics, from the beginning of the year, was one of the highest goals and objectives and priorities for this year. So let's see how it goes."

## Australia takes early lead against US On Day 1 of swimming

AP ■ PARIS

Australia took the lead in its swimming showdown against the United States at the Paris Olympics by claiming two of three gold medals on the first full day of competition. Ariarne Titmus turned one of the most anticipated races of the Games into a blowout when she left Katie Ledecky in her wake at La Defense Arena. Titmus led from start to finish in the 400-meter freestyle Saturday night. The Australian star known as "The Terminator" handed Ledecky a second straight Olympic defeat in an event the American won at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Titmus faced her stiffest challenge from 17-year-old Canadian phenom Summer McIntosh, but she won comfortably as McIntosh claimed the silver. Ledecky settled for bronze. Titmus swept the 200 and 400 free in Tokyo, and she is going for the same double in Paris. Ledecky is going for a double in the 800 and 1,500. Australia then made it 2 for 2 against the Americans in the women's 4x100 freestyle relay, claiming its fourth straight Olympic title in that event. The quartet of Mollie O'Callaghan, Shayna Jack, Emma McKeon and Meg Harris set an Olympic record with a winning time of 3 minutes, 28.92 seconds. The Americans - Kate Douglass, Gretchen Walsh, Torri Huske and Simone Manuel - rallied to take silver. China took bronze. The U.S. Finally got its first gold in the men's 4x100 freestyle relay. The Americans were anchored by Caeleb Dressel, who won the eighth gold medal of his

career. Australia took the silver. CHINA TAKES FIRST GOLD OF GAMES The first gold medal of the Paris Olympics went to China when Huang Yuting and Sheng Lihao beat South Korea's Keum Jihyeon and Park Hajun in the final of the 10-meter air rifle mixed team event Saturday morning. Shortly before that, Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le and Islam Satpayev became the first medalists of the games when they beat Germany's Anna Janssen and Maximilian Ulbrich 17-5 for the bronze. FRANCE'S FIRST MEDALS Luka Mkhaidze and Shirine Boukli won France's first two medals of the Olympics when Mkhaidze claimed silver and Boukli earned bronze in judo. Mkhaidze lost 1-0 to Yeldos Smetov of Kazakhstan in the final of the men's 60-kilogram division - a disappointing result for the raucous crowd at Champ-de-Mars Arena. About 30 minutes before Mkhaidze's loss, Boukli claimed France's first medal of its home Olympics with a victory over Spain's Laura Martinez in a bronze-medal match. Paris will have plenty of chances to cheer on its vaunted judo team, which has a competitor in all 14 weight classes in these Olympics. France is one of the world's top judo nations. TENNIS CONTROVERSY Novak Djokovic was perplexed by the Olympics rules after his 6-0, 6-1 rout in less than an hour against an overmatched Matthew Ebden, a 36-year-old doubles player from Australia who



hadn't competed in a tour-level, main-draw singles match since June 2022. Djokovic felt other singles players deserved a spot at the Olympics instead of Ebden. Ebden was in Paris to compete in men's doubles, where he's been as high as No. 1 and currently is No. 3 and has won two major championships. That made him available for the singles competition when 16th-ranked Holger Rune of Denmark pulled out because of a wrist injury. Ebden was not the first doubles player asked to fill in, but he was the first to say yes. He hadn't even practiced singles in about two years until playing a tiebreaker in training on Friday. In other tennis action, Rafael Nadal is not sure whether he will compete in singles, saying after he paired with Carlos Alcaraz to win their first-round doubles match Saturday night that he wants to "make the smartest decision possible to have the best chances to bring (a) medal back home." Nadal's first match in singles, against Hungary's Marton Fucsovics, is scheduled for

Sunday. Also, Angelique Kerber eliminated Naomi Osaka 7-5, 6-3 in the first round in a matchup between former No. 1-ranked players with multiple Grand Slam titles. RAIN DISRUPTIONS Rain continued from the opening ceremony through the first full day of competition and caused several postponements and delays at the Paris Olympics. Men's street skateboarding was supposed to start Saturday but was pushed to Monday because of the showers. The start of play in the scheduled tennis matches on the 10 smaller courts at Roland Garros was delayed because of rain, but action started as scheduled in the two main stadiums that have retractable roofs. The rain could threaten the water quality for swimming in the Seine when the triathlon begins Tuesday with the men's event at the Alexander III bridge next to Grand Palais. 10-TIME OLYMPIAN Georgian shooter Nino Salukvadze made history as

the first woman to compete at 10 Olympic Games in a career which began representing the Soviet Union. She has competed at every Summer Olympics since 1988, when she won gold as a 19-year-old Soviet prodigy. She set her latest record when she stepped into the shooting range for qualification in the women's 10-meter air pistol. Salukvadze placed 38th and didn't advance to Sunday's eight-shooter final. She gets another shot at a medal Friday in qualification for the 25-meter pistol event. In a career spanning five decades, the 55-year-old has competed on three different Olympic teams: the Soviet Union in 1988, then the Unified Team which was organized for ex-Soviet athletes in Barcelona in 1992 after the Soviet Union collapsed. She has represented her home country of Georgia following its independence for the last eight Olympics. HUNGARIAN FENCER LOSES An era-defining streak in Olympic fencing was snapped by an upset when Hungarian fencer Aron Szilagyi lost his opening bout while chasing a fourth consecutive gold medal. Szilagyi won gold medals in men's individual saber in 2012, 2016 and 2021 and was trying to become the only fencer in history to win a fourth. Instead, the streak ended in Szilagyi's first bout of the Paris Games as he was beaten 15-8 by the 27th-seeded Canadian Fares Arfa in one of the biggest upsets so far at the 2024 Olympics.



## Boxer Preeti beats Vietnam's Vo Thi Kim Anh to enter pre-quarterfinals

PTI ■ PARIS

Indian boxer Preeti Pawar picked up an unanimous decision win against Vietnam's Vo Thi Kim Anh to enter the women's 54kg category pre-quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics. The Asian Games bronze medallist, competing in her maiden Olympic Games, opened the proceedings for India in the boxing arena as she won her first round by a 5-0 margin on Saturday night. The 20-year-old from Haryana, who had been hospitalised for a few days ahead of the Games due to illness, was unimpressive in the first round as her Vietnamese opponent dictated the proceedings. But the Indian made amends in the next two rounds, attacking and landing clear blows on her opponent. "Happy that we started on a winning note! Despite falling ill before the Games, Preeti not only recovered but fought brilliantly and showed exceptional courage," Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh said. Preeti will face second seed and world championships silver-medallist Marcela Yeni Arias of Colombia in the round of 16 clash on Tuesday.

# DIRECTOR VIJAYA BHASKAR SAYS, 'LOVE IS BEAUTIFUL'

K. RAMYA SREE

In a candid and insightful conversation, director Vijaya Bhaskar shared the inspiration and vision behind his latest film, *Usha Parinayam*. Scheduled for release on August 2, the film is a family-centric entertainer that explores the true essence of love. Bhaskar, who is also the producer under Vijaya Bhaskar Kraft, is excited to introduce his son, Sree Kamal, in a new light and also launch Telugu actress Tanvi Akaanksha in her debut role.

## HERE'S WHAT BHASKAR HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE FILM:

**Q: People describe *Usha Parinayam* as a feel-good family entertainer. What makes this film special?**

**Vijaya Bhaskar:** "*Usha Parinayam* is a film that embodies my definition of love. In today's world, love is often misconstrued or twisted into something violent. What's portrayed as love in some stories is really just infatuation or even insanity. In my film, I want to make the clear distinction that love should never be violent. It's a youthful entertainer, but it carries a simple yet profound message: love is pure and beautiful."

**Q: Your son, Sree Kamal, is playing a significant role in this movie. How does this film differ from his previous works?**

**Vijaya Bhaskar:** "Kamal has been known for his entertaining roles, but this film is a departure from that. *Usha Parinayam* presents him in a more intense, emotional role. This is an opportunity for him to explore a different facet of his acting abilities. It's an intense love story, and I'm excited to see how he has embraced this new challenge."

**Q: You've also introduced Tanvi Akaanksha in this film. What stood out about her for this role?**

**Vijaya Bhaskar:** "Tanvi Akaanksha is a remarkable talent. She's making her debut as the heroine and I was drawn to her natural charm and dedication. Her role as Usha is central to the film and I believe her performance will capture the hearts of the audience."

She's a well-behaved and professional actress and I'm thrilled to have her in this project."

**Q: Comedy plays a role in *Usha Parinayam*. How did you balance humour with the film's more serious themes?**

**Vijaya Bhaskar:** "Comedy is a genre with limitless boundaries, and it can be incorporated into various types of stories. In *Usha Parinayam*, the humour flows naturally from the script. It's not forced but rather an integral part of the coming-of-age narrative. The comedy complements the story without overshadowing the film's core message about love and family."

**Q: What are your thoughts on the evolving tastes of the audience and their impact on filmmaking?**

**Vijaya Bhaskar:** "I don't believe audience tastes have drastically changed. People still seek good stories and engaging content. The platforms might evolve, but the essence of storytelling remains

the same. If a film is crafted well and resonates with the audience, they will come to the theaters. It's about delivering a story that people can connect with, no matter the medium."

**Q: The film's title and tagline, "Love is Beautiful," are quite evocative. What's the significance behind them?**

**Vijaya Bhaskar:** "The title *Usha Parinayam* has been a dream project of mine for many years. It centers around Usha's journey through love and marriage. The tagline, 'Love is Beautiful,' captures the essence of what I wanted to convey. In an age where the true beauty of love is often lost, this film aims to remind people of its purity and nobility. Love is an emotion that should be celebrated, not controlled or corrupted."

As *Usha Parinayam* approaches its release, director Vijaya Bhaskar's heartfelt intentions and dedication to portraying love in its truest form are evident. The film promises to be a delightful experience for families, offering a refreshing take on romance and the values that bind us together.



The highly anticipated pan-India film *Kubera*, directed by acclaimed filmmaker Sekhar Kammula and featuring the star power of Dhanush and Nagarjuna, is making impressive strides in production. The creative team has been unveiling the main cast through a series of intriguing posters and sneak peeks.

In honour of Dhanush's birthday today, the *Kubera* team has released a striking new poster. This latest reveal showcases Dhanush in a unique light, highlighting his vulnerability and humility through a sincere and understated portrayal.

This character represents a departure for Dhanush, marking a deeply authentic performance that stands out.

*Kubera* is generating considerable excitement, bolstered by its impressive ensemble cast and crew, including several National Award winners. The film is a high-budget social drama featuring Rashmika Mandanna as the leading lady and Jim Sarbh in a pivotal role.

Produced by Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao under the banners of Sri Venkateswara Cinemas LLP and Amigos Creations Pvt Ltd, *Kubera* is being crafted as a multilingual venture in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi.



**Sekhar Kammula's *Kubera* unveils new poster to celebrate Dhanush's b'day**

## First Gear from *Mechanic Rocky* reveals all key characters

Actor Vishwak Sen is gearing up to dazzle audiences in his upcoming film, *Mechanic Rocky*. This action-packed comedy entertainer, written and directed by debutant Ravi Teja Mullapudi and produced by the renowned Ram Talluri of SRT Entertainments, has just revealed its first

teaser, titled *First Gear*. The *First Gear* teaser introduces key characters and hints at the central love triangle involving Vishwak Sen, Meenakshi Chaudhary and Shraddha Srinath. It promises a mix of captivating entertainment and dynamic action sequences. In the titular role, Vishwak Sen as *Mechanic Rocky* sports a bold and intense look. The teaser features him delivering a single impactful dialogue: "*Chote Chote Bachcho Ko Pooron Ki Mai Jawaab Dethoo...*" The background dialogue, "*Danger Ke License Eedu*," further emphasises Vishwak's compelling character. Meenakshi Chaudhary is seen looking stylish in ethnic wear, while Shraddha Srinath takes on a sophisticated urban role. The teaser also features a humorous



L Board sequence and brief but memorable appearances by Sunil, Naresh and Roadies Raghu Ram. Ravi Teja Mullapudi has crafted a story filled with engaging elements, showcasing Vishwak Sen's character in a striking manner. Manojh Katanani's cinematography is impressive and Jake Bejo's lively background score adds to the fun. The production design is top-notch, generating significant curiosity for the film. The team includes Anwar Ali as the editor, Kranthi Priyam as the production designer and Satyam Rajesh and Vidya Sagar J as executive producers. *Mechanic Rocky* is set to hit cinemas on October 31st, joining the Diwali festivities with a promise of high-energy entertainment.

## Action King Arjun's dynamic look from *Vidamuyarchi* is here

Southern cinema enthusiasts are in for a treat as the first look of Action King Arjun from the much-anticipated film *Vidamuyarchi* is unveiled. Directed by the talented Magizh Thirumeni and produced by Lyca Productions under the visionary

guidance of Subaskaran, this film starring Thala Ajith Kumar promises to be a grand cinematic affair. Arjun, known for his versatility and impactful roles in the Southern film industry, is set to captivate audiences once again with his performance in *Vidamuyarchi*. The powerful poster showcases Arjun in a stylish stance on a road, with Ajith's silhouette in the background, creating an air of mystery and anticipation. The intriguing tagline, "Efforts never fail," adds to the excitement surrounding the film.

Lyca Productions, renowned for its mega-budget films and innovative content, is steering this project, raising the bar for expectations. Magizh Thirumeni, celebrated for his unique blend of entertainment and

originality, is directing this grand production that features Ajith Kumar. The film, which has wrapped up its shooting phase, promises to be a star-studded spectacle. It reunites Ajith, Trisha and Arjun, who previously enchanted audiences with their

performances in the blockbuster *Mankatha*. The cast also includes Aarav, Regina Cassandra and other prominent actors in pivotal roles.

Anirudh Ravichander, Kollywood's musical rockstar, has crafted a chart-topping album that is expected to set the stage for the film's success. The technical team includes Om Prakash as the cinematographer, NB

Srikanth as the editor, Milan as the art director and Sundar as the stunt composer. Anu Vardhan is in charge of costumes, while Subramanian Narayanan is the executive producer and J. Girinathan and K. Jayaseelan serve as production executives. G. Anand Kumar (still photography), Gopi Prasanna (publicity design) and Hariharasuthan (VFX) complete the team.



## DULQUER SALMAAN'S BIRTHDAY GIFT

# Title track of *Lucky Baskhar* released

On the eve of Dulquer Salmaan's birthday, the talented actor's upcoming film *Lucky Baskhar* has unveiled its title track, celebrating the occasion with a vibrant musical release. Known for his remarkable versatility in multiple languages, Dulquer Salmaan stars in this compelling story of an ordinary man, *Lucky Baskhar*. The title track, launched on July 28th, takes listeners on a nostalgic journey to the late 1980s and early 1990s. Its infectious beats, nostalgic instrumentation and the legendary Usha Uthup's powerful vocals create a memorable experience. The lyrics, penned by Ramajogayya Sastry, align seamlessly with Dulquer Salmaan's character and offer a dose of inspiration to the audience.

Composer GV Prakash Kumar has masterfully blended 1980s Indi-rock with modern sensibilities, giving the track a

fresh and standout quality that is sure to appeal to music lovers across various languages.

Directed and written by blockbuster filmmaker Venky Atluri, *Lucky Baskhar* aims to add another gem to Dulquer Salmaan's impressive portfolio of cult classics. The film features Meenakshi Chaudhary as the leading lady, opposite Salmaan. Produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas and presented by Srikanth Studios, the film promises high production values. The film's period setting, recreating 1980s Mumbai (then Bombay), is brought to life by ace production designer Banglan, whose work is expected to garner accolades. Cinematographer Nimish Ravi beautifully captures the director's vision, while National Award-winning editor Navin Nooli ensures the film's editing is top-notch.

Having recently completed its shoot, *Lucky Baskhar* is set to release worldwide in Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi and Tamil on September 7th.

## DULQUER SALMAAN'S NEXT WITH GEETHA ARTS TITLED AAKASAM LO OKA TARA

Dulquer Salmaan, a distinguished and acclaimed multilingual actor celebrated for his impressive work in Indian cinema, is set to star in an exciting new Telugu project. Known for his versatility, Dulquer has achieved notable success in Telugu cinema with standout roles in films like *Mahanati* and *Sita*

*Ramam*. He also recently made a significant cameo in the highly anticipated film *Kalki 2898AD*. With a strong fan base in Telugu cinema, Dulquer continues to engage and captivate audiences through his diverse and compelling film choices. His latest venture is a collaboration with director Pavan Sadineni, renowned for his innovative storytelling and unique cinematic vision. To celebrate Dulquer Salmaan's birthday, the

film's makers have unveiled its title and a captivating first-look poster. Titled *Aakasam Lo Oka Tara*, the film's poster features Dulquer Salmaan in a simple, understated look, with a schoolgirl set against a picturesque farming field, adding an air of mystery and intrigue. This visual not only highlights the film's thematic essence but also sparks the audience's curiosity, promising a heartwarming and engaging story. Produced by Sandeep Gunnam and Ramya Gunnam, *Aakasam Lo Oka Tara* is a collaboration among some of the most prominent production banners in the industry. Geetha Arts, Swapna Cinema and Lightbox Media are jointly presenting the film, enhancing the anticipation and excitement surrounding the project. The film is slated to begin production soon, with detailed information about the cast and crew being kept under wraps. Fans and industry insiders eagerly await further announcements that will shed more light on this highly anticipated project. With a strong team and a compelling first look, *Aakasam Lo Oka Tara* is set to make a significant impact across Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam languages.



## Rao Ramesh takes you on a rib-tickling ride with *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*

Produced by Bujji Rayudu Pentylala and Mohan Karyia, *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam* is being created under the production companies PBR Cinemas and Lokamaatre Cinematics. With the anticipation towards the film's release increasing, on Sunday the Global star Ram Charan released the hilarious trailer of the film through X (formerly known as Twitter). As the actor has currently been held up with his projects, he shared the trailer sharing

that the film is packed with entertainment and energy. He went on to extend his best wishes to the makers and the entire team of *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*. Coming to the trailer starts on a funny note with Rao Ramesh being introduced as a family man who has funky issues to deal with his wife, played by

Indraja and his son, played by Ankit Koyya. The humorous one-liners and Rao Ramesh's funky comedy timing are highlighted in the trailer. It keeps us laughing out loud from start to end.

On the occasion, the director of the film, Lakshman Karyia said "I'd like to thank Ram Charan garu for unveiling the trailer of the film today. I hope the trailer struck a chord with you all. We've shown Rao Ramesh garu in his comedic best avatar and this is going to be a fun ride." Touted to be a thoroughly entertaining comedy-drama, this film is being presented by creative filmmaker Sukumar's wife Thabitha Sukumar and this is her maiden presentation. Mythri Movie Makers are grandly releasing the film on August 23.

## Allari Naresh's film with Sithara Entertainments kicks off

Allari Naresh, renowned for his successful comedy films, is branching out into diverse genres with his latest project. Partnering with the esteemed Sithara Entertainments, Naresh is set to star in a unique concept film that promises to break new ground.

The film, tentatively titled *Production No. 29*, has already piqued the interest of movie enthusiasts with its intriguing concept poster featuring sign language symbols. This innovative teaser has generated considerable buzz on social media. The project officially began with a Pooja Ceremony on July 27th. Meher Tej, known for the well-received Family Drama, is both writing and directing the film. The regular shooting is slated to commence within the coming week.

The producers are confident that this film will offer a distinctive cinematic experience. Suryadevara Naga Vamsi of Sithara Entertainments and Sai Soujanya of Fortune Four Cinemas are leading the production, with Venkat Upputuri co-producing the film.

Ruhani Sharma will star opposite Allari Naresh in a pivotal role, while the music will be composed by the acclaimed Ghibran. Jiju Sunny will handle the cinematography, Ramakrishna Arram will edit the film and Vishal Abani will be the art director.

