

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The Telangana government announced this year's Gaddar Award on December 9 and called upon prominent film industry persons to bring proposals. For some reason, movie folks didn't consult the government and there was no response. The TG government announced even before the cine industry asked. Like Nandi Awards, we want to take up Gaddar Awards on December 9. Film Industry folks should come forward with new proposals  
 — TG CM Revanth Reddy

**EAM Jaishankar rules out any role for third party**

**'I AM BOTHERED BY LESS SCREEN SPACE'**

**Double Ismart comes up with two UPDATES**

**DON'T MISS...**  
**Many island villages remain...**  
 Many island villages in the Konaseema and Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) districts remain submerged due to the ongoing floods from the Godavari and Sabari rivers, leaving them without road connectivity. Villages in P Gannavaram, Sakshinipalli, Mamidikuduru, Kothapet, Allavaram, Alamuru, and Kaplesvaram mandals in the Konaseema district are surrounded by floodwaters, prompting officials to arrange boats for access. Despite no recent rains in the State, the Godavari and its tributary, the Sabari ...

# Pattadar Passbooks with official seal soon: CM

The new passbooks will feature a QR code to provide detailed property information.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu announced that the State government will soon issue Pattadar Passbooks to landowners, featuring an official seal.

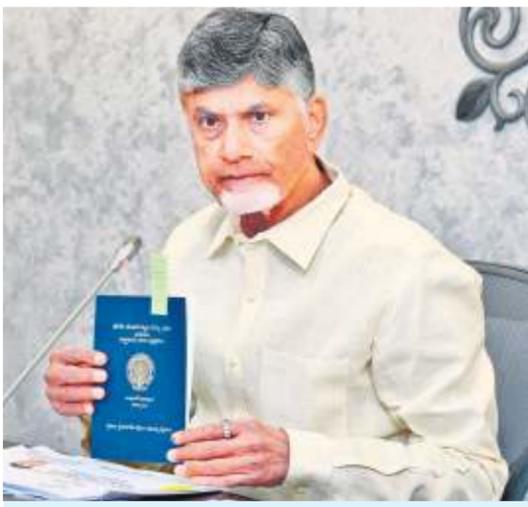
In a review meeting with officials on Monday, Naidu criticised the previous administration for allegedly misusing power by printing the photo of former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on the passbooks. He claimed that the TDP-led NDA government is now rectifying this issue.

Naidu asserted that the people believe hereditary property should not feature any individual's photo on the passbook. He also criticized the previous government for spending Rs 15 crore on printing Reddy's photos on the passbooks.

According to the CM, the State government, in line with its election promises and public demand, will issue passbooks with an official seal. Officials have already provided a sample of the new passbook design, which includes a QR code. Scanning the QR code will display detailed information about the property, including its location and map.

Naidu also highlighted the previous government's expenditure on agricultural land surveys, which he claimed amounted to Rs 650 crore. He alleged that this money was spent on placing Reddy's photos on boundary stones, despite the Centre's guidelines not mentioning such requirements.

The CM revealed that the NDA



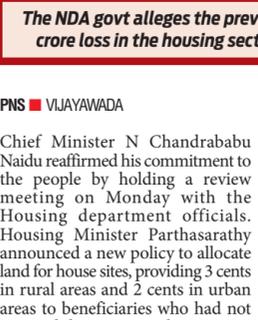
- Naidu criticises the previous government for using land passbooks to display the photo of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.
- CM claims the previous govt wasted Rs 15 cr on printing Jagan's photos on passbooks..
- Naidu criticises the previous govt's Rs 650 cr expenditure on boundary stones with Jagan's photos.
- The NDA govt exploring options for repurposing 77 lakh granite stones with Jagan's photos, which would cost an additional Rs 15 cr to alter.

government is currently evaluating options for dealing with the 77 lakh granite stones bearing Reddy's photos. He estimated that removing these images would cost an additional Rs 15 crore. Naidu directed officials to explore ways to repurpose the stones and avoid wasting the public funds, which he said total Rs 700 crore.

# CM FULFILS HOUSING PROMISE FOR POOR

## 3 cents in villages, 2 cents in urban areas

The NDA govt alleges the previous govt caused a Rs 10,000 crore loss in the housing sector due to mismanagement.



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reaffirmed his commitment to the people by holding a review meeting on Monday with the Housing department officials. Housing Minister Parthasarathy announced a new policy to allocate land for house sites, providing 3 cents in rural areas and 2 cents in urban areas to beneficiaries who had not received them previously.

- The govt plans to complete 1.25 lakh houses within 100 days and build 8.25 lakh houses next year.
- Delayed payments to NTR housing beneficiaries to be expedited.
- MIG layouts to be created for middle-income families.
- Housing projects for journalists to be undertaken at reduced costs.
- The govt assures proper infrastructure for all housing projects.

Briefing media persons about the review meeting, Minister Parthasarathy said that this policy aims to assist the poor, ensuring they receive their promised land allocations. Even in areas where land was acquired by the previous government but not distributed, the current administration will allocate 3 cents to the poor.

Following the CM's directives, the construction of houses has been prioritised. Minister Parthasarathy revealed that 1.25 lakh houses will be completed within 100 days, and the construction of an additional 8.25 lakh houses is planned for the upcoming year. He criticised the previous YSRCP government for neglecting the NTR housing beneficiaries and delaying payments, assuring that the current administration will expedite these payments. The minister also highlighted plans to create MIG layouts for middle-income families and undertake housing projects for journalists at reduced costs. Discussions are ongoing to transfer the responsibility for housing construction under the Polavaram R&R scheme to the Housing department.

# HRA hiked for AP Secretariat staff

The Andhra Pradesh government has announced an increase in the House Rent Allowance (HRA) for employees of the Secretariat and Head of Department (HoD) offices. The HRA will rise from the current 16 per cent to 24 per cent, with a maximum cap of Rs 25,000. The Finance Secretary issued a Government Order (GO) on Monday detailing this adjustment. This change will remain in effect until June 2025, pending the recommendations of the 12th Pay Revision Commission (PRC).



# Bagless days for classes 6-8

The Union education ministry on Monday notified guidelines for implementation of bagless days for classes 6-8 and making learning in schools more joyful, experiential and stress-free.

The guidelines, developed by PSS Central Institute of Vocational Education, a unit of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), were released on the fourth anniversary of the new National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The NEP, 2020, had recommended that all students in classes 6-8 participate in a 10-day bagless period. The idea behind 10 bagless days is to make them an integral part of the teaching learning process rather than an addition to the existing scheme of studies of education from classes 6-8.

# 'Vegan diet linked to lower ...'

Going vegan for eight weeks was found to be linked to lowering of biological age, according to a study published in the journal *BioMed Central (BMC) Medicine*. Researchers looked at the molecular effects of the plant-based diet that abstains from consuming animal food products, such as dairy. The diet largely includes eating fruits and vegetables, along with grains, beans and nuts. The researchers, including those at Stanford University, US, found that consuming the ...

# RBI plans web series to ...

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is planning a five-episode web series to provide an in-depth presentation about its functions and its 90-year journey. The web series is proposed to be for nearly three hours, with each episode having a duration of 25-30 minutes, according to an official document. The RBI, which was set up in 1935, completed 90 years in April this year. "The bank is desirous of creating a web series of five episodes of approximately 25-30 minutes each, which can be aired on national TV ...

# Rohit, Kohli among India players ...

India skipper Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and a few other players will start their training from Monday ahead of the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka starting August 2. While the Indian T20 team under Suryakumar Yadav will play the third and final match on Tuesday in Pallekele, Rohit, Kohli and a few others like rookie Harshit Rana will train in Colombo after reaching the island nation's capital on Sunday. Rohit, Kohli and Kuldeep Yadav will hit the ground running nearly a month after they helped India win the T20 World Cup in the ...

# Academic system should be free from politics: Lokesh

Minister for Education, Information Technology (IT), and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, announced on Monday that the academic system should remain free from political influence. He unveiled the new academic calendar for school education, notably omitting the photos of the Chief Minister and the Education Minister, a departure from previous



# The Minister releases new academic calendar for school education

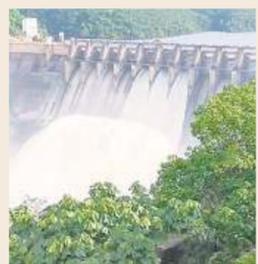
practices. During a review meeting with senior officials of School Education at his Vundavalli residence in Amaravati, Lokesh stated that political interference in government educational institutions would not

be tolerated. He also emphasized that textbooks and training materials for teachers and students should not feature political messages, photos, or colours associated with any political party. Lokesh further stated that with the term of the school management committees ending in July, elections for these panels will be held in August.

**2 Srikakulam fishermen detained in Sri Lanka**  
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# 3 gates of Srisailem Dam lifted

Irrigation officials at the Srisailem reservoir on Monday lifted three crest gates to release floodwater downstream to the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP). After a long interval, the officials lifted the gates, numbered 6, 7, and 8, to a height of 10 feet, allowing approximately 82,738 cusecs of water to flow downstream. Each gate released around 27,000 cusecs of water, according to Chief



Engineer Kabir Basha. Currently, the Srisailem project is receiving an inflow of 4,67,210 cusecs of water. The water level stands at 878.90 feet, just below its full capacity of 885 feet. Before opening the gates, officials performed a traditional 'pooja' to the Krishna river water. The event attracted a large number of visitors who gathered to witness the spectacular sight of water gushing through the crest gates.

# Two RDOs, a Sr Asst suspended

Two Revenue Divisional Officers (RDOs) and a Senior Assistant were suspended in connection with the burning of files at the Sub-Collector's Office in Madanapalle of Annamayya district. Andhra Pradesh Revenue Department Special Chief Secretary RP Sisodia issued orders suspending the three officials, including former RDO Murali, incumbent RDO



Hari Prasad and Senior Assistant Gowtham.

It may be mentioned here that important files, pertaining to the land acquisition, were destroyed in a fire in the Sub-collector's office in Madanapalle in Annamayya district on July 21. DGP Dwaraka Tirumala Rao personally visited the Sub-Collector's Office in Madanapalle and inspected the burnt files. He said that it was an 'incident' but not a fire accident.

# Difference in votes polled versus counted

DISCREPANCIES FOUND IN 89K VOTES IN AP AND 15K VOTES IN TG IN LOK SABHA: ADR

Poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has claimed that there is a discrepancy in the number of votes polled and the number of votes counted in 538 constituencies in the Lok Sabha election. According to an analysis by the ADR released in a press conference on Monday, in the recent Lok Sabha polls a total of 5,54,598 votes counted are less than the votes polled in 362 parliamentary constituencies while a total of 35,093 votes have been counted in excess of the votes polled in 176 parliamentary constituencies.

A reaction from the Election Commission was awaited on the matter.



"In addition, the inordinate delay in the release of final voter turnout data, absence of disaggregated con-

stituency and polling station figures in absolute numbers and whether the elections results were declared based on final reconciled data has raised concerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the election results," said ADR founder Jagdeep Chokkar while addressing

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a press conference.

ADR, however, did not specify that in how many seats these difference of votes would have resulted in a different outcome.

The report said the Election Commission has so far failed to give any reasonable explanation in declaring the election results before releasing the final and authentic data on vote count, the mismatch in EVM votes polled EVM votes counted, increase in voter turnout, non-disclosure of number of votes polled in numbers, unreasonable delay in release of votes polled data and the clean-up of certain data from its website.

# 'States must supervise coaching centres functioning'

Pradhan says no politics over IAS aspirants' death

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday said there are clear guidelines for running coaching centres and it is the duty of the state governments to supervise their functioning. Taking part in a short debate in the Rajya Sabha over the death of three students due to flooding of the basement of a UPSC coaching centre in Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar

following heavy rains on July 27, he termed the incident unfortunate and said there should be no politics over it. Nothing would compensate for the loss the bereaved families have suffered, Pradhan said.

"We must fix responsibility so that such incidents do not recur," he said, adding, "There should be no politics... Negligence has happened and someone has to take responsibility so that a solution can be found."



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

# 2 Srikakulam fishermen detained in Sri Lanka

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

In a harrowing ordeal, two fishermen from Srikakulam district, identified as Korlaiah and Venkayya, have been detained in Sri Lanka for nearly 40 days after inadvertently drifting into Sri Lankan waters during a fishing expedition. The fishermen, who had embarked on their journey from Tamil Nadu, found themselves in a precarious situation when their vessel veered off course into Sri Lankan territorial waters.

The Sri Lankan Coast Guard swiftly apprehended the duo, leading to their prolonged detention. This distressing turn of events has triggered significant anxiety among their families back home, who are now grappling with severe financial strain and uncertainty regarding the welfare of their loved ones. The inability to communicate with the detained fishermen has only heightened the distress experienced by their families, compounding their fears and anxieties.

In response to the unfolding crisis, Srikakulam District Collector Swapnil Dinakar



Pundkar has taken urgent action. On Friday, he appealed to Union Minister Shri Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, urging him to take proactive measures to address the situation. The Collector has also engaged with Sri Lankan authorities, advocating for the immediate release of the fishermen. This diplomatic outreach is a crucial step in ensuring the safe return of Korlaiah and Venkayya to their families.

Local officials have been mobilized to provide crucial support to the affected families, assisting them in navigating this challenging period. The community has rallied around the families, offering emotional and financial support as they endure this uncertain time. Efforts are being made to ensure that the families do not face this crisis alone, highlighting the resilience and solidarity of the Srikakulam community.

As efforts to resolve the situation continue, there is hope that the fishermen will soon be reunited with their families. The local and national authorities are working tirelessly to secure their release, demonstrating a commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of Indian citizens abroad. The story of Korlaiah and Venkayya is one of resilience, hope, and the unyielding human spirit in the face of adversity.

# Narayana inspects TIDCO houses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P Narayana has criticised the previous YSRCP government for its alleged negligence, which he claims has caused hardships for the poor across the State. On Monday, Minister Narayana inspected the TIDCO houses in the Amaravati capital area. He said that these houses, constructed during the TDP regime, were of high quality and provided various facilities.

Minister Narayana, accompanied by local MLA Shrawan Kumar, CRDA Commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar, and TIDCO MD Saikant Verma, visited the Mandadam and Dondapadu villages during the inspection. He directly interacted with the beneficiaries to understand their issues.

In his media address, Minister Narayana detailed the progress made between 2014 and 2019, stating that the Central government had approved the construction of over seven lakh houses. Of these, administrative permissions were granted for five lakh houses through TIDCO. Tenders were issued for 4,54,704 houses, and construction commenced on 3,13,832 houses. He reported



that 77,371 houses were more than 90% complete, 64,245 houses were between 50% and 75% complete, and 49,325 houses were between 25% and 50% complete. Additionally, the construction of 1,22,000 houses was less than 25% complete during the TDP regime. Minister Narayana criticized the YSRCP government for reducing the number of houses to 2,62,216 and only completing 1,67,000 houses, with 77,000 of these being completed during the TDP

tenure. He highlighted the high quality of the TIDCO houses, noting features like underground drainage, shopping complexes, Anganwadi schools, and community halls. Furthermore, the Minister accused the YSRCP government of mismanaging funds, stating that only Rs 240 crore of the Rs 3,350 crore from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was utilised. He added that if utilisation certificates for Rs 550 crore had been submitted, an additional Rs 1,100 crore would

have been received through the 15th Finance Commission. Due to alleged negligence, these funds were not obtained, and currently, there is no money left in the CRDA account.

Minister Narayana assured that the Chief Minister is committed to releasing funds for tenant farmers in the capital region soon. He also mentioned plans to negotiate with banks to extend the repayment period for TIDCO house beneficiaries to ease their financial burden.

## Lecturers raise concern over non-teaching responsibilities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the decision taken by the higher authorities of the Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions (TMREIS), the Telangana residential schools and colleges are forcing the University Grants Commission - National Eligibility Test (UGC NET) and State Eligibility Test (SET) qualified lecturers to perform night watchman duties. Several lectures raised their voice against the decision taken by the higher authorities. The TMREIS authorities issued the Whatsapp message to all principals of residential schools.

As per the message, "All the principals are hereby informed to instruct the staff who are on night duty to share their inspection photos for every two hours in the night and further they should know night stay is not meant for coming and having sleep in the institution but supervise the dormitories to avoid any untoward incidents which is quite essential for residential pattern for which they are allowed to avail next day off. It doesn't mean they shouldn't take rest but vigilance must be there on students." The lecturers raised concern over increasing workload and non-teaching responsibilities imposed on them in Telangana residential schools and colleges.

### ERROR REGRETTED

In the news item headlined 'Over 100 Anna Canteens set for I-Day relaunch' that appeared on the 29th July 2024 (Monday) edition, the name of the Chief Minister was inadvertently mentioned as Jagan Mohan Reddy. The error is regretted.

- Management

## ONGC aids govt in tackling waterlogging



PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

In response to a request from the District Collector, ONGC Rajahmundry Asset quickly mobilised resources to tackle waterlogging in the Sai Baba Temple area. The response included deploying a mobile air compressor and retrieving a high-discharge pump from one of its rig operations.

The ONGC team was on-site to ensure the safe and efficient removal of

water. The advanced equipment, particularly the high-discharge pump, was crucial in accelerating the drainage process. Santanu Das, ED Asset Manager, emphasised ONGC Rajahmundry Asset's commitment to assisting state bodies in safeguarding community welfare. This prompt action and deployment of advanced technology highlight ONGC's dedication to supporting local administration in times of need.

## LAW & ORDER ISSUE Akbaruddin warns govt of approaching HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM floor leader Akbaruddin Owaisi warned the state government that he will approach the High Court on the law and order issue in Hyderabad if the government did not respond on it.

Participating in the discussion on demands on Monday in the Telangana Legislative Assembly, Akbaruddin said that three murders took place on Saturday on the very next day the government replied to BRS MLA T. Harish Rao after Harish raised the law and order issue and said the law and order situation in the state was alarming. Recalling the City Police Commissioner's statement that the police will not be friendly anymore, Akbaruddin asked the City Police Commissioner to explain whether he wants an 'enemy police.'

## INDIA will break govt's 'chakravyuh': Rahul

• Says it will ensure MSP legal guarantee, caste census

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Using the 'chakravyuh' metaphor as a leitmotif, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravyuh' he promised would be broken by the INDIA bloc.

Participating in the debate in the Lok Sabha on Budget 2024-25, Gandhi said the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will ensure that a legal guarantee for MSP as well as a caste census is passed by the House.



In a speech that invoked the Mahabharat and led to an uproar in the House, prompting Speaker Om Birla to inter-

vene frequently, the former Congress chief alleged that the sole aim of the Union Budget is to strengthen the framework of big businesses, political monopoly that destroys the democratic structure, and the deep state or the agencies.

"There is an atmosphere of fear and that fear has pervaded every aspect of our country. In the BJP only one man is allowed to dream to be the prime minister. If the defence minister wants to be PM, there is a big problem, there is fear. This fear has been spread throughout the country...why is it that my friends in the BJP are terrified.

## 'End restrictions on media in Parl'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Monday requested Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to remove the restrictions imposed on the media within Parliament premises. "Sir, I would request you to allow the media, who have been restricted to a cage, to move out," Gandhi said in the Lok Sabha.

## Software employee loses Rs 1.72 cr in fake stock trading

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A city based 31-year-old software engineer named Kumar lost Rs 1.72 crore in share trading fraud in the city. He said that on June 9, 2024 he received a message on his WhatsApp inviting him to join the Upstox Trading group named 'Y61-VIP-Upstox Services Group,' which purportedly helps

people develop trading skills and is led by Prof Rajat Chopra. Further a person introduced herself as 'Lata Garg' and claimed to be an assistant to Professor Rajat Chopra. "She explained that she could assist him in investing in the Indian stock market using an Upstox international account and mentioned the potential to make money through trad-

ing. Lata Garg instructed him to download a trading app named 'Uipo' and provided a link to a WhatsApp group" the complainant added. Then he started adding money for trading. On June 30, based on suggestions from Rajat Chopra, the victim initially added a total of Rs 1,20,000 to the Uipo app account from his bank.

## Bagless days for classes ...

Continued from Page 1

It will not only reduce the boundaries between the bookish knowledge and application of knowledge but also expose children to the skill requirements in the work areas, thus helping them to decide the future career path," the guidelines stated. "Every student will take a fun course during classes 6-8 that gives a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational craft such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc, as decided by states and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs," they added.

The ministry said all students would participate in the 10-day bagless period sometime during classes 6-8 during which they would intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, etc.

"Ten bagless days activities can be accommodated in any number of slots in an annual calendar. But it is advisable to keep two or three slots.

While developing an annual work plan, all subject teachers may be involved. If necessary, indoor and outdoor activities may be clubbed in a day," the guidelines stated. Visit and survey of vegetable markets; charity visits; survey and report writing on pet care; doodling, kite making and flying; organising a book fair; sitting under a banyan tree; and visiting a biogas plant and solar energy park are among the recommended activities in the NCERT guidelines.

Among other initiatives launched on the NEP anniversary were dedicated TV channels to facilitate learning of various Indian languages; a Tamil channel; primers for early graders in 25 Indian languages; career guidance guidelines; National Mission for Mentoring and National Professional Standards for Teachers in braille and audio-books; school innovation marathon by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and a book on graduation attributes and professional competencies. Four books and lecture notes

aimed at promoting Indian knowledge systems among students and teachers were also launched.

"The four-year journey of NEP, 2020, has been about bringing in transformative change in the country's education system for nurturing a new generation of learners. NEP, 2020, stands as a symbol of hope for transforming the learning landscape, harnessing the country's demographic dividend, empowering the population and driving socio-economic development," Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in a message. "Implementation of NEP has made learning more vibrant and guided in making the country's education more futuristic, rooted, global and outcome-oriented," he added.

The Akhil Bharatiya Siksha Samagham has been conceptualised as an event to celebrate the adoption of NEP, 2020, to reinvigorate the commitment of various stakeholders for its effective implementation and to realise the collective strength for achievement of shared goals through collaborative efforts

## 'States must supervise ...

Continued from Page 1

Stressing that education is in the concurrent list and is the responsibility of the Centre as well as the state, Pradhan said the coaching centres have responsibilities too.

The Government of India sent advisories related to coaching centres to the states and Union Territories in 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2024, the Union education minister said.

The advisories suggest "registration of coaching centre and minimum standards for that, what kind of safeguards it should take for students and continuous monitoring, including levying penalty if someone goes against it"

Some states such as Goa, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Manipur have their own regulations.

"Considering this, the government in January 2024 sent an advisory to states. That is already in public. Had the state governments followed it, this unfortunate incident would not have happened," Pradhan said while asserting that it is the states' duty to implement it.

It would not be appropriate for the state governments to move away from their responsibilities, he said in the Rajya Sabha.

Pradhan said that the government is ready for any kind of discussion on the education system. "We don't have any-

thing to hide," he asserted. Some people think they are experts in constitutional matters, he said, adding the Supreme Court has already given its order on NEET and the government is ready to discuss the issue in detail in the Upper House.

Slamming the UPA government for not implementing the Public Examination Malpractices Bill, 2010, Pradhan said the present government has brought the law into force.

Cited incidents of paper leaks across states, the Union education minister told the House that "we need to move forward" and the "coaching centres have to follow the rules."

## Academic system should be ...

Continued from Page 1

He asserted that supervisory responsibilities for mid-day meals and campus amenities should be handed over to parents' committees.

The Minister stressed the importance of improving toilet maintenance in government schools and directed officials to call for tenders for the necessary supplies. After a detailed review of the functioning of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools in the state, Lokesh announced that a new roadmap for these institutions would be released soon.

Lokesh also approved the filling of vacant teaching and non-teaching positions in Kasturba Gandhi Girls Schools and instructed officials to formulate appropriate guidelines.

Secretary of School Education Kona Sasidhar, Director Vijaya Ramaraju, and Project Director of Samagra Sikshana B Srinivasa Rao were present.

## Difference in votes polled ...

Continued from Page 1

"The ECI failing to address and take appropriate steps against the egregious incidents of violations, illegalities and irregularities seen in the Lok Sabha, 2019 and Lok Sabha Election 2024 elections has led to the trepidations in the mind of the electorate. These apprehensions must be seriously addressed and put to rest," Chokkar said.

The report said while declaring the results of the General elections 2024 votes polled and counted showed significant discrepancies in 538 parliamentary constituencies (PCs), except Amreli, Attingal, Lakshadweep and Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu. "Surat PC was uncontested. Hence the total discrepancies in 538 PCs are 5,89,691 votes," the report said.

Independent journalist Poonam Aggarwal who also addressed the press conference said she found the exact same result while analysing the data of the votes cast and the votes polled.

During the 17th General Elections, while for the first 6 phases of the election, the voter turnout app displayed the exact number of voters, however, in the last phase i.e. the 7th phase of voting only percentage figures were given and previous data was removed by the Election Commission.

As per the research conducted by a team of experts and ADR, serious discrepancies were found between the number of voters in different constituencies and the number of votes counted. "The master summary of 542 constituencies showed discrepancies in 347 seats. 195 seats were without discrepancies whatsoever. The discrepancies ranged from 1 vote (lowest) to 101323 votes at 10.49 per cent of the total votes (highest).

There were 6 seats where the discrepancy in votes was higher than the winning margin. The total volume of discrepancies was in the nature of 739104 votes put together," the report said about the 2019 polls.

Sudhakar Babu slams CM for renegeing on poll promises

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu has launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for renegeing on his election promises, particularly the so-called "Super Six" promises.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Monday, Sudhakar Babu emphasised that the Chief Minister's words in the Assembly do not align with his actions and affirmed that YSRCP will persist in questioning the non-implementation of the Super Six schemes. He highlighted that even before the elections, YSRCP warned about the impracticality of these promises. Despite his claims of vast experience and the ability to generate wealth for their implementation, CM Naidu has failed to deliver on these commitments, he added.

Questioning the implementation of new policies related to sand and liquor, the former MLA reminded that CM Naidu had promised monetary benefits for every child under the Talliki Vandanam scheme and asked what the status of that scheme is. He said Naidu's behaviour reflects a consistent pattern of pre-election promises followed by post-election betrayals.

The former MLA slammed Naidu for not being able to get necessary funding to essential projects like Polavaram, Amaravati, and construction of various ports, despite playing an important role in the NDA government.

Jagan's leadership marked by incompetence: Sharmila

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been sharply criticised by Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Y.S. Sharmila. In a statement on Monday, Sharmila suggested that Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership is marked by incompetence, even going so far as to imply that his actions warrant placement in a museum for his foolishness.

Sharmila claimed that Naidu had become a significant challenge for Jagan Mohan Reddy,

emphasising this point in her remarks on social media. "We don't harbour personal animosity, but we have the responsibility to highlight failures," Sharmila wrote. "Is there any rule preventing opposition parties from questioning one another? We have the right to criticise any party when they falter. Jagan

Mohan Reddy's refusal to attend the Assembly is a serious issue. Disrespecting the legislature is unacceptable, which is why we believe Jagan should resign."

Sharmila recounted her protest against the demolition of Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's statue by ruling party activists. She criticised Jagan, saying, "Had you not destroyed NTR's idols or changed the name of NTR University while in power, Your inability to engage effectively in the Assembly and reliance on media to address issues reflect poorly on your leadership."



The APCC president also criticised Jagan Mohan Reddy's policies, accusing him of failing to support farmers adequately and mismanaging the YSR Jalayagnam scheme and alcohol prohibition. She asserted that Jagan's 'alliance' with the BJP has compromised the interests of the State for personal gain.



VSP crosses 100 m tons milestone

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a groundbreaking achievement, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant crossed the production of 100 million tons of saleable steel. This historic milestone was announced with great pride by a RINL spokesperson on X (formerly Twitter), who proclaimed, "RINL surpasses 100 million tons of saleable steel production since inception! This achievement reflects our dedication, innovation, and unwavering commitment to excellence."

The genesis of this industrial colossus dates back to April 17, 1970, when then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared the establishment of a steel plant in Visakhapatnam. The former USSR played a pivotal role in the nascent stages, crafting a comprehensive project report for a 3.4 million ton per annum plant by November 1980. Rapid advancements ensued, with a contract signed in February 1981 for the intricate design and development of the coke oven, blast furnace, and sinter plant.

January 1982 marked a significant milestone with the

first mass concreting of the blast furnace foundation. Concurrently, construction of the local township commenced to support the burgeoning workforce. On February 18, 1982, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited was officially constituted, marking the separation of VSP from the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and establishing RINL as the corporate entity for the plant in April 1982.

The production journey of VSP began in earnest in November 1990, ushering in a new era of Indian steel manufacturing.

APTF condemns assault on principal as barbaric

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State President of the Andhra Pradesh Teachers Federation (APTF), G. Hrudaya Raju, has denounced the recent assault on Dega Narayana, Headmaster of the high school at Balapanur in Nandyala district, as a barbaric act. On Monday, during a meeting at the APTF district office in Nandyala, Raju expressed outrage over the incident. He detailed that the attack followed an incident where three students damaged a wall at Balapanur Zilla Parishad High School. When Narayana confronted the students, R. Venkateswarlu, the father of one of the students, assaulted the headmaster with an axe handle.

Raju called for the immediate registration of an attempt-to-murder case against the assailant and urged for stringent action to be taken.

State can overcome debt under Naidu's leadership: PV Ramesh

Says strategic roadmap needed combining long-term vision with immediate action plans

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Chief Secretary PV Ramesh has expressed confidence in Andhra Pradesh's economic future, asserting that the State can overcome its significant debt burden under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Addressing a conference organised by Jana Chaitanya Vedika on 'Economic Development of AP - The Way Forward,' Ramesh emphasised the need for a strategic roadmap combining long-term vision with immediate action plans.

Ramesh identified land administration as a critical area for improvement, advocating for a streamlined revenue system to bolster the State's economic foundation. Agriculture, which sustains 65 per cent of the population, requires a significant productivity boost across sectors like horticulture, aquaculture, and animal husbandry. Despite being India's top aquaculture exporter, the State lacks



essential processing facilities and value addition, areas demanding urgent government intervention.

The industrial sector, contributing 18 per cent to the State's economy, holds immense potential. Ramesh highlighted the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) as a strategic asset, capable of driving industrial growth due to its excellent connectivity. He emphasised the need to attract investments from Andhra Pradesh natives who are currently investing elsewhere.

Ramesh proposed a government-managed public portal to facilitate investor attraction and address supply-demand imbalances. He expressed concern over declining education standards and healthcare quality in government hospitals, calling for innovative solutions aligned with the Chief Minister's P4 concept.

Advocating for autonomous urban areas and municipal corporations, Ramesh said that government focus is on core public services like water, roads, healthcare, housing, and transport infrastructure.

MP urges Aviation Minister to start new flights from Gannavaram

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has handed over a representation to Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu to start new flight services from Gannavaram Airport so as to enable connectivity to various places of the country.

The MP met Union Minister Ram Mohan Naidu at his



chamber in Parliament on Monday and requested for new flights services from Vijayawada to Varanasi via

Vizag, Vijayawada to Calcutta via Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada to Cochin via Hyderabad (or) Bengaluru, Vijayawada to Ahmedabad, and Vijayawada to Pune.

The MP stated that these flight services from the Gannavaram Airport in the capital region of Amaravati will be very useful for businessmen and travelers, thereby increasing the footfall.

Staff shortage at hospital leaves pregnant women without care

Only one female doctor is available at Chintapalli Area Hospital, who has now taken leave

PNS ■ PADERU

A severe shortage of medical staff at Chintapalli Area Hospital has led to a critical crisis in maternal healthcare, with pregnant women in the region being denied essential services. Currently, the hospital is operating without any female doctors.

The impact is far-reaching, affecting pregnant and lactating women from 11 primary health centres in Chintapalli and GK Vedhi mandals. These women depend on the local hospital for treatment, and with the shortage, they are now being transferred to other area hospitals for delivery. Every day, 50 to 100 pregnant women visit the hospital for health checks, but the absence



of available doctors means they are often turned away. Women from suburban primary health centres like Seeleru, Dharakonda, Pedavalasa, GK Vedhi, Korukonda, and Tajangi also rely on Chintapalli Area Hospital for ultrasound scans, which are now halted.

Under the Prime Minister's safe maternity campaign,

health check-ups for pregnant women are scheduled on the 9th and 10th of each month. However, with only one female doctor available, who has now also taken leave, the hospital cannot manage the workload. This has resulted in a complete stoppage of medical services for pregnant women.

The hospital officially has three female doctors assigned:

Civil Surgeon Sudhasharad, currently on childcare leave, and Dr Srilata and Dr Praveena, who were deputed to Paderu District Hospital during the YCP government's tenure. These doctors are now refusing to return. Despite this critical shortage, the Vaidya Vidhana Parishad and district authorities have taken no steps to address the issue. Pregnant women facing complicated deliveries are particularly at risk. The hospital handles only natural births, and those needing caesarean sections are transferred to Narsipatnam Area Hospital, which is 50 km away. There have been tragic incidents where both mother and baby died en route during such transfers.

Success a blend of hard work, attitude, confidence: Former DGP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Former Director General of Police (DGP) N Sambasiva Rao has underscored the vital importance of setting and pursuing specific goals in life. Speaking to new engineering students during their orientation and induction programme at Andhra University's YVS Murthy auditorium here on Monday, Rao shared insights from his personal journey and emphasised the role of philosophical ideas in achieving



personal growth and success. Rao, who rose from humble beginnings also a combination of a well-rounded attitude and confidence in one's abilities.

to become an IPS officer, reflected on the significant impact that his early education and the guidance of his teachers had on his life. "It is crucial for you to explore and understand the opportunities available to you early on," Rao advised. His message was clear: success is not solely the result of hard work and dedication, but

8 minor boys rescued from human trafficking

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a coordinated operation against human trafficking, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) at Rajahmundry and Tuni Posts, along with CIB/RPF Rajahmundry and APO, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), Andhra Pradesh, conducted a special drive on Train No 13351 Dhanbad-Alappuzha Express. The operation took place between Tuni and Rajahmundry railway stations



the other day. During the operation, eight boys were found moving sus-

piciously in the sleeper and general coaches. Unable to provide a clear reason for their

journey, the children were detained at the Rajahmundry station. Initial inquiries revealed that the children, heading to Vijayawada, Chennai, Tirupur, and Kerala, were potentially being trafficked for child labour. A team of police officials, APO/BBA, District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), and Child Helpline spoke to the children. They said that they were going to Kerala with four known persons, however, their statement was not trustworthy.



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## Many island villages remain submerged

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

Many island villages in the Konaseema and Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) districts remain submerged due to the ongoing floods from the Godavari and Sabari rivers, leaving them without road connectivity.

Villages in P Gannavaram, Sakshinetipalli, Mamidikuduru, Kothapet, Allavaram, Alamuru, and Kapileswaram mandals in the Konaseema district are surrounded by floodwaters, prompting officials to arrange boats for access.

Despite no recent rains in the State, the Godavari and its tributary, the Sabari, are

swollen from heavy rainfall in their catchment areas. While the water level in the Godavari is receding, many areas remain waterlogged. With roads submerged, residents of Pottilanka and Inavallilanka rely on boats for transportation. Officials are distributing essential commodities to the affected villages, despite the submerged roads.

The Godavari River has overflowed onto the Yeduru Bedem causeway, exacerbating the situation as the Vasista, Vainateya, and Gowthami rivers also experience heavy inflows. Farmers in these island villages report that their plantain, papaya, maize, and vegetable crops have been under floodwaters for the

past ten days.

In the ASR district, villages in Chintur and Kunavaram mandals are also inundated.

Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has visited some of the affected villages to monitor relief operations. Reservoirs and irrigation tanks are full, with floodwaters overflowing onto roads and disrupting traffic. The Seethapalli, Maderu, and Bodlanka streams are swollen from heavy inflows. In Devipatnam mandal, an auto-rickshaw with six passengers was stranded on a flooded road in Pamugandi village but the passengers were safely rescued.

Control rooms have been set up at various mandal head-

quarters to provide and receive information from flood victims. Essential commodities, including torchlights, are being distributed, according to the Collector.

In a related incident, police used a boat to rescue a pregnant woman stuck in floodwaters in VR Puram and transported her to a hospital on Sunday night.

Villagers in Kunavaram and Yetapaka mandals report that backwaters from the Polavaram project cofferdam have inundated several areas. They have appealed to the government for relief and rehabilitation packets and to relocate them to safer locations.



## Implement free sand policy transparently: Eluru Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi directed the officials to take steps to implement the free sand policy transparently and in a flawless manner in the district.

The Collector held a meeting with the officials concerned here on Monday and reviewed the supply of sand at free of cost as per the new policy.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Vetri Selvi said that the free sand policy should be implemented everywhere in the district with full transparency.

He told the officials to install CC cameras and ensure staff must be available 24 hours a day at the sand stock points. The staff should work in three shifts and records should be kept in the stock point every morning starting with stocking, how much sand was supplied and stock-



ing details, the Collector told them.

The sand prices must be displayed at the stock points and strict action will be taken against those who charge more than the prescribed prices, she warned. The officials of the Special Enforcement Bureau should check the vehicles that come out of the stock point and if there are any discrepancies in the records or the quantity of sand, they should investigate

and cases should be registered, the Collector ordered the officials.

She directed the Tahsildars of the Department of Mines concerned to check the stock points every day and sign the records. Collector Vetri Selvi warned that action would be taken against the officials concerned, if there was illegal movement of sand anywhere in the district.

The officials should immediately respond and take

action on the controversial news items published in the newspapers on sand smuggling, investigate the facts of the news and submit a report. The task force team should strengthen surveillance, she told the officials.

Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy, In-charge DRO M Mukkanti, RDO NSK Khavali DTC Santha Kumari and mines DD B Ravi Kumar were among those who attended the meeting.

## Aqua farmers hail cut in custom duty on feed

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Aqua farmers welcomed the cut in customs duty on certain products of aqua feed in the budget by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman.

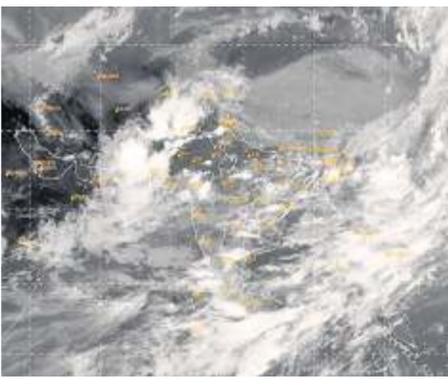
The aqua farmers also expressed their happiness by making zero custom duty on certain imports which will benefit the hatcheries. The aqua farmers also expressed their happiness for setting up



centers in India to reduce dependency on other countries for Brooders. The Aqua Prawn Farmer Association

representatives from different parts of the state held a meeting at the Tulasi convention centre, at Veeravasaram, near here on Monday to express their thankfulness to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman.

They thanked Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for reducing customs duty on certain products which are useful for the production of prawn feed.



## Southwest monsoon weak in AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The southwest monsoon has been weak in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema, the Meteorological Centre said on Monday.

A daily weather report here said that strong surface winds with speeds ranging from 30-40 Kmph are likely to prevail at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra

Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days.

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at a few places or one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. Rain occurred at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at one or two places in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours, the report added.

## 3 youths drown in Telugu Ganga reservoir



PNS ■ KADAPA

Three youths drowned in the Telugu Ganga SR 1 Reservoir at Challabasayapalle in Duvvur mandal in YSR district.

Police said that deceased youths entered the Telugu Ganga SR 1 to have a bath on the evening of Sunday. Before entering the reservoir they took selfie photographs with their mobile phones in the water.

They drowned in the Telugu Ganga as it was full of water due to recent incessant rains. Nobody noticed the drowning

of the three youths in the reservoir. Since they did not return home even in the night, the suspected parents complained to the police. The passersby noticed the clothes, mobile phones and bags of the three youths on the embankment of the reservoir and informed the same to the police.

The police called the NDRF teams who retrieved the bodies from the reservoir. The deceased youths were identified as Sk. Musaphir (22), Pathan Rehmatullah (23) and Shahid (23). The deceased belonged to Proddatur.

## TTD EO presents silk robes to deity at Tiruttani temple

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

On the auspicious occasion of 'Adi Kritika', TTD EO J Syamala Rao presented 'Pattu Vastrams' on behalf of Tirumala Venkateswara Swamy to Subramanya Swami in Tiruttani temple on Monday.

Later speaking to the media here, he said since 2006, TTD has been offering silk robes to the presiding deity of Subramanya Swamy who is also popularly known as 'Tanikesan' in this renowned hill shrine.

"Devotees perform 'Kavadi Puj'a with great devotion on this occasion. And I prayed to the presid-



ing deity to bestow His benign blessings on the well-being of the entire humanity," he maintained.

On his arrival to the temple, he was welcomed by the Temple JC Arunachalam,

Temple Chairman Sri Sridhar, members and others. Tirumala Temple DyEO Lokanatham, Parupattedar Tulasiprasad, Veda Paraynamdars were also present.

## TTD Addl EO inspects sites for new 'Srivani' counter

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

TTD Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdhary, accompanied by Tirupati JEO Veerabrahmam and other officials, inspected various potential sites for establishing a permanent ticketing centre and donor section for 'Srivani' devotees in Tirumala.

To provide 'Srivani' Trust donors with a more convenient ticketing experience, TTD is considering setting up an exclusive counter with a parking facility. As part of this initia-



Following this, Additional EO Chowdhary also inspected the newly renovated Annamaiah Bhavan.

The inspection team included SE 2 Jagadeeswar Reddy, Deputy EO Selvam, Transport GM Sessa Reddy, and other officials.

## SCR launches SpeedoMeter app

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway (SCR) launched SpeedoMeter app (SPM) during the review meeting on safety of train operations at Rail Nilayam, Secunderabad on Monday.

The SPM app is an in-house developed application which evaluates crew performance for safety and punctuality, while working on trains by checking the speed, braking distance, signal adherence; visual and computer reports aid in this assessment process. It facilitates



comprehensive analysis of crew performance on various aspects, ensuring high stan-

dards of safety and punctuality in the train operations.

The General Manager stated that the SPM app is a wonderful tool to get detailed analysis within a short duration. It will not only ensure safety but is essentially helpful in monitoring mobility, speed and other aspects of the loco.

In regards to review of safety of train operations over the zone, Arun Kumar Jain instructed the officials to strictly adhere to safety procedures in all the operations to avoid any unusual incident which may hamper movement.

## UoH to organise Model UN meet today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

University of Hyderabad will be organising a Model United Nations conference themed on Lifestyle for Environment Initiative (LIFE) on July 30. The conference will focus on

"Green Horizons: Navigating the Clean Energy Transition" under the vision Viksit Bharath@2047.

Delegates from various countries will explore the global importance of climate change, sustainable develop-

ment goals, economic implications, technological innovations, energy security, social justice and international cooperation. The conference aims to foster diplomatic negotiations and collaborative policy-making.

## Police rescue kidnapped man; 4 suspects held

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Police have successfully resolved a kidnapping case by arresting four suspects and rescuing the victim.

SP Subba Rayudu announced on Monday that Bhaskar, a resident of Cheruvu Mundara Pali village, was abducted from an auto rickshaw at Bhakarpet Ghat on July 24. The kidnappers, armed with a revolver, took him hostage while he was en route to Gottigallu village.

The abductors contacted Bhaskar's son, Reddy Kiran, demanding a ransom of Rs 2 crore for his father's release. Kiran, with the assistance of his relatives, promptly filed a police report. The police, treating the case with urgency, launched a swift operation with former special teams.

Acting on a reliable tip, the police apprehended an RMP doctor, who provided crucial information leading to the arrest of three additional sus-

pects. Bhaskar was subsequently rescued. It was revealed that the kidnappers had used a dummy revolver to intimidate the victim, according to SP Rayudu.

While four suspects are in custody, the main orchestrator of the kidnapping remains at large. Police are actively searching for him.

The police have confiscated the dummy pistol, the vehicle used in the crime, and various intoxicants employed during the abduction.

## Movie industry didn't respond on Gaddar awards, say TG CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed disappointment over the lack of response from the film industry regarding Gaddar Awards. During the Vishwambhara Dr C. Narayana Reddy National Literary Award function held at Ravindra Bharathi, he called on the film industry to come out with proposals to support the awards.

Revanth lauded the immense contributions of C. Narayana Reddy as a poet, Vice-Chancellor and Raja Sabha Member. He noted that Narayana Reddy's works made the entire Telugu community proud and highlighted his inspiring journey from a remote area.

The Chief Minister emphasized that Narayana Reddy's life remains an inspiration to many and his deeply immersive works are remembered even today.

The Chief Minister



announced that the government would soon decide on a suitable commemoration for C. Narayana Reddy and assured state support for publishing his works.

Revanth also mentioned that despite previous announcements about presenting Gaddar Awards akin to the prestigious Nandi Awards on December 9, there was no response from the film industry. He urged film industry personalities to

come forward with proposals regarding the Gaddar Awards.

Revanth congratulated the literary award recipient and Tamil author and Saraswati Samman awardee, Shrimati Sivasankari. The event was organized by the Sushila Narayana Reddy Trust on the occasion of Dr C. Narayana Reddy's 93rd birth anniversary. The event saw the presence of several dignitaries and literary figures.

## USE KIDS' IMAGES TO OBTAIN SIM CARDS

## Fraudsters use fake Aadhaar cards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A study by the Cyber Security Bureau revealed that fraudsters are using counterfeit or outdated Aadhaar cards with children's images to falsely obtain SIM cards for malicious activities. The study found that 64.5 per cent of Indian consumers prefer digital KYC (Know Your Customer) for SIM registration, with Aadhaar being the preferred ID.

"Telecom SIM Subscription Frauds: Global Policy Trends, Risk Assessments and Recommendations". The study found that fraudsters are using fake Aadhaar cards to falsely obtain SIM cards for malicious activities. The study found that 64.5 per cent of Indian consumers prefer digital KYC (Know Your Customer) for SIM registration, with Aadhaar being the preferred ID.

Notably, 89 per cent of alternate numbers provide dare

not linked to Aadhaar, indicating a significant gap in verification processes. The study also highlighted the vulnerabilities of OTP-based authentication and identified irregular practices by Point of Sale (POS) agents. The study also showed gaps in real time subscriber authentication and ineffective OTP-based authentication. It was seen that often the alternate numbers used for authentication were linked to other criminals.

INDIA CORNER



Penguin to publish English version of Kamba Ramayana

Penguin Random House India (PRHI) on Monday announced the publication of the first complete multi-volume English translation of "Kamba Ramayanam", a Tamil version of the epic Ramayana by 12th-century poet Kampan. The monumental project, undertaken by six scholars and translators of the Tamil language, is expected to be released between 2028-30. Widely considered as the Tamil literary tradition's greatest poem, Kampan's Ramayana is celebrated for its innovative use of language, the psychological depth of its characters, and its profound engagement with themes of power, truth, and divinity. The six books of Kampan's Ramayana, consisting of 42,000 lines of verse, will be divided into seven volumes along with an introductory volume -- "Volume 1: Bala", "Volume 2:



Ex-APSC chief sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment

Former Assam Public Service Commission chairman Rakesh Paul was on Monday sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment by a special court in connection with a cash-for-jobs case related to recruitment of agricultural development officers in the state. Two other former APSC members -- Basanta Kumar Doley and Samedur Rahman -- were awarded 10 years of imprisonment, while 29 others will serve jail sentence of four years. Special Judge Dipankar Thakuria said in his order. Paul and the two former members were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of seven years in connection with a case of cheating, another seven years for forgery, and 10 years for cases registered under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. In the case of Paul, the sentence will run consecutively, but with the CrPC stating that a person convicted in such a case can be in prison for a maximum of 14 years, he will serve the sentence for 14 years. In the case of Doley and Rahman, the sentence will run concurrently and they will be in jail for 10 years.



14 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh

As many as 14 Naxalites, one of them carrying a bounty of Rs 1 lakh, surrendered before security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Monday, police said. The Naxalites turned themselves in before senior officials from the police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) here, citing disappointment with atrocities committed by senior cadres and "inhuman" and "hollow" Maoist ideology, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said. They were active in the Usoor-Pamed, Bhairamgarh and Ganganalor area committees of Maoists, he said. Among them, woman cadre Nagi Podiyam (38) was active as the head of the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangathan (KAMS- a frontal wing of Maoists) in Marubadka village and carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh, the official said. Podiyam was allegedly involved in murders, firing at police teams and damaging roads, he said. The surrendered Naxalites will be provided facilities as per the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy.



INDIA'S BORDER DISPUTE WITH CHINA

EAM Jaishankar rules out any role for third party

PNS ■ TOKYO

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday ruled out any role for a third party in India's border dispute with China, saying the two neighbours have an issue and it is for them to find a way out.

"We are not looking to other countries to sort out what is really an issue between India and China," Jaishankar said while responding to a series of questions at a press conference in Tokyo.

Jaishankar, who is here to attend a Quad foreign ministerial meeting, also said that India's relationship with China is not good and it's not doing well.

"We have a problem, or, I would say, an issue between India and China...I think it is

for two of us to talk it over and to find a way," he said.

"Obviously, other countries in the world would have an interest in the matter, because we are two big countries and the state of our relationship has an impact on the rest of the world. But we are not looking to other countries to sort out what is really an issue between us," he said, recalling his meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi twice this month.

Jaishankar and Wang met last week in the Laotian capital where they participated in the meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

During their meeting, they agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process following the military standoff in eastern Ladakh in May 2020.

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

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

On July 4, Jaishankar and Wang met in the Kazakh capital city of Astana on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the standoff.

India has been pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas.

India only country where petrol, diesel prices declined in last 3 years: Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said India is the only country where rates of petrol and diesel have come down between November 2021 and April 2024.

Replying to various queries during Question Hour in Rajya Sabha, the minister also informed that the government is encouraging dialogue between Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and dealers regarding margins for the latter.

Puri noted that petrol and diesel were deregulated during the UPA government.

Deregulation means that prices of the commodity in the market are not set by the government, he added.

"Prices here being high and elsewhere being low. It's exactly the opposite. In India today, the prices are the lowest and is the only country where prices have actually come down," Puri said.

He attributed this to very bold, ambitious and farsighted decisions taken by the Prime Minister.

"The prices in the world, I am giving you a two-year reference period between November 2021 and April 2024.

EXCISE 'SCAM' HC reserves order on Kejriwal's bail plea in CBI case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday reserved its order on the bail plea by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the corruption case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam.

The verdict was reserved by Justice Neena Bansal Krishna after hearing the counsel appearing for the AAP leader as well as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The CBI opposed Kejriwal's bail plea in the case, saying he was the "sutradhaar" of the excise scam and if released, he

could influence the witnesses.

"The investigation could not have been concluded without his arrest. Within a month we filed the charge sheet," said CBI's counsel advocate D P Singh. Earlier in the day, the CBI filed its final charge sheet in the trial court against the chief minister and five others, including AAP MLA Durgesh Pathak. Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, contended that the arrest was an "insurance arrest" to ensure that he does not come out of jail.

'Ready to discuss Mekedatu project implementation with TN'

PNS ■ MYSURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said his government was ready to discuss with Tamil Nadu regarding implementation of Mekedatu project across river Cauvery, but the neighbouring state was not coming forward despite it not "causing any problem to them".

If the Centre gives necessary permissions, the State is ready to implement the project, he told reporters here.

Siddaramaiah along with Deputy Chief Minister D K



Shivakumar, several Ministers and officials today offered 'bagina' (traditional thanksgiving) to river Cauvery at Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam in Mandya district. It is customary to offer a 'bagina' to the rivers in the state, when the dams are filled

to their maximum capacity. "We are ready to discuss. Despite Mekedatu not causing any problem to them (Tamil Nadu), they are not ready to discuss. If the central government gives permission we are ready to construct the Mekedatu reservoir," Siddaramaiah said.

He was responding to a question on whether he will hold discussions with Tamil Nadu or the Centre for a "concrete programme" as a lot of water is flowing into the sea, with Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu expected to fill up in a couple of days.

'Child brides in schools common, we can do little,' teachers in Rajasthan village

PNS ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

When Rani and Pinki (names changed) came to school wearing sindoor and colourful bangles, their teachers suspected the obvious but chose to overlook it.

The sisters, aged 15 and 16, were married at their home in Hanuman ji Ka Jhopda village on July 15, two days before the annual wedding season ended, according to some accounts. The sisters, belonging to



Other Backward Classes (OBC), study in classes 9 and 10 in a government school in Bundi's district's Hindoli area. Despite laws against child

marriage, the practice persists in this Rajasthan area. At times, the in-laws' are seen dropping a little bride on a motorbike to school.

Rukmani Bai (name changed), who works as a househelp in Buni city, told PTI that as the elder aunt, she did Rani's "kanyadaan". Rukmani Bai had taken four days' leave from work to attend the weddings of her two nieces and shopped for gifts worth around Rs 10,000 for them.

'Vegan diet linked to lower biological age'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Going vegan for eight weeks was found to be linked to lowering of biological age, according to a study published in the journal BioMed Central (BMC) Medicine.

Researchers looked at the molecular effects of the plant-based diet that abstains from consuming animal food products, such as dairy. The diet largely includes eating fruits and vegetables, along with grains, beans and nuts.

The researchers, including those at Stanford University, US, found that consuming the plant-based diet was related



with changes in how a gene expressed itself, or gene behaviour, without changing the DNA itself. Specifically, they looked at DNA methylation, known to be able to "turn off" or "silence" a gene, thereby not allowing it to express itself.

Higher levels of DNA methylation is associated with a higher biological age. It is one of the epigenetic processes, which affect the behaviour of a gene by altering its environment.

For eight weeks, the team

followed 21 pairs of adult identical twins -- one half of each pair consumed an omnivorous diet, including meat, eggs and dairy, while the other consumed a vegan one. Identical twins share a significant amount of their genetic make-up.

On average, the participants were aged 40 years and had a body mass index (BMI) in the overweight category. About 77 per cent of the group were women. After eight weeks, the researchers observed a 'younger' heart, liver, inflammatory and metabolic system among the participants consuming the vegan diet.

TEESTA WATER SHARING

Bengal govt opposed to any pact between India, Bangladesh: Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday asserted that her government is opposed to any agreement between India and Bangladesh over sharing of the Teesta river water.

Maintaining that she loves the people of Bangladesh, Banerjee said sharing of Teesta water will mean "depriving north Bengal of even drinking water", let alone any provision for irrigation purposes.

Speaking in the assembly on a resolution regarding erosion control and flood mitigation in West Bengal, Banerjee said the Teesta river has very little water during the winter and summer seasons.

Banerjee also alleged that the state government was not invited to discussions between

India and Bangladesh over renewal of the Farakka Treaty, stating that her state is a stakeholder in the issue, as river Ganga flows into the neighbouring nation from West Bengal.

Last month, Banerjee had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, expressing

"strong reservation" over the Centre "excluding" the West Bengal government from discussions with Bangladesh regarding

Teesta water sharing and the Farakka Treaty. Banerjee, in the communication, had also blamed the construction of a "series of hydropower projects in Sikkim, deforestation in upper catchment and impact of climate change" as reasons behind the Teesta river's health suffering.



Coaching culture has become a gas chamber: Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday said the culture of coaching centres has become no less than a "gas chamber" and stressed on the need to examine the huge expenditure incurred on newspaper advertisements by them.

The Rajya Sabha on Monday held a short duration discussion under rule 176 on the deaths of three UPSC aspirants in a coaching centre in Delhi due to water logging.

Allowing the discussion, Dhankhar remarked, "I find that youth demographic dividend of the country has to be nurtured, I further find that coaching has become virtually commerce."

He also pointed out the high sums earned by the coaching centres leading to commercialisation of education.

"Coachings have become a flourishing industry with high returns...every time we read a newspaper front one or two pages are by way of advertisements...Every penny spent on advertisement is coming from the students, every new building is coming from the students," he said.

Comparing the coaching culture to no less than "gas chambers", the Chairman stated, "In a country where

Court sends 5 accused to judicial custody for 14 days

Five accused arrested on Monday in connection with an incident, in which three civil service aspirants drowned at the basement of a coaching centre here, have been sent to judicial custody for 14 days by a court. The five accused -- four co-owners of the coaching centre at Rajinder Nagar and the driver of a car -- were produced in the court, which sent them to judicial custody till August 12. The driver of a sports utility vehicle (SUV) that drove through the street that was flooded by rainwater, causing the water to swell and breach the gates of the three-storey building and inundate the basement, was among the five arrested. His counsel told the court that his client had no intention or knowledge of causing death and sought his immediate release on bail. However, the plea was denied by the court.

opportunities are getting enlarged this silo is turning out to be a problem...they are becoming no less than a gas chamber."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Talk tough, act tougher

Despite PM Modi's stern warning to Pakistan, crossborder terrorism is showing no signs of waning

Despite warnings, increased presence of troops and diplomatic manoeuvres cross-border terrorism remains a grim reality. In what must be a grave concern for all, the Indian Army has reported the loss of its 12th soldier this month, further straining the already tense relations between India and Pakistan. Rifleman Mohit Rathour was killed, and a Major along with three other soldiers were wounded in an unprovoked attack by Pakistanis Border Action Team (BAT) on an Indian forward post during an operation against terrorists attempting to cross the LoC at Kamkari in Machhal sector, north Kashmir. BAT, comprising Pakistani military personnel and terrorists, often provides cover fire for intruders crossing the LoC. In this latest assault, Pakistani personnel exploited poor weather and low visibility to attack the Army post with grenades and gunfire, resulting in a prolonged gunfight that critically wounded two soldiers, one of whom later died. In response to the surge in terror attacks, security in J&K



has been tightened, with the Government deploying two BSF battalions, totalling over 2,000 personnel, to the Union territory. The recent attack comes a day after the India Prime Minister warned Pakistan of dire consequences.

On Kargil Vijay Diwas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a stern warning to Pakistan, asserting that the evil designs of the masters of terror will never succeed and that India will overcome every terror challenge. This strong message came amidst a rise in terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, including a deadly attack on a bus carrying pilgrims. But the PM's warning had little effect on the perpetrators.

The ongoing skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) and heightened insurgency activities in Jammu and Kashmir have contributed significantly to these casualties. While Pakistan's alleged support for militant groups continues to stir trouble, India must chalk out a comprehensive strategy to end such activities and ensure the safety of citizens and secure borders. Indeed, it is a tough task, given the difficult terrain but we must show resolve to take on terrorism and give fitting reply when such an incident takes place. Isolating Pakistan on international forums, especially at the UN, can work provided we present our case discreetly with proof. So far, despite the provocations, India has been steadfast in its efforts to normalise the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The Government's approach includes developmental initiatives, infrastructural investments, and engagement with local communities to foster peace and stability. But clearly, it is not enough and terrorists must be dealt with more vigorous force using high-tech solutions. The martyrdom of the soldiers should not go waste and we should strengthen India's resolve to pursue peace and stability in the region. Cross-border terrorism must stop now and we should have zero tolerance towards infiltrators to protect our borders and the people.

### PICTALK



'Kanwariyas' gather at Har Ki Pauri ghat to collect 'Ganga jal,' in Haridwar

# BRS faces existential crisis as KCR falters

Despite substantial party funds, the BRS now faces an existential crisis, compounded by internal defections and declining support



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi, formerly the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, sets itself apart from other declining political parties. Led by the ambitious K. Chandrababu Naidu, or KCR, the party's national expansion has been marked by setbacks, including its failure to retain power in Telangana. This fate is shared by many political parties and their leaders, as most eventually fade away after holding power at a state or national level. The downside continued as BRS suffered a significant and sudden setback with no Lok Sabha seat in 2024. Despite having around Rs 1,000 crore in party funds, KCR's hopes of national expansion were dashed. Rao renamed his party BRS in 2022, dropping the word Telangana, and KCR opened branches in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Those units are defunct now.

This is a stark example of how the political landscape can change instantly. Having lost power in the 2023 Assembly elections to Congress in the wilderness for the past ten years, the BRS is now facing a significant struggle for survival. The BRS has no representation in the Lok Sabha for the first time after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The party, which dominated Telangana politics for about two decades and ruled the state for almost a decade, has now been voted out of the Lok Sabha in 2024. Just last week, BRS received a further setback. BRS MLA A. Gandhi defected to the ruling Congress, which reflects the party's decline.

The Congress now boasts 75 M.L.A.s, including 65 from Congress, one from C.P.I., and nine former BRS. Members. In 2001, KCR made a historic decision to resign from the Telugu Desam Party (T.D.P.). He believed that creating a separate state was the only way to end the discrimination in the Telangana region, sparking a demand for separation. TRS was formed to achieve separate Telangana, a seemingly impossible regional objective. He was 47 at the time. T.D.P. was the second-largest party in the National Democratic Alliance. In



2004, the TRS. Joined forces with the Congress and secured five Lok Sabha seats. Following this, KCR was appointed the Union Minister for Labour and Employment in the United Progressive Alliance (U.P.A.) government, headed by U.P.A. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. He continued his struggle inside and outside Parliament. In 2009, he initiated a hunger strike to demand the introduction of the Telangana Bill in Parliament.

After a few days, the Centre conceded to his demands. Shortly before the 2014 election, the U.P.A. government announced the formation of Telangana state. The TRS, performed well in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, winning 11 seats, its highest tally. However, it lost power to the Congress in the 2023 Assembly polls. On December 9, 2022, TRS, was officially renamed BRS., indicating KCR's intention to pursue national ambitions.

Now that the BRS, has failed to win even a single Lok Sabha seat in the state and its vote share has dropped to only 16.69%, the party faces a genuine existential crisis. The BRS, lost power last year, with just 35 seats in the Assembly.



UNLIKE CHANDRABABU, WHO HAD THE BACKING OF THE KAMMA COMMUNITY, KCR LACKS SUPPORT FROM ANY CASTE GROUP EXCEPT VELAMAS, A SMALL GROUP

The BRS chief struggled to keep the party together during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It could not implement plans to field candidates in other states. KCR's attempt to establish a dynastic rule by appointing his son, nephew, and daughter to significant positions has been a point of contention. It was seen as a deviation from the party's founding principles and a sign of increasing autocracy. Secondly, like many dictatorial leaders, Rao failed to develop a second tier of leadership, which is an asset for any political leader except promoting his family. Thirdly, KCR, who rose to power through agitation and protests, steadily withdrew from public spaces. His inaccessibility and his aversion to media have significantly contributed to the disconnect between him and his leaders and workers. Rao surrounded himself with people who lacked substance and only praised him.

As a result, he could not see the reality and fell into the trap of his sycophants, who presented false facts. Unlike Chandrababu, who had the backing of the Kamma community, KCR lacks support from any caste group except Velamas, a small group.

This political isolation is a significant factor in his decline. Fifthly, there were allegations of corruption. His daughter Kavitha is now in jail for alleged corruption in the Delhi liquor case. Sixthly, instead of concentrating on the state, KCR began dabbling in national politics and went around the Opposition-ruled states with a naked ambition of becoming Prime Minister. But he failed.

This wavering resulted in BRS. Unable to form the government in the 2024 polls. Seventhly, he thought he and his party were unbeatable and would continue to rule Telangana indefinitely like many other tinpot dictators. Eighthly, BRS. Faced defections.

However, he also induced defections when he was the chief minister. KCR has now joined a group of once-influential leaders such as Sharad Pawar, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Edapadi Palaniswamy, Deve Gowda, Mayawati, Uddhav Thackeray, and others who have previously held power but are now struggling. In politics, it's like playing a game of snakes and ladders.

(The author is a popular columnist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DO NOT SUBVERT NITI AAYOG

Madam — Boycotting NITI Aayog Meetings Undermines Democratic Processes Boycotting NITI Aayog meetings by some political parties contradicts the principles of cooperative federalism. With parties from the INDIA bloc attending, it was expected that others, including the Congress party with its significant representation in Lok Sabha, would also participate.

The central government's allocation of more funds to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, seen as politically motivated, should be addressed through dialogue rather than boycotts. Cooperation between the government and opposition is essential for national interest. Opposition parties staying away from NITI Aayog meetings miss the opportunity to voice their concerns and influence critical decisions.

Boycotts serve as ineffective protests, harming democratic processes and national unity. Continuous stalling of official processes by the opposition, since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure began, undermines the democratic framework. For citizens, the concern is about the smooth functioning of democracy. The opposition's confrontational approach hinders cooperative federalism, affecting national interest.

Addressing grievances through participation, not boycotts, ensures a healthier democratic process. Same Old Story Educated middle-class citizens often await the budget with anticipation, only to feel disappointed afterward. The recent budget, though promising in terms of infrastructure, employment, and other areas, fell short of transformational changes, particularly in taxation. The Finance Minister missed an opportunity to significantly alter the taxation structure, leading to disillusionment among the middle class. This cycle of expectation and disappointment continues, echoing Indiana Jones' sentiment: "Same old, same old."

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

### Ensure safety norms at coaching centres



The coaching institutions at Old Rajinder Nagar in Delhi are endangering the lives of UPSC aspirants, who face numerous hardships to pursue their dreams of becoming IAS officers. The recent tragic incident where three aspirants drowned in a basement flooded with rainwater underscores the dire state of India's coaching centers. Previously, such stories were common from Kota, but now Old Rajinder Nagar has also gained

notoriety for exploiting students for profit. This area, known as the UPSC hub, is filled with overpriced, poorly maintained apartments rented out to students from low and middle-income families who struggle to afford them. The Delhi government must take immediate action against negligent property owners and coaching institutions, enforcing strict standards to ensure the safety of the aspirants. These standards should include regulations on the number of students per batch, proper ventilation, parking facilities, and reasonable rent for student accommodations.

Additionally, a toll-free number should be established for students to report grievances related to their living and studying conditions directly to the police, ensuring their safety and empowering them against exploitation. These measures are crucial to protect the lives and aspirations of future officers and uphold societal responsibility.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

### CELEBRATING PARENTS DAY

Madam — Parenting responsibilities are a testament to the unconditional love, support, and sacrifices parents make throughout their lives. This day emphasizes the importance of family values, fostering stronger relationships, and promoting gratitude and respect towards parents. Parents guide us with unwavering love and support, enduring countless silent and selfless sacrifices to ensure our happiness.

Despite the challenges of raising children, including teenage tantrums and door slams, their disciplined approach aims to provide us with a better life. As we transition into adulthood, parents continue to support us, often silently, checking on us and ensuring our well-being. Their selfless gestures speak volumes, even if they are not always expressive. It is time to show our appreciation and thankfulness for the support and love parents provide. The young generation must understand that one day they would be parents too!

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

### NAIL THE MYTH

Madam — Scientific facts have broken several myths and misconceptions. Will it put a break to political rhetoric in India which advocates population control based on false assumptions that the minority population is growing at a faster pace than its majority counterparts. Now that the pandemic period is over, the focus must be to release the 2021 census based on latest survey conducted so as to ascertain a clear picture of the socio economic scenario rather than targeting any particular community or area. It is absurd to predict about the future only on narrow rhetoric and political compulsions rather than using the demographic dividend for the progress of the country. So, no single community or religion be held responsible for rising population since it can falsify facts. If the Minority phobia is real or a mechanism to gain political dividends is a million dollar question.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

# Monsoon mayhem: The pothole predicament

Despite millions being spent annually by road authorities to ensure safe travel, the recurrence of potholes raises serious questions about where the money is going

The arrival of the monsoon season brings relief from the scorching heat, but it also brings along a familiar foe: "Potholes". This issue constantly frustrates commuters and raises doubts about the effectiveness of road maintenance. Every year, the Road Authorities spend millions of rupees to ensure a smooth and secure journey for travellers. However, these hazardous holes continue to deface the roads. All that money—where is it going? The other day I had to take a chance and walk the distance between the Amar Business Zone and the Hinjewadi Bus Stop. The rain was so intense that vehicles and cabs were unavailable, so I had to face it on my own. I prayed while I walked, hoping that I wouldn't hurt myself. The flooded streets and obscured footpaths turned the walk into a risky journey, where every step held the risk of either finding solid ground or plunging into an unseen pothole.



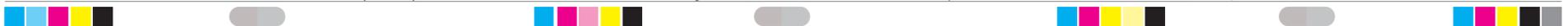
they are on foot or in their vehicles. The unpredictable nature of the road, obscured by the coverings of water, is risky. Potholes, which are frequently hidden beneath murky pools, become silent causes of numerous accidents, damaged vehicles, and occasionally fatal injuries. This issue demands urgent attention and a lasting resolution.

The persistence of potholes is a glaring testament to a systemic failure. Despite the annual financial outlay, the roads remain in a perpetual state of disrepair. One can't help but wonder about the quality of materials used, the thoroughness of the repair work, and the accountability

of the authorities involved. Are these millions being funneled into quick fixes rather than sustainable solutions? Moreover, the economic implications of this issue cannot be ignored. In an inflated world, where every rupee counts, the costs incurred from vehicle repairs, medical bills, and lost productivity due to traffic caused by bad roads are substantial. It's an added burden on the average citizen, who is already grappling with the rising cost of living.

So, what can be done to address this perennial problem? First and foremost, there needs to be a shift from reactive to proactive maintenance. Regular inspections, especially before the monsoon

(The author is a freelance writer and a motivator; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN THE HIDDEN ENEMY WITHIN

By keeping their ego in check, we can create a positive and productive work environment that will foster innovation and sustained success



SAKSHI SETHI

Today, many of us insist the main impediment to a full, successful life is the outside world. The most common enemy that lies within an individual is the three-letter word 'Ego'. At the beginning of the career, it impedes learning and the cultivation of talent. With the progress, it blinds to their faults and sows future problems and in failure, it magnifies each blow and makes the recovery more difficult. The ego, which is often defined as a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance, is often viewed as a necessary trait for leaders. However, when ego inflates to unhealthy levels, it becomes a significant obstacle to effective leadership thereby stifling personal growth, distorting decision-making, eroding trust and ultimately jeopardizing the success of an organization. Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective leadership. Great leaders understand the importance of harnessing the collective intelligence and diverse perspectives of their team.

Apart from collaboration, Constructive feedback is also essential for personal and professional growth. Leaders who embrace feedback can adapt, learn and improve continuously. While a healthy level of self-confidence is essential for leadership, an inflated ego can have detrimental effects. Leaders with big egos often believe their ideas are superior, which can prevent them from valuing the input of their team. This attitude can stifle creativity and innovation, as team members may feel undervalued and less motivated to share their ideas.

Moreover, such leaders may resist feedback, seeing it as a threat to their authority or self-image. This resistance can prevent them from growing and improving, leading to repeated mistakes and missed development opportunities. Above all, ego can erode trust within a team. If team members feel that their leader is self-serving, they may become disengaged and less loyal to the organization. For a high-functioning team, it is the trust, and clear accountability mechanisms, that can allow leaders to build strong relationships with their team members thereby fostering a positive work environment where individuals feel safe, valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts.



The absence of the said factors can lead to a toxic work environment as leaders with large egos may struggle to admit when they are wrong which will ultimately prevent learning from mistakes and perpetuate problems. For an organisation to flourish, it becomes vital to acknowledge the mistakes continuously for continuous improvement and to build a culture of honesty and transparency. There is no denying the fact that leaders with inflated egos may prioritize short-term gains and personal accolades over long-term success and sustainability. This can lead to decisions that provide immediate benefits but can harm the organization in the long run. The only way to mitigate this is by encouraging leaders to engage in self-reflection and seek feedback; creating an environment where open communication is valued and establishing clear accountability mechanisms that can help them become more aware of their ego and its impact.

By addressing and learning from their failures, leaders can drive continuous improvement and inspire their teams to do the same. Moreover, leaders who practice humility and openness, encourage a culture of collaboration, thereby fostering an environment where ideas can flourish and the best solutions can emerge. Remember, ego in the workplace leadership can be a double-edged sword. By promoting self-awareness, fostering a culture of humility, encouraging open communication, setting clear accountability, and leading by example, organizations can mitigate the negative impacts of ego and cultivate more effective and empathetic leaders. In an era that glorifies social media and other forms of shameless self-promotion, the battle against ego must be fought on many fronts. Great leaders recognize the importance of humility, empathy and a commitment to the collective goals of their team and organization.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

# Equitable revenue sharing is must for fiscal federalism



A S MITTAL

Punjab's declining GDP reflect the broader issue of uneven development. Addressing these disparities is essential for promoting holistic growth and preventing social distress across states



The current state of India's fiscal federalism is significantly detrimental to the states. The system needs to be reoriented to spur a competitive environment across the country, not just within some individual states. The recent union budget was expected to set a comprehensive five-year economic agenda for the country's wholesome growth. In Budget 2024-25, unique packages were granted to Bihar of Rs 26,000 crore and Rs 15,000 crore to Andhra Pradesh in exchange for political support, resulting in an even wider fiscal imbalance. It's essential to ask why a similar approach has yet to be taken to address the economic growth of other financially distressed states. For example, Punjab, as a landlocked border state facing locational disadvantages, requires a fair platform to compete on an equal footing.

Once a prosperous and progressive state, Punjab grapples with a significant problem of unchecked unemployment stemming from distressed farming and an imbalanced industrial base dominated by 99.7% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Punjab accounts for only 5% of industrial units in the country, with a 3.6% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the industrial sector over the last five fiscal years, ranking 12th. In contrast, the neighbouring state of Haryana has demonstrated higher growth rates at 5.9%. Punjab ranked first in GDP in 1981 and fourth in 2004. In the fiscal year 2023-24, with a GDP of Rs 6.98 lakh crore, the state was ranked 16th.

In comparison, the neighbouring state of Haryana's GDP stands at Rs 11.20 lakh crore, ranked 12th. Interestingly, Bihar, once part of the economically challenged states known as 'BIMARU' (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), is now a fast-growing economy with a growth rate of 10.6% and a GDP of Rs 8.59 crore in FY 2023-24.

Allowing lopsided economic development in a sensitive state like Punjab will have serious repercussions. Failing to ensure



ONCE A PROSPEROUS AND PROGRESSIVE STATE, PUNJAB GRAPPLES WITH A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM OF UNCHECKED UNEMPLOYMENT STEMMING FROM DISTRESSED FARMING AND AN IMBALANCED INDUSTRIAL BASE DOMINATED BY 99.7% OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE

holistic development will ultimately lead to accusations of inefficiency in managing human resources. Unemployment exacerbates various issues in distressed areas, including mental health, crime, and drug abuse. Substantial evidence links drug abuse and law and order problems directly to unemployment. These issues must be addressed assertively to ensure the overall progress and well-being of Punjab.

Economic distress in Punjab has led to unemployment and a significant migration of its human resources to Canada, which has created a breeding ground for radicals and anti-Indian Khalistani extremist activities on Canadian soil; it is a globalised challenge that must be addressed promptly. Secondly, the Pakistan border has been adversely affecting Punjab's economy. This, along with illegal arms supply and drug-related terrorism, has severely impacted Punjab's social fabric and law and order. The central government has not adequately compensated Punjab for its unique challenges compared to other states. The revenue-sharing disparity is a pressing issue causing significant, alarming socio-economic distress in Punjab. The state receives only 51 paise for every rupee it contributes to the Centre's tax pool, compared to states like Bihar, which receive Rs 1.20. This highlights the urgent need for equitable revenue sharing to ensure Punjab's socio-economic well-being.

Currently, Punjab's contribution to the country's tax kitty stands at approximately 3%, and it only receives 1.8% of the divisible pool of taxes allocated by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. It

is concerning that Punjab only received 1.8% of the Rs 8,16,649 crore distributed by the Centre to the states during 2022-23. However, the large areas and population figures of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar provide them with additional leverage from the central tax pool. Uttar Pradesh received the highest share at 18% (Rs 1,46,525 crore), and Bihar received the second-highest share of 10%.

This highlights why Punjab and other states argue they must receive a fair share of funds despite contributing more to the exchequer. During the fiscal year 2022-23, Punjab contributed Rs 32,800 crore to the central taxes fund, which included CGST, income tax, corporation tax, wealth tax, union excise duty, customs, and service tax. However, in return, the state only received Rs 14,756 crore. Punjab has raised the issue with the Sixteenth Finance Commission, which believes it deserves a fair share of central tax. The Finance Commission recommends the distribution of tax revenues between the Centre and States.

Despite recommendations to allocate 42% and 41% of net tax revenue to States, their share of gross tax revenue fell to 35% in 2015-16 and 30% by 2023-24. For 2024-25, the Gross Tax Revenue (GTR) is projected to grow at 11.7%, raising concerns about adequacy in meeting state fiscal needs. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act has had significant and varying consequences on fiscal federalism.

It has given the Centre more extensive taxation powers, altering the budget landscape and transforming budgetary federal-

ism in the country. While GST has led to revenue growth, it also restricts the financial autonomy of the states. In a recent memorandum submitted to the 16th finance commission chairman, Punjab highlighted the loss on account of GST introduction, indicating that the state would have earned more than Rs 45,000 crore with VAT versus the budgeted GST of Rs 25,750 crore in FY 2024-25.

This gap is expected to increase to Rs 95,000 crore with VAT and GST at Rs 47,000 crore by 2030-31.

The Way Forward: In the current fiscal federalism, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive and inclusive approach to budgetary prudence, local employment generation, and social harmony, regardless of demographic and political differences. Devolve more fiscal powers to states, enhancing their flexibility in revenue generation, expenditure planning, and borrowing limits. Reforms are necessary to address imbalances in the revenue transfer system.

A Finance Act amendment is still pending to establish fairness and accountability in managing the resource imbalances between the Centre and the States, which has led to growing regional tensions. Ultimately, fair, competitive, and effective fiscal federalism is essential to ensure that resources result in improved services and infrastructure for citizens.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

# India's population: A liability or an untapped asset with immense potential

As the world population nears 8 billion, it becomes imperative to reassess the impact of population dynamics on sustainability and progress.

Much is being written and spoken about India's teeming human population. Huge concerns are being raised on the spectre of the burgeoning population becoming a severe liability for national survival. India's population was 1.44 billion in January 2024 and could be a shade above this at present. This population has been growing at the rate of nearly 1 per cent per year during the last decade. People say that the country cannot progress economically and become a developed nation unless population growth is checked. Or, in other words, a big population is a most severe dampener to national growth and development.

How far is this true and is there historical precedence to cor-



ATUL SEHGAL

roborate this concern? The subject of the population needs to be analysed from a larger, global perspective. The population of the world is close to 8 billion today and has trebled over the last 100 years. The core issue regarding population being considered an asset or liability pertains to the current paradigms of tapping and using global material resources and the huge disparity in ownership of those resources. Humans do not and cannot

produce babies at will like goods are produced in a factory. Humans can only cohabit and copulate, like lower animals. This is borne out by the fact of decreasing fertility in many parts of the world despite the professed advancements of modern medical science. Scientists and medical professionals can help with the process of fertilisation of reproductive cells but cannot achieve conception at will. It stands to reason that babies are produced in the factory of nature by the subtle action of a supernatural, omnipotent entity. You can call him Creator or God who is also the controller and regulator of the world and the larger universe. This is a prime scientific fact if science is correctly under-

stood as the systematic and logical treatment of any subject. Hence population growth or decline is a subject more of God than of man. If population growth is high and humans fear that it will make human life unsustainable, their Creator knows better. He makes humans learn and realise their mistakes through natural disasters like climate change, wildfires, cyclones, tornados, earthquakes, floods and epidemics. These serve to balance out the excessive population from time to time. It has to be admitted that modern science has done a lot to conquer life-threatening illnesses and increase the longevity of humans. Average life expectancy globally today is almost double compared to what it was 200



years ago. But this increase has come at the cost of the environment. We have used chemical fertilizers for crops abundantly which have undermined the quality and fertility of soil. We have used chemical, reductionist formulation-based drugs and vaccines aplenty whose serious, sneaky side effects are slowly coming into evidence. But we cannot go on doing it ad infinitum without seriously prejudicing sustainability. Today, humans

are ravaging and pillaging global material resources like never before. They are enhancing human comforts at the cost of the environment. Life expectancy is rising at the cost of life quality. Infectious diseases are being combated through strong chemical formulation drugs, while insidiously inviting chronic diseases and newer ailments unheard of before. Humans are unwittingly proceeding towards a situation of unsustainable existence. Let us go back to the prime metaphysical truths of existence. God regulates all life. He is the source of all knowledge which is enshrined in the divinely revealed scriptures called Vedas.

These scriptures are the repository of all knowledge including science and technology.

Vedic hymns declare that each human couple should produce 10 children. The same Vedas exhort humans to live up to at least 100 years, healthy and fit. In the above backdrop, the human population is an asset, not a liability. We should know how to utilise the manpower productively and fruitfully. If we follow the modes of agriculture and food production as per Vedic sciences, using technologies based on such sciences, we will never have to compromise the quality or fertility of the soil and can produce bumper crops season after season.

We can achieve this through strictly organic farming and protect our environment and ecosphere. Following assiduously the principles of Ayurveda, we can ensure

sound health and high longevity without recourse to synthetic chemical drugs. All we have to do is change our systems and paradigms of living to reduce the stark wealth disparity witnessed today where 20 per cent of the global population holds 80 per cent of global resources. Our instinct of self-aggrandisement, driven by capitalism based on the banal baser element of greed has led to the present situation. Population needs to be considered an asset and it will be regarded as an asset if we change our living paradigms to align with nature and embrace environment-friendly technologies expounded in our ancient Vedic scriptures.

(The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS



HP unveils its most powerful AI PCs

HP unveiled its most powerful PCs yet, which are designed and engineered around the Snapdragon X Elite processor 5 and Neural Processing Unit (NPU) 6, on Monday. The newly launched laptops include the HP EliteBook Ultra and HP OmniBook X, being HP's first Copilot+ PCs, run on NPU 6 that is capable of 45 trillion operations per second (TOPS) to run language models and generative AI locally on the device, said a press statement issued by the company. "We are at the beginning of a new era of AI PCs that will redefine what a personal computer can do. We believe this innovation is all set to unlock new possibilities and transform the future of work. Our next-gen AI PCs are designed to enhance work efficiency, boost security, and offer personalized experiences for hybrid workstyles. We are excited to see how these innovative devices will drive India's digital transformation and economic growth," said Ipsita Dasgupta, senior vice president and managing director, HP India.



Airlines asked to exercise moderation in pricing of tickets

Airlines have been advised to self-regulate as well as sensitised to exercise moderation in pricing of air tickets, the civil aviation ministry told the Rajya Sabha on Monday. There have been persisting concerns over high airfares, especially during peak and festival seasons. Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said the ministry holds consultation with airlines and the representatives are advised to self-regulate and keep passengers' interest in mind while fixing the airfares. "Airlines have also been sensitised to exercise moderation in pricing and to keep passengers' interest in mind. The airlines have committed to ensure that airfares do not surge during events such as natural disasters, calamities, etc.," he said in a written reply. Under current regulations, airfares are neither established nor regulated by the government after the repeal of the Air Corporation Act in March 1994. "Globally, most countries have deregulated their aviation sector, i.e., removing government-imposed entry and price restrictions on airlines. Deregulation has led to increased competition between airline carriers, leading to decrease in airfare."



India okays export of 1,000 tn of non-basmati rice to Namibia

India on Monday allowed the export of 1,000 tonnes of non-basmati white rice to Namibia through National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL). Though exports of non-basmati white rice have been banned since July 20, 2023, to boost domestic supply, exports are allowed on the basis of permission granted by the government to certain countries to meet their food security needs on request. "Export of 1,000 MTs of non-basmati white rice to Namibia is permitted through NCEL," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said. India's export of non-basmati white rice was USD 122.7 million in April-May and USD 852.53 million in the entire 2023-24. The country has earlier also allowed such exports to countries like Nepal, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea, Malaysia, Philippines, and Seychelles. NCEL is a multi-state cooperative society. It is jointly promoted by some of the leading cooperative societies in the country, namely Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), popularly known as AMUL, Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO), Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd (KRIBHCO), and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED).



Negotiating teams to restart India FTA talks as soon as possible: UK

PNS ■ LONDON

The process of getting negotiating teams back in the room will kick-start soon to deliver a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, the UK's newly elected Labour government announced on Monday as it set out its trading priorities.

Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds spelled out his department's approach to international trade deals, which he said will put economic growth at the heart of the negotiations to achieve high-quality pacts that give British businesses access to international markets and boost jobs.

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) said it also plans to publish a trade strategy which aligns with the government's industrial strategy.

enhances economic security and supports net zero ambitions. "Boosting trade abroad is essential to deliver a strong

**"Boosting trade abroad is essential to deliver a strong economy at home. That's why I've wasted no time taking stock of progress and getting ready to press on with trade talks with our international partners," said Reynolds**

economy at home. That's why I've wasted no time taking stock of progress and getting ready to press on with trade talks with our international partners," said Reynolds. "From the Gulf to India, our trade programme is ambitious and plays to the UK's strengths to give British businesses access to some of the most exciting economies in the world.

Our teams will be entering negotiating rooms as soon as possible, laser-focused on creating new opportunities for UK firms so they can support jobs

across the country and deliver the growth we desperately need," he said.

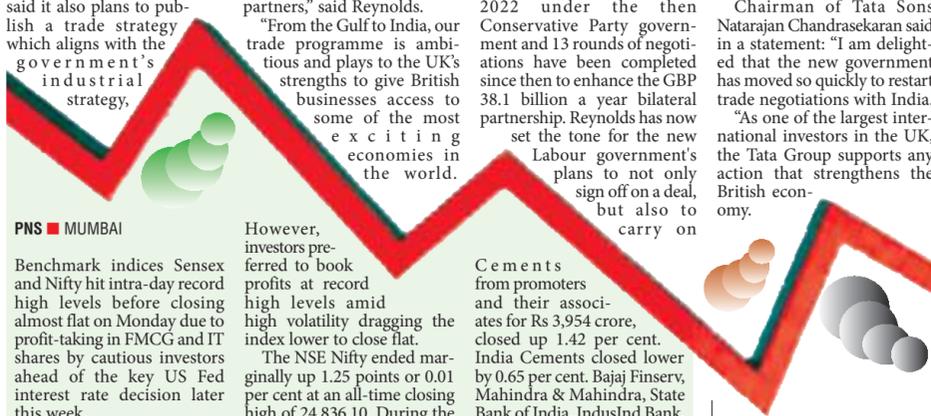
India and the UK began negotiating an FTA in January 2022 under the then Conservative Party government and 13 rounds of negotiations have been completed since then to enhance the GBP 38.1 billion a year bilateral partnership. Reynolds has now set the tone for the new Labour government's plans to not only sign off on a deal, but also to carry on

the process from where it was left off in the fourteenth round of discussions amid general elections in both countries.

"India, with which the UK is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement and Bilateral Investment Treaty, is projected to be the world's third largest economy by 2027. A trade deal would give UK businesses better access to its burgeoning market of middle-class consumers, projected to grow to over a quarter of a billion consumers by 2050," notes the DBT.

The announcement follows Foreign Secretary David Lammy's visit to India last week to discuss economic and global security.

Chairman of Tata Sons Natarajan Chandrasekaran said in a statement: "I am delighted that the new government has moved so quickly to restart trade negotiations with India. As one of the largest international investors in the UK, the Tata Group supports any action that strengthens the British economy."



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit intra-day record high levels before closing almost flat on Monday due to profit-taking in FMCG and IT shares by cautious investors ahead of the key US Fed interest rate decision later this week.

However, investors preferred to book profits at record high levels amid high volatility dragging the index lower to close flat.

The NSE Nifty ended marginally up 1.25 points or 0.01 per cent at an all-time closing high of 24,836.10. During the

Cements from promoters and their associates for Rs 3,954 crore, closed up 1.42 per cent. India Cements closed lower by 0.65 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank,

Sensex, Nifty retreat from record highs

Close flat ahead of key US Fed rate decision

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 23.12 points or 0.03 per cent at 81,355.84 -- its all-time closing high -- with 16 of its components advancing and 14 ending lower. The index opened higher and jumped 575.71 points or 0.70 per cent to hit a new intra-day record peak of 81,908.43 in late morning deals following a decline in US bond yields.

day, it surged 164.9 points or 0.66 per cent to hit a fresh lifetime peak of 24,999.75. From the Sensex pack, Larsen & Toubro rose the most by 2.77 per cent after it announced bagging new large orders worth Rs 2,500 crore to Rs 5,000 crore.

UltraTech Cement, which announced the acquisition of 32.72 per cent stake in India

Reliance Industries and Sun Pharma were among the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Titan Ltd fell the most 2.38 per cent. Bharti Airtel (2.22 per cent), ITC (1.33 per cent), Kotak Mahindra Bank (1.04 per cent) and HDFC Bank (0.68 per cent) were among the major losers, dragging the key indices from record highs.

Hindustan Zinc will explore avenues of zinc applications in batteries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) on Monday said it is committed to being future-ready and will explore new avenues of zinc applications in batteries.

The company will explore avenues of zinc applications in

batteries alongside its focus on volume enhancement, reduction in cost of production and creating value for stakeholders. Hindustan Zinc Chairperson Priya Agarwal Hebbbar said in a statement. Hindustan Zinc Ltd in its efforts to support the ongoing global energy transition and thrust on emerging

clean tech, will explore new avenues of zinc applications in batteries, the statement added.

"With the world undergoing an energy transition, developing climate-friendly technologies will be highly mineral intensive, and the metals and mining sector will have a big role to play to support this transition."

Gold tumbles Rs 950; silver nosedives Rs 4,500

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices tumbled by Rs 950 to Rs 71,050 per 10 grams in the local market here on Monday due to weak demand from jewellers.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 72,000 per 10



makers and industrial units. This marks the biggest single-day fall in silver prices in 2024. It ended at Rs 89,000 per kg in the previous session.

Traders said reduced demand from jewellers as well as retail buyers led to the fall in gold prices. "Last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget announced

a customs duty cut from 15 per cent to 6 per cent, weighing on the domestic front.

"Post the cut in import duty, gold premiums in India jumped to their highest level in a decade," Manav Modi, Senior Analyst of Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Comm min for anti-dumping duty on Chinese glass mirror

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry's arm DGTR has recommended imposition of US\$ 234 per tonne anti-dumping duty on Chinese unframed glass mirror for five years to protect the domestic industry from cheap imports.

The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has recommended the duty after conducting an investigation into dumping of the product from the neighbouring country.

Unframed glass mirror is mainly used in architecture and furniture manufacturing. It is also used as a decorative and functional material for the decoration of interiors in the construction business.

"The authority recommends imposition of the anti-dumping duty on the imports of subject goods originating in or exported from the subject countries



(China), for a period of five years," the DGTR said in a notification.

A representation was received from the All India Mirror Manufacturers Association stating that the increase in dumped imports of these goods from China is hurting the domestic industry.

The directorate in its findings has concluded that the domestic industry has suffered due to the dumped imports.

While DGTR, which is under the commerce ministry, recommends the duty, the finance ministry takes the final decision to impose the same within three months of the recommendation.

Countries initiate anti-dumping probes to check if their domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in below-cost imports. As a countermeasure, they impose duties within the multilateral regime of the WTO (World Trade Organization).

Anti-dumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry.

ACC Q1 net profit down 22.5% to Rs 361 cr



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cement maker ACC Ltd on Monday reported a decline of 22.46 per cent in its net profit to Rs 361.40 crore in the first quarter ended on June 2024.

The company had posted a profit of Rs 466.14 crore in the April-June quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from ACC, now a part of Adani Cement.

Its revenue from operations was marginally lower at Rs 5,154.89 crore during the quarter under review.

It was Rs 5,201.11 crore in the corresponding period a year ago.

Indian economy likely to record over 7% growth: NCAER

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy could grow higher than 7 per cent and possibly closer to 7.5 per cent in the current fiscal on the back of normal monsoon and receded electoral uncertainty, economic think tank NCAER has said.

In its July 2024 issue of Monthly Economic Review (MER), NCAER said real GDP



Gupta said the Union Budget 2024-25 lived up to the expectations of unwavering commitment to fiscal consolidation, prudence, and quality.

The Budget has kept the fiscal deficit target at 4.9 per cent of GDP and capital expenditure at 2.4 per cent of GDP during 2024-25.

According to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the short-term growth strategy is based on six key areas -- private sector capital formation,

green transition financing, MSME development, agricultural transformation, Education and skill development, and enhanced state capacity. The NCAER-NSE business confidence index (BCI) increased to 149.8 in the first quarter (Q1) of FY25, up from 138.2 in the fourth quarter (Q4) of FY24, indicating an improvement in business sentiments.

RBI plans web series to showcase 90-year journey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is planning a five-episode web series to provide an in-depth presentation about its functions and its 90-year journey.

The web series is proposed to be for nearly three hours, with each episode having a duration of 25-30 minutes, according to an official document.

The RBI, which was set up

in 1935, completed 90 years in April this year.

"The bank is desirous of creating a web series of five episodes of approximately 25-30 minutes each, which can be aired on national TV channels and/or OTT platforms, commemorating 90 years journey of RBI," it said in the document inviting bids through e-tendering for Production and distribution of



Web Series Commemorating 90 years of RBI.

The five-episode series will serve as a valuable resource for enhancing public understanding of the central bank's vital role in the economy, fostering greater engagement, and building trust and confidence in its operations and policies, it said.

For the web series, the RBI has invited proposals from interested production houses, TV channels, and OTT platforms.

The primary objective of this project is to create a comprehensive and engaging series that provides an in-depth exploration of the RBI functions and operations over its 90-year journey.

This series should highlight the central bank's vision and mission, showcase its significant achievements and initiatives, and provide insights into ongoing developments and collaborations, the document said.

Sebi launches chatbot 'SEVA' for investors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday launched a chatbot, 'SEVA', an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based conversation platform, for investors.

The Beta version of chatbot SEVA (Sebi's Virtual Assistant) includes features like citations for generated responses, speech-to-text and text-to-speech functionality for accessibility, and

follow-up questions, among others, the regulator said in



enabled to answer questions relating to general information on the securities market, latest master circulars, grievance redressal process, etc.

Based on the feedback received from the users, additional areas will be added to the chatbot. Sebi said that the beta version of the chatbot is available on SEBI's investor website and SAARTHI mobile app (both Android and iOS)

a statement. The chatbot is presently

# what's brewing?

## RANBIR KAPOOR RECALLS FEELING CONNECTED TO 'SANATANA DHARAM'

Ranbir Kapoor is currently occupied with his role in Nitesh Tiwari's highly anticipated movie *Ramayana*, in which he plays Lord Ram opposite Sai Pallavi, who portrays Goddess Sita. He has recently discussed his faith and his connection with the divine. During a conversation with Nikhil Kamath on his *People by WTF* podcast, Ranbir expressed his strong faith in Sanatana Dharam.

Ranbir said, "When I grew up, my father (Rishi Kapoor) was extremely pious. He used to do two pujas a day. We celebrate every festival; we have *Navratras* at home... so God was a very big thing for me growing up. I think it gave a lot of peace to my father; my mother (Neetu Kapoor) was less religious... so, I have a good feeling about God... even when I'm in trouble, when I've been like, my mother's fighting with me and I don't have another conflicted conversation with her, where she's going to cry and stuff like that. Or I want a film to succeed, or I want to buy something, I've never asked for that. So my relationship with God is full of gratitude. And you know, I feel very, very grateful for the place I'm in and for everything that I have. And so that kind of sums up my relationship with God."

He added, "I started believing a lot in the Sanatana Dharam. I think I started reading a lot about it in the last couple of years. I went quite deep into what it is and what the effects

are. You believe it or not, if you believe it, it is like hope. It is like giving yourself a good system and good values... I think there is something good about it. I feel connected."

Meanwhile, the *Barfi* star's perspective on life has been altered since the birth of his daughter, Raha Kapoor. During an interview, he revealed that he did not have a fear of death until Raha was born and believed he would pass away at the age of 71.

"Now that I am a father and have a daughter, that's a game-changer. That is making me question detachment and indifference because I feel like I was just born. I was reborn. I feel that the 40 years of my life that I have lived were another life. I am feeling new emotions, new thoughts... I never feared death," said the *Brahmastra* actor. He continued, "I always thought that I would die at the age of 71 because I had this obsession with the number 8. I don't know why I said that. But now I feel like that's too soon. That's another 30 years. So, all that has changed because of Raha."

## RANBIR KAPOOR RECALLS DAD'S STRICT LESSONS ON SAVINGS

Ranbir Kapoor began his career in Bollywood as a helper to Sanjay Leela Bhansali in the movie *Black*, then made his first appearance as an actor in the director's 2007 project *Saawariya*. During a conversation, Ranbir reminisced about his time in college in Mumbai and New York before entering the film industry, mentioning how his father, the late actor Rishi Kapoor, restricted his spending in New York to teach him the importance of money. After completing his studies in Mumbai and New York, Rishi Kapoor opted to send him back to New York as he believed Ranbir was too young to pursue an acting career. This was when the *Animal* star had enrolled at the renowned Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute to study method acting. While he was at the film institute, his father constrained his spending to the point where he could only afford two meals daily. Sharing the same, he said "By then, I was very eager to come back and start work. I felt like I had gotten the experience of America. It was not really the college experience, but the exposure of talking to people from all over the world and living alone. My father had kept me on a very tight budget. Of course, when I say tight budget, I am still coming from a privileged background, but it was enough to have a McDonald's dollar menu meal for lunch and dinner. So, it was like \$2 for lunch and \$2 for dinner. It was as strict as that."



## Lady Gaga introduces her fiancé, Michael Polansky

Singer-actress Lady Gaga, who is ready to bring Arkham Asylum and Gotham City down along with Joaquin Phoenix in *Joker: Folie à Deux*, is now engaged.

The 38-year-old singer and her longtime boyfriend, entrepreneur and tech investor Michael Polansky, are set to tie the knot. She revealed the news to French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal at the 2024 Paris Olympics, as per reports. In a TikTok post by Attal on July 28, Gaga can be heard introducing Polansky as "my fiance" as they watched a swimming event together.

According to reports, Gaga and Polansky were first romantically linked in 2020 when they were photographed kissing at a New Year's Eve party in Las Vegas. Just weeks later, they went public with their relationship during a



PDA-filled weekend in Miami for *Super Bowl 2020*. At the time, Lady Gaga shared a photo on Instagram of the pair cuddled up on a yacht, writing, "We had so much fun in Miami." A source close to the 13-time Grammy Award winner later told that the couple quarantined together during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The insider said they hunkered down at Gaga's house and grew close. In January 2021, when Gaga was invited to perform at US President Joe Biden's inauguration, Polansky was by her side. A source said at the time that she was "happy" with Polansky and "grateful" to have his support. The insider also said Gaga introduced him to people backstage at the event as "my boyfriend."

## SINGLES INFERNO SEASON 4 ANNOUNCED!

Netflix's popular Korean reality show, *Singles Inferno*, concluded its third season in January with high praise and impressive viewership numbers. Distinguishing itself from Western shows such as *Too Hot to Handle* and *Love is Blind*, this series has transformed the dating reality TV genre with its Asian flair, combining intense drama, romantic tales and stunning landscapes.

Funded by Shijak Company, Netflix has officially greenlit the show for its fourth season. The show's significant viewership in season three, ranking it as a Global Top 10 TV Show (non-English) for five straight weeks and gaining fans in 31 countries, certainly contributed to its ongoing success as a multi-series franchise.

In a media statement, producer Kim Jae Won shared his excitement in January upon receiving the show's first official recognition. He said, "We will do our best to make *Season 4* even more interesting by listening to the criticisms and feedback sent by the fans for *Season 3*."



## STANDALONE

The fashion parade continued as FDCI India Couture Week 2024 entered its fifth day, with master designer Rahul Mishra showcasing his skills on the rampwalk. He stood in for his latest collection, *Nargis*, which focused on fusing his characteristic pieces with a hint of glitter. Actress Lisa Ray commanded the ramp in a stunning piece, making sure to fully honour the collection. She transitioned into a pretty ivory and gold saree outfit with gold-toned flower embellishments.



## Saoirse Ronan enters Wedlock!

Actress Saoirse Ronan, who was nominated for an Oscar, tied the knot with her co-star Jack Lowden from *Mary Queen of Scots* in a simple wedding ceremony in Scotland. The actors, who are said to have begun a romantic relationship after appearing together in the 2018 period drama, got married on the weekend of July 20 at the Edinburgh Central Registrar's Office.

As per the Scottish civil marriage records, the couple said their vows in Lowden's homeland of Scotland, with just a few of their nearest friends and family present. Speculation that Ronan, 30, and Lowden, 34, were in a relationship began circulating on social media in December 2018, after they were cast opposite each other in *Mary Queen of Scots*, with her portraying Mary Stuart and him playing Lord Damley. Lowden shared a mirror selfie on Instagram in December 2023 to celebrate the beginning of the new year.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



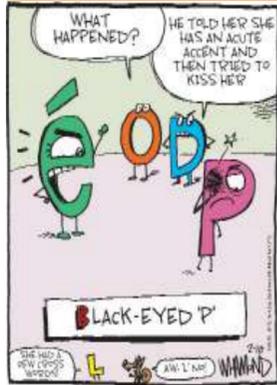
### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



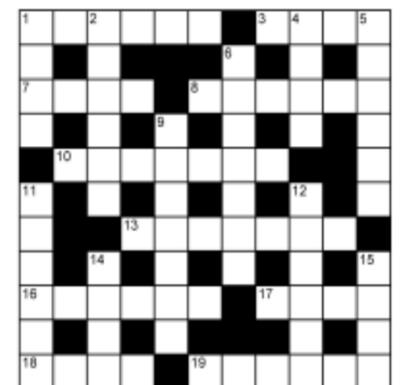
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

### ACROSS

- Sixth planet from the sun
- Pieces
- Teenager's skin problem
- A ship's chimney
- A song for a baby
- An insect's feeler
- Stopped
- A large group of soldiers
- A young sheep
- A dog with curly hair that is often clipped
- Blow soapy water to make these
- A covering for a bed
- Something to write with
- Made noises while asleep
- The inside of your hand
- A rubber cover for a wheel

### DOWN

- Something to sit on
- The muscle in your mouth
- Hotels
- A precious metal



## 'I AM BOTHERED BY LESS SCREEN SPACE'

TEJAL SINHA

Not all actors need the opportunity to showcase their prowess with a large screen space or full-fledged lead roles. There are a few extremely talented ones who can shine bright even in a small role, creating a much greater impact. Thanks to Indian cinema, we have so many such actors, who are no less than an inspiration. One of these masterly ones is Purva Parag. We are sure many 90s kids would remember sitting with their moms in front of the television watching her play not the 'atyachari' but rather 'pyaari' saas. Popularly known for her stint in shows like *Jai Santoshi Maa* and *Sarojini*, she feels ecstatic to have played a good mother-in-law (MIL). Mumbai has certainly been the 'city of dreams' and with so many opportunities coming her way, she too has shifted to the city. A journey, she describes as not like that of a 'fairy-tale' but rather, she

ful for to date is, "People still remember me for the work I have done in the past. Today, makers approach me with good work. I feel very lucky."

Would you believe it if we said that Purva, being an outsider in the industry, got her first character on Sab TV's *Dhaba Junction*, the next day that she had shifted to Mumbai? Well, that's true! How lucky, isn't it?

Going ahead, the *Grehan* actress has also been one of those actresses who has never shied away from working on different mediums, simultaneously.

For instance, while she was doing *Gafla*, she recalls also work-

who worships her work with all her heart and soul. Well, it's just not us saying it, but she agrees to it too. She further goes on to recall how, in 2023, she was continuously working on films like *Kachchey Limbu*, *Gangster Ganga* and *Sarfira*. Just not this; along with these projects, she was also working on around three TV shows too.

This pretty much sums up that the work she is a part of

matters before anything else. Off late, she has been referred to as the 'Rising Star of Indian Cinema'. "I don't believe in such things, haha," shares the *Jasoos Vijay* fame. "I am an actress; whether I am doing small roles or big ones, I just aim to give my best to them. Sometimes in projects like *Barfi* and *Madaari*, though I played small characters, the projects were successful and I got a lot of fame from these projects. But again, there have been times when I have done good work, but was not recognised. So, I just believe in hard work."

Meanwhile, talking of her work, recently, we saw a different Purva altogether in the Akshay Kumar and Radhika Madan-starrer *Sarfira*, directed by Sudha Kongara Prasad. She was seen donning a Maharashtrian look along with the accent, which certainly was a challenge for her.

"*Sarfira* is a beautiful movie of its own. Though I had read the script and knew everything about the film, there was a different excitement while watching it. The pace of the film keeps you intact. In fact, when we were shooting, there was a different pattern we got to experience with Sudha (the director). She had a different attitude for every scene."

However, on the other hand, talking about her character and the transformation, she shares, "I speak Hindi, so for me to learn Marathi and to act in flow with an accent, it was challenging, yet there was an actor's preparation excitement. Working with the living legends was an experience in and of itself. Seema Biswas, Ashok Lokhande, Akshay and Radhika were all so talented and performers. The atmosphere was full of good energy. Let me tell you about this incident, where there was this wedding song (*Chaat*) in the film. The hook-step was so mind-blowing that I went and told Ganesh sir, "Please don't show us on-screen, but even I want to do this dance!"

She goes on to share that, though she had a small role in *Sarfira*, she did have a great experience being a part of the project. For instance, she recalls, "Radhika and I have

worked together in *Kachchey Limbu* as well. Now, what really happened was that in *Sarfira*, we had a completely different look, a Maharashtrian look, while in *Kachchey Limbu*, it was more towards a western one. So she did not really recognise me and was like, '*Mai pehchanti hoon aapko, but kaun hai?*' And then I told her about our previous project."

Meanwhile, working with Akshay Kumar was certainly a fan moment for her. "I'm a big fan of him. In my first scene, he was standing behind me and Radhika. Though I couldn't see him, there was an exciting factor for me, not as an actor but as a fan."

Going ahead, one of her most memorable projects, she says, has been *Madaari*, starring the late actor Irrfan Khan. Recalling her 'humble' experiences of working with him, she speaks with no less than honour, "I had first met Irrfan sir in my shot. Getting to work with him, I had all kinds of mixed feelings, from fear to excitement and happiness. Basically, I knew Nishikant Sir, so there was a comfort zone. Both Irrfan Ji and I are from the National School of Drama (NSD). We had an amazing conversation about it, just like how we talk to our seniors. There was no such attitude in him that he was such a big star! He was so calm and used to do all of the work with ease that there was a small issue that had happened on the sets of *Madaari* with the co-actors and trust me, he handled it so well! It was then that I understood that he is such a great actor that he wasn't bothered about anything else, but giving his best."

The *Hasee Toh Phasee* actress has some projects coming up in Jio Cinema and has also been shooting for a few, as we discuss. As we come to the end of the chat, she shares that she is looking forward to playing more of the diverse characters and doing something that challenges her as an actor. "I wouldn't say I'm never bothered; I am bothered by the less screen space. I do want to create big, effective and impactful characters. But yes, again, I believe that if you are doing a good job, then that little work of yours does not become a problem. Even today, people talk about and ask me about my *Madaari* or *Barefoot to Goa's* characters, which is so overwhelming. I believe that even after playing or doing even one scene, people remember you, which makes a big impact on the actor as well as the audience. It's a win-win."

Actress Purva Parag has created her own niche in the entertainment market with her prowess in different fields. She speaks to *The Pioneer*, discussing her journey, her remarkable stint in *Sarfira* and *Madaari* and more tidbits.



ing on multiple TV shows simultaneously. In fact, there was also a time when she was already doing back-to-back shows, when she also began working on a few episodes of the Indian police procedural television show *C.I.D.* "I had always preferred to be approached for good roles," says the *Koyelaanchal* fame. "I try not to say no to any project. For me, work is work, irrespective of its medium."

She is one of those

humorously says, "Entering the industry, I have managed things just like Ajay Devgn successfully rides two cars at the same time in his action films (she laughs)." However, over the years, one thing that she has learned pretty well is that "success and failure both play an important part in any actor's life and so has it been for me."

Just like any working mom, she too had her own conditions in between. To make it simple, the *Sarojini* fame though had her hands full, there was a time in her journey that she had to take a break of around 4 years for her son back then. Though she has had a lot of on-and-off moments in her journey, one thing that she is very grate-

## Vegan athlete turning heads in Telugu cinema

Actor Arvind Krishna, recipient of the 'Vegan Voice' award at the Vegan India Conference, engages in an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, sharing his experience at the event, his workout routine and providing insight into his upcoming project *Masterpiece*.



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Jacqueline Fernandez and actor Arvind Krishna were caught a sight of at the Vegan India Conference, where Arvind was also presented with the "Vegan Voice" award! However, learning that he is a former basketball player, now turned actor, made us even more curious to learn around his journey. That's when we got wind of this exclusive interview!

We spoke with the Telugu actor who is currently shooting for the next schedule of his film. "I had an eye-opening experience at the vegan conference," begins the *Shukra* fame. "From physicians to dietitians to campaigners, I witnessed an entire panel. Ask me about the advantages of becoming vegan; I'm quite delighted about it (He laughs)! I'm sure you'll notice if you see me." The *SIT* fame goes on to say, "We had a lot of discussions on the inceptions of protein... all this while, me turning into a

vegan has only taught me how to have a balanced diet." Not that his busy schedule prevents him in any way, though. "I observe that a lot of individuals place too much emphasis on eating enough protein! You know what? Not many other supplements are as beneficial."

We found it quite agreeable that he is also an athlete and that his veganism and physical prowess go hand in hand. In the same vein, we inquire, "Being vegan has improved my recuperation times from workouts significantly. I enjoy working out a bit more these days. My respiration and endurance have improved with them, which is something else I've observed. This is really helpful to me as an actor because, well, look at that skin and hair! You see, it also provides me with an advantage." For our viewers in the south, he provided a revelation: "I am working on my upcoming Telugu film titled *Masterpiece*. Hurray, I am a superhero in the film. I spent 19 hours nonstop filming a sequence in which I had to battle 12 different fighters. The entire

team was shocked to see me punching and kicking without eating for a whole day at the end of the shoot. Look at the endurance it provided me, guys—it's all because I rigorously adhere to a vegan diet. To me, that seemed like a win."

The JNTU Hyderabad alum says, "As you rightly pointed out, whether or not shooting, the day is definitely demanding for me," when describing a normal day in his routine. "Since my shooting schedule has begun, I get up really early to work out. My fitness regimen consists of workouts that enhance my strength on the court, such as strength exercises. Keeping up with my nutrition while travelling is the true challenge."

In case you're wondering about the passionate athlete's future, he shares with us the story of how he won a basketball title in front of 60,000 spectators. "And the host team was our opponent. Every audience member was watching us because we defeated the home team. I could see the change right away because they began to stand by us. I believe we played a really hard game." Naturally, what a sight to see!

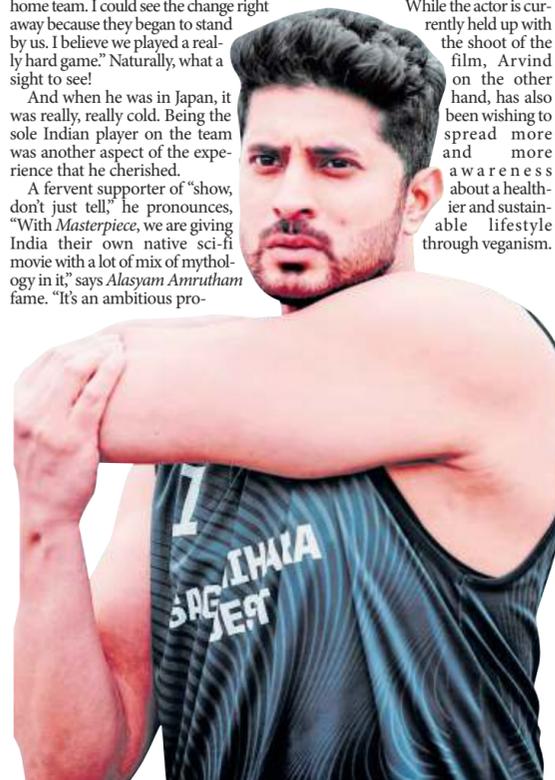
And when he was in Japan, it was really, really cold. Being the sole Indian player on the team was another aspect of the experience that he cherished.

A fervent supporter of "show, don't just tell," he pronounces, "With *Masterpiece*, we are giving India their own native sci-fi movie with a lot of mix of mythology in it," says *Alasyam Amrutham* fame. "It's an ambitious pro-

ject that I have been working on for the last three and a half years. We are looking at the release later this year, as an international production studio is handling all of the CGI. I'm going to be in another film, this time as a travel photographer. The other is a police officer! But let me just say that because it's all about conviction, I've found that playing the part of a superhero has been the most difficult."

Well, we hope readers are aware that he has collaborated with major celebs like Rajnikanth and Ravi Teja. Here are a few unique anecdotes in case it's not! "It's a funny story because I said, 'Who is Rajnikanth?' when the production team contacted me to say they were from his movie. I could never have envisioned landing a role in the movie *Thailava*, but when it finally dawned on me, I thought, 'Oh my god, superstar Rajnikanth.' Bringing intense media glare to basketball as an actor is another goal of mine."

While the actor is currently held up with the shoot of the film, Arvind on the other hand, has also been wishing to spread more awareness about a healthier and sustainable lifestyle through veganism.



FOOD REVIEW

## WORK, PLAY, 'KIMCHI' ALL DAY!

AARTI SREENATH

Social Hyderabad, hosted its Kore-yeah Food Festival, at the vibrant hub of Mindspace. This event was a tempting exploration of Korean cuisine, blending traditional flavours with innovative twists. Here's a detailed account of my gastronomic adventure.

The experience began with *Budae Jjigae*, a hearty hotpot stew brimming with diverse flavours. This stew, a nod to its roots, combined Maggi noodles, Korean ramen and chunks of succulent chicken ham. The rich, savoury broth wrapped each ingredient in warmth, making every spoonful a comforting delight.

Then comes the *Hallyu Litchi Boba*, which stands out to be an absolute star. This vibrant drink featured a base of blue pea tea mixed with litchi juice, punctuated by juicy litchi boba pearls. The drink's essence was a perfect blend of tangy blueberry notes and the sweet, fragrant flavour of litchi. It was refreshing and unique, making it my top recommendation for anyone visiting the festival.

Next, I sampled the *Ginger at Your Service*, a beverage crafted for those who prefer a less sugary palate. This drink was a revelation, with its potent ginger infusion providing a soothing yet invigorating experience. Enhanced by *blueberry boba pearls* and served over a block of ice, it was garnished with ginger candy, adding a touch of sweetness to balance the bitterness. This drink is a must-try for ginger tea enthusiasts.

The main course, the *tofu bibimbap*, was a feast for both the eyes and the palate. This traditional Korean dish featured a colourful array of fresh vegetables atop a bed of soft-boiled jasmine rice. The tofu was perfectly seasoned with a hint of masala and salt, while the mix of raw and boiled vegetables added a nutritious crunch. This dish is a delightful option for vegetarians and tofu lovers alike, presenting a harmonious blend of flavors and textures. As a big fan of bold flavours and masalas, I found this dish to be a mild for my taste. While it was well prepared, it didn't quite deliver the vibrant kick I usually enjoy.

The starters set the tone with the Korean potato mille-feuille. This dish featured crispy layers of potato topped with *Choi's epic kimchi* and a sprinkle of parmesan. It was a delicate balance of flavours that left you wanting more, much like a cliffhanger in a K-drama. Despite being

a potato dish, it was light and not overly salty, making it a great choice for those mindful of their sodium intake.

The ambience very well matched the culinary experience, with cozy, pop-orange lighting and a vibrant atmosphere, providing an ideal setting for both casual dining and a lively club vibe. The decor and lighting made it a fantastic spot to enjoy the unique dishes and soak up the energetic environment. Each dish was crafted with care and creativity, offering a delightful fusion of traditional tastes and modern twists.

During the food festival, the ambience was transformed with vibrant orange and yellow hues radiating throughout the space. Posters celebrating Korean culture adorned the dining area, enhancing the festive theme and creating an inviting and energetic atmosphere. Social

Hyderabad's Kore-yeah Food Festival was a remarkable journey through the flavors of Korea.

Whether you're a fan of Korean cuisine or simply looking to explore new flavours, this festival is an unmissable experience, which is going to end today (July 30).



**What's good:** *Hallyu Litchi Boba*  
**Insider tip:** Offers both indoor and outdoor seating, allowing you to enjoy the scenic natural beauty or opt for a cozy, dimly-lit environment for your workspace

**Cost for two:** Rs. 1500 (Approx)

**How to get there:** Survey 64, Ground plus level, Hitech City, Hyderabad





## Rohit, Kohli among India players to train ahead of ODIs against Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

India skipper Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and a few other players will start their training from Monday ahead of the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka starting August 2. While the Indian T20I team under Suryakumar Yadav will

play the third and final match on Tuesday in Pallekele, Rohit, Kohli and a few others like rookie Harshit Rana will train in Colombo after reaching the island nation's capital on Sunday. Rohit, Kohli and Kuldeep Yadav will hit the ground running nearly a month after they helped India win the T20 World Cup in the

Americas for the second time. The ODIs against Sri Lanka will also mark the return of Shreyas Iyer into the national side. It was in late 2023 that Iyer last played a limited-overs match for India, against South Africa in December. The squad also features Delhi all-rounder Rana, who was a member of the IPL-winning

Kolkata Knight Riders' team earlier this year. These players will train under India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar in Colombo. Each of the three ODIs will be played at the R Premadasa Stadium here. While the first match is on August 2, the second and third ODIs are on August 4 and 7 respectively.

## Players will fight tooth and nail to be there: Dravid on cricket's Olympic debut at LA 2028

PTI ■ PARIS

An ardent supporter of cricket's inclusion in the Olympics, former India head coach and batting legend Rahul Dravid says the "serious dressing room conversations" that he has heard indicate that players are going to "fight tooth and nail" to be there at the world's biggest sporting event. Dravid was in the French capital on Sunday to attend a panel discussion on 'Cricket at the Olympics: Dawn of a New Era', celebrating the sport's inclusion in the 2028 Los Angeles Games, at the recently inaugurated India House.

"I've already heard a few conversations in the dressing room. People are talking about the 2026 T20 World Cup, there is an ODI World Cup in 2027, and you hear people saying there is the Olympics in 2028," Dravid, who also caught up on some tennis action at the Games before coming for the event, said during the discussion.

"People are going to want to win that gold medal, stand on the podium, and be a part of the Games Village, a great sporting event, and interact with so many athletes. 'As you get closer, I have no doubt that teams will be preparing and checking out facilities. They will take this seriously, and players will fight



tooth and nail to be out there," he added. The Test great had ICC CEO Geoff Allardice for company during the discussion at India House here. "You grow up watching the Olympics, seeing Carl Lewis winning the gold medal, watching the great athletes perform. You always want to be part of great events like this. The environment, the energy -- it's a dream come true." Dravid hoped that India would win both the men's and women's gold medals at the LA Games. "The dream for me to have a fantastic cricket tournament, hopefully Indian men and women winning the gold which would be nice.

"Unfortunately, I won't be able to play, but I will make every effort to be in LA in some capacity or another. If not anything else, I will try to get a media job," joked Dravid, who ended his tenure as India head coach after the recent T20 World Cup triumph in the West Indies. The men's and women's cricket competitions will run concurrently at the LA Olympics. As far as Allardice is concerned, he said cricket will be one of the "star attractions" in LA four years from now. "It's quite surreal to be here in Paris, seeing the energy around sport and how it's getting together. Cricket is starting to dawn on the global sporting

community. "I think cricket will be one of the star attractions in Los Angeles...When you see global stars of big sports around the world competing in one city at a time -- watching Rafael Nadal at tennis this afternoon -- and then if you are in LA, you can watch the best tennis players, best golfers, and the best cricketers. "We are going to be very, very strong come 2028," he said. **WOMEN'S CRICKET IS GOING FORWARD:** Dravid also shared his thoughts on the growth of women's cricket, saying it is progressing well and increasing participation by young players is making the sport more inclusive and attractive. "Women's cricket is already going forward. I don't think it needs anything else. It's fantastic to have it going on concurrently. Even when you talk to people at the grassroots level, to coaches, one of the things they constantly tell you is the level of participation from young girls. "Every year in every academy, the percentage is growing exponentially, sometimes even more than the boys. Cricket is becoming a lot more inclusive and attractive. This could potentially be a career. You would not have said that five or six years ago. That's what we want to see."

## Clinical India eye series whitewash against wobbly Lanka in third T20I

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

There will be no let-up in intensity as a ruthless India, under the leadership of new coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Suryakumar Yadav, seek to exploit Sri Lanka's weaknesses and push for a series whitewash in the inconsequential third and final T20I here on Tuesday. The fate of the series was decided after India swept aside Sri Lanka in the first two games, leaving the possibility of an embarrassing whitewash hanging over the hosts' heads.

India secured a seven-wicket victory on Sunday in a rain-shortened match in the second T20I, thwarting Sri Lanka's charge once again. Despite the hosts' flying start, their fight fizzled out for the second consecutive game due to subpar batting.

On the same day, the Sri Lankan women's team beat tournament-favourites India in the final for their maiden Women's T20 Asia Cup title in Dambulla but it seemed to have no impact on the men's side which continued to grapple with existing issues.

Sri Lanka's embarrassing batting collapses in the middle overs is the prime reason of their undoing in this series so far, while India have gone about their business like a true world champion side.

India has proven to be the superior side by a significant margin, demonstrating greater confidence in their plans, skills, and execution, and never faltering under pressure. There have been moments when Sri



Lanka have appeared to be running away with the contest but each time India has found their way back, particularly with their incisive bowling, to keep their upper hand. The 'bowlers' captain' Suryakumar has not only marshalled his troops with precision to make effective bowling changes, but he has looked to lead from front with the bat having scored 58 and 26 in the two outings so far.

India have remained aggressive right from the word go to reap rich benefits, putting a 200 plus score in the opener. In the second game, a slight change in the batting line-up delivered a seven-wicket win which helped them seal the series.

It remains to be seen if vice-captain and opener Shubman Gill is fit in time for

this contest after he missed the second game due to a stiff neck. His replacement, Sanju Samson had to wait for over an hour to face his first ball due to a rain break and when his chance arrived, the right-hander missed one from Maheesh Theekshana for a golden duck. Samson and India will be seeking improved performances from the batter, who has been a fixture around the T20I squad for some time, including serving as a non-playing member of the World Cup-winning team. But at the other end, Yashasvi Jaiswal has looked to go all-out with his attacking game to rake up 70 runs in two outings and he remains one of the biggest threats for the Lankans.

For the hosts, Pathum Nissanka (111 runs) and Kusal Perera (73) have provided the fireworks at the top but Sri Lanka's middle-overs struggles have led to their downfall.

India spinner Ravi Bishnoi, who helped script a win in the second game with 3/26, highlighted Sri Lankan batters' inability to navigate spin bowling in the series. "They play spin really well but I do not know what (has) happened, they are collapsing in the middle overs," Bishnoi said after the second T20I.

"They are known as a good spin-batting team but I think something has gone wrong," said Bishnoi, possibly hinting at the lack of skills and aptitude among Sri Lankan players generally which has led to their struggles across formats.

With the ball, Matheesha Pathirana returned an expensive 4/40 in the opening game but Sri Lanka will want a lot more from their bowlers.

### TEAMS (FROM):

**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Riyan Parag, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj. **Sri Lanka:** Dinesh Chandimal, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis (wk), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Perera, Charith Asalanka (c), Wanindu Hasaranga, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Binura Fernando, Asitha Fernando, Dilshan Madushanka, Matheesha Pathirana, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Welalage.

PTI ■ PARIS

India's star athlete Neeraj Chopra will have a special supporter at the Paris Olympics: a Kerala cyclist who has travelled all the way from Calicut, riding more than 22,000 kilometers over two years.

Fayis Asraf Ali's arrival in the French capital was the culmination of a long journey on his Surly bicycle that took him across 30 countries, beginning on August 15, 2022.

Ali set off with a mission to cycle from "India to London to spread peace and unity".

Having cycled across 17 countries, he stopped in Budapest one August afternoon last year, when he came to know that the Tokyo Olympics gold medalist was staying across the street.

The ace javelin thrower was with the athletics contingent for the World Championships in which claimed another historic win. A few hurried calls to a "known Kerala coach" led to a "dream meeting" with his sporting idol.

"I got a few minutes to talk to the Indian athletes and Neeraj told me since 'you are going to London why don't you come to Paris for the Olympics,'" Ali told PTI

during an interaction after ending his journey at India House here on Sunday. "I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to see him again in Paris so I altered my plan a bit and procured the required visa and cycled to the UK before ending my journey here.

"I am so excited to meet him again. I've requested PT Usha ma'am (IOA chief). I'm here to see him create history again. We will cheer for him (on August 8)," he added. He carries four pairs of clothes, a tent, a sleeping bag and a mat that takes the total weight of the cycle to 50kgs.

"I never stay in a hotel and get some sponsors on the way and that's it. In between twice, I flew to Kerala to arrange visas. "Visa is all you need to cross the border, a cyclist does not need any other documentation," he added. Is he not tired or facing any health issues?

"No, never. The love of the people and the warm reception I get everywhere keeps me going. I'm here and so excited," added Ali, who was greeted by star cricketers Chris Gayle, Harbhajan Singh and Suresh Raina while he was in the UK.

An engineer by profession, Ali was into his fourth year in Saudi Arabia when his father

was diagnosed with a heart ailment in 2015. His father died in 2018.

Being the only son, he had to return to India to look after his father. He had quit his job and was back home in Calicut. His wife is a medical professional and he has two sons.

He also has a thyroid issue that makes him put on weight. "Those three years made me realise that health is the most important thing in life, not money. One fine morning I saw a couple of cyclists touring and thought of starting riding," he recalled.

He first bought a Rs 13K bicycle to get used to riding and then chalked out plans for his maiden solo ride: Calicut to Singapore. Then he upgraded it to a Rs 1 lakh cycle, especially designed for long trips. For the trip to Paris, he had to buy a more advanced bicycle, costing Rs 2.5 lakh. He set out on his first trip on August 7, 2019 and reached Singapore on November 21, clocking 8000kms across seven countries.

"Rotary arranged my trip and I got a few sponsors. But my biggest supporter was my wife who took care of both my kids and the family. So I just had to embark on my journey," he said.

## India's tennis campaign at Olympics ends in single day

PTI ■ PARIS

India's tennis campaign at the Paris Olympics lasted just one day as Sumit Nagal and the men's doubles pair of Rohan Bopanna and N Sriram Balaji bowed out after losing their respective opening matches to French challengers, here Sunday. Nagal was first to take court, but his strong baseline game didn't seem to be enough against mercurial Corentin Moutet, who earned a stylish three-set win.

In his second appearance at the Olympic Games, Nagal bounced back after losing the first set but fell 2-6 6-4 5-7 in two hours and 28 minutes at a packed court seven at the Roland Garros.

In the Tokyo Games, Nagal had lost in the second round to Russian Daniil Medvedev but could not make the most of a manageable opener today. He was up 2-0 in the decider with an early break but allowed Moutet to claw his way back and win.

Later in the day, Bopanna and Balaji went down fighting 5-7 2-6 against Edouard Roger-Vasselin and Gael Monfils, who replaced injured Fabien Reboul in the home team at the last minute.

India have won only one Olympic medal in tennis,

when Leander Paes bagged a bronze in the 1996 Atlanta Games. Monfils' big-hitting helped the home team that was egged on by the partisan crowd. It was probably the last time Bopanna represented India in a multi-sport event. The 44-year-old has already announced his retirement from Davis Cup.

The doubles match featured several fiery baseline exchanges between Bopanna and both the French players. The French ploy of engaging Bopanna in long rallies from the back took Balaji out of the picture on many points, and it largely denied the debutant opportunity of a quick finish at the net.

The Indians dropped serve first when Bopanna went down 0-40 in game six following a long rally that ended with Indian teams' enforced error. Bopanna and Balaji though got the break back in the next game on Roger-Vasselin's serve. Down by a breakpoint, Monfils could not put away a volley.

The match was back on serve. Eventually, Balaji came out to serve at 5-6 to stay in the set. Feeling the nerves, he struggled to put first serves in and committed a double fault to get to 15-30. A long rally

ensued, which ended in home team's favour. At second set point, Bopanna netted a backhand volley. Balaji could not hold serve in the second set, as Bopanna too struggled to cope with the powerful strokes of the French players. The match ended with Indian team's enforced error. It has always been a battle of attrition between Nagal and Moutet with three of their last four outings being three-set affairs and it was no different today.

Nagal had got the better of Moutet in their last meeting in Grand Prix of Hassan in the Moroccan city of Marakkech in April this year. Nagal didn't seem to have a plan B but Moutet had a few tricks in his bag to unsettle his rival. He served underarm a number of times and used the drop shots, the forehand slice and the backhand slice very effectively. The chants of Coco-Coco, Aalee-Aalee and Moutet-Moutet certainly gave the home player the energy required in such a slugfest. Nagal had a nervy start with a boisterous crowd behind Moutet. A drop volley error at 30-all put him down by a break point. Another unforced error cost him the opening game.

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The French player began with an underarm serve, much to the amusement of the home fans. He, however, ended up serving a double fault. It was an easy hold for the southpaw even as Nagal also bounced

back with a hold at love. Nagal said he was expecting underarm serves from him but obviously didn't appreciate that. Moutet struggled a bit with his first serve but fed Nagal a

lot of high balls and attacked his backhand more to build on the break. Nagal had his chances to get the break back in game four but squandered four breakpoints.

He was down by another break point in game five but saved and held when Moutet just missed the line with his return. The crowd favourite again amused the gathered supporters at court seven as he crossed over the court to check the spot if the ball landed inside the line. It was crucial for Nagal to hold serve after falling behind 2-4 but he erred on overhead volley at breakpoint. Moutet pocketed the opening set when Nagal's forehand return soared over the baseline.

The second set was not a one-way traffic with Nagal finding his rhythm. The free points were not given. The set remained in serve till game five. After playing two deuce points, Moutet again served underarm, and this time he got the point as Nagal netted the return. Nagal was furious but the crowd loved the moment. Nagal finally had his first break of the match when Moutet's dropped shot crashed into the net.

Before that on the second break point, when he netted the return, Nagal had banged his racket on the court, letting go of the frustration. However, he gathered himself through the crucial break. The

crowd stood and began singing the national anthem to egg on their favourite. Nagal though, consolidated the lead with a hold and levelled the match by breaking his rival in game eight when Moutet netted a volley return. The French player yet again resorted to giving high balls and drop shots to Nagal to break the momentum, and almost succeeded, but Nagal too stuck to his guns, avoiding an early break. He then broke Moutet when he double faulted while facing his fourth break point. Leading 2-0 in the decider, Nagal had a perfect opportunity to run away with the match but found himself down 0-40. He saved the first breakpoint but a drive volley error from him meant that the set was back on serve. Serving at 5-5, Nagal began by netting a forehand, and Moutet found a stunning forehand slice passing-winner on the run. Another forehand error put Nagal down by three break points. He lost fourth point in a row when he could not pick up a half volley. It was not difficult from there for Moutet to close the match. He will play either Australian world number six Alex de Minaur or Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff next.

# AAAY RELEASING ON AUGUST 15

GA2 Pictures, in association with Bunny Vas, Vidya Koppineedi, Narne Nithiin and Anji K. Maniputhra, proudly announces the paid premieres of their highly anticipated film, AAY, on August 15, Independence Day.

This production from GA2 Pictures features the dynamic Narne Nithiin and the stunning Nayan Sarika in the lead roles, with debutant director Anji K. Maniputhra at the helm. Produced by the talented Bunny Vas and Vidya Koppineedi, AAY is generating buzz with its captivating promotional material. The film's recently released songs have become chart-toppers and are spreading rapidly across social media through a wave of reels and shorts. The movie will have its global theatrical release on Independence Day, with paid premieres on August 15.

Set against the beautiful backdrop of Godavari, AAY promises to be the ultimate fun entertainer of the season. Narne Nithiin is expected to charm audiences with this nostalgic Godavari-based film.

The project brings together top-notch talent both in front of and behind the camera. Renowned producer Allu Aravind presents the film, while art direction is by Kiran Kumar Manne, cinematography by Sameer Kalyani, and music by Ram Miryala.



## Tamannaah carries 'Bonam' for Odela 2

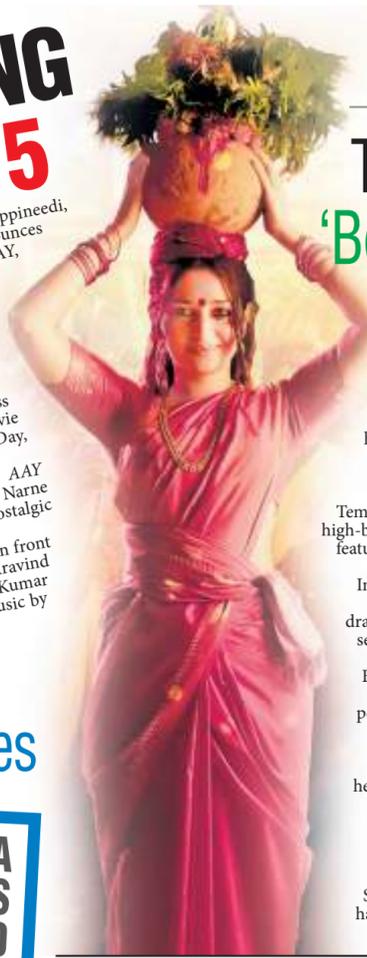
Tamannaah Bhatia is set to enchant audiences once more as she teams up with Madhu Creations and Sampath Nandi Teamworks for the eagerly awaited sequel, *Odela 2*. Following the success of the 2021 hit *Odela Railway Station*, this sequel is directed by the innovative Ashok Teja. The release of initial promotional materials—including the first look, teaser and behind-the-scenes footage—has already stirred considerable excitement and speculation among fans, raising anticipation for the film.

Currently, the high-budget multilingual film is in the midst of a dramatic climax shoot at the Odela Mallanna Temple, located in RFC, Hyderabad. A meticulously crafted, high-budget temple set has been erected for this pivotal scene, featuring Tamannaah Bhatia and other actors, alongside 800 junior artists.

In celebration of Hyderabad Bonalu, the filmmakers have unveiled a new poster showcasing Tamannaah Bhatia draped in a saree, carrying a 'Bonam' on her head, exuding serenity and contentment. The timing is serendipitous, as the Bonalu episode is being filmed amid the ongoing Bonalu festivities. Tamannaah Bhatia has undergone rigorous training and rehearsals to deliver an electrifying performance, promising to keep audiences on the edge of their seats with her intense action scenes.

Sampath Nandi, renowned for his talent in blending high-octane action with engaging storytelling, is at the helm of this ambitious project. Under his guidance, *Odela 2* is set to deliver a thrilling experience filled with emotional depth and adrenaline-pumping moments.

The film also boasts an exceptional behind-the-scenes team: Ajaneesh Loknath, celebrated for his work on *Kantara*, is composing the music; top cinematographer Soundarrajan is capturing the visuals; and Rajeev Nair is handling art direction. With such a stellar lineup, *Odela 2* is shaping up to be a must-watch cinematic event.



## Exciting developments for Simbu fans

In a flurry of exciting news for fans of Silambarasan TR, aka Simbu, two major updates regarding his upcoming film projects are here.

The highly anticipated film, tentatively titled *STR48*, is set to begin shooting in February or March 2025, say sources. Directed by the talented Desingh Periyasamy, Simbu will take on the role of producer for this film, promising a personal touch and a strong commitment to the project. Fans are eagerly awaiting more details about the film's storyline and cast, but the combination of Periyasamy's directorial expertise and Simbu's production acumen has already generated substantial excitement.

Before *STR48* hits the sets, Simbu has another major project on the horizon. Directed by Jude Anthony Joseph, this film is set to start shooting later this year. Sources say that Jahnvi Kapoor and Kiara Advani will play lead roles in these films. An official announcement regarding the same will be made soon.

## Double Ismart comes up with two updates

The romantic melody of the season, *Kya Lafda*, from the highly anticipated film *DOUBLE ISMART*, has been released. Featuring Ustaad Ram Pothineni and Kavya Thapar, this track is set to become a monsoon favorite.

Following the success of the first two singles, which have gone viral and topped music charts, *Kya Lafda* stands out with its unique and invigorating composition. Credit goes to music director Mani Sharma for seamlessly blending techno beats with vibrant vocal performances. The song's infectious groove instantly lifts the listener's spirits and sets a lively tone.

The track's catchy hook and stylish programming add to its charm, making it a delightful and memorable listening experience. Vocalists Dhanunjay Seepana and Sindhuja Srinivasan deliver a romantic touch, while Sri Harsha Emani's lyrics further enhance the song's allure. The sizzling chemistry between Ram Pothineni and Kavya Thapar adds a visual appeal that perfectly complements the song's energetic and romantic essence.

Excitement is building for the film, with the teaser receiving an enthusiastic response from audiences. As the release date approaches, the makers continue to generate buzz with regular updates and promotions.

Sanjay Dutt stars as the antagonist in this Pan-India film, produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur under the Puri Connects banner. The film also features impressive cinematography by Sam K Naidu and Gianni Gianneli. *Double ISMART* is set to debut in theaters worldwide on Independence Day, August 15th. In celebration of Sanjay Dutt's birthday, a special making video showcasing his intense role as the BIG BULL was released. The video highlights his menacing presence and his strong bond with Ram and director Puri Jagannadh. It also features Sanjay Dutt dancing alongside Ram, adding an extra layer of excitement to the film.

As post-production wraps up, promotional activities are in full swing. With the buzz building around the newly released songs and teaser, *Double ISMART* promises a thrilling blend of mass appeal, high-octane action, dramatic depth and pure entertainment.



## DHAK DEVA STEPS INTO KD'S BATTLEFIELD

While Sanjay Dutt dishes memorable performances the next one that has got his fans very excited is in *KD - The Devil*. The first look of Sanjay's character Dhak Deva from the film was revealed on his birthday.

As the actor joins the Epic world of Dhruva Sarja's *KD-The Devil*, this is being billed as one of his special films. Talking about the same, *KD-The Devil*'s director Prem says, "Who doesn't know the mammothness of Sanjay Dutt in the film industry? He comes with so many impactful roles. His *MunnaBhai* is still celebrated so much, I feel very thankful and blessed that he agreed to do this film and it was a pleasure working with him."

On joining *KD - The Devil*, Sanjay Dutt says, "I am excited to be a part of *KD - The Devil*. I loved the way Prem Sir had envisioned the world that the film is set in. It's a period actioner and a pan India film. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of a team which had some of the best minds in the industry collaborating for this project."

Other than Sanjay Dutt, *KD - The Devil* also stars Shilpa Shetty, Nora Fatehi, Ramesh Aravind, V Ravichandran and Dhruva Sarja in important roles. A period action entertainer based on true events from 1970s Bangalore, *KD - The Devil* is presented by KVN Productions and directed by Prem.



## Mythri Movie Makers LLP to release Shivam Bhaje in Nizam

Ganga Entertainments is excited to announce the release of their prestigious debut film, *Shivam Bhaje*, hitting theaters worldwide on August 1. The film's trailer has already captivated audiences and generated considerable buzz.

Producer Maheshwara Reddy Mooli is thrilled to share that *Shivam Bhaje*, featuring Ashwin Babu in a standout role, will be distributed by Mythri Movie Makers LLP in the Nizam region. This collaboration promises to make the August 1 theatrical release even more

significant. *Shivam Bhaje* is a gripping blend of international crime, murder mystery, secret agents and Lord Shiva's cosmic intrigue. With Vikas Badisa's mesmerising background score and Sivendra Dasaradhi's stunning visuals, the film is set to offer a visually and audibly enthralling experience. Ashwin Babu's performance is poised to make a major impact.

Directed by Apsar, this contemporary divine suspense thriller stars Digangana Suryavanshi as the leading lady opposite Ashwin Babu.



## SANGHARSHANA RELEASING ON AUGUST 9



Mahindra Pictures announced the release of its Production Number 1 film, *Sangharshana*, directed by Chinna Venkatesh and produced by Valluri Srinivasa Rao. This Telugu and Tamil bilingual film has successfully wrapped up both its filming and post-production stages and is set for a grand theatrical release on August 9.

*Sangharshana* is a suspense thriller that seamlessly integrates elements of romance and family drama. The film

stars Chaitanya Pasupuleti and Rasheed Bhanu in lead roles, with cinematography by Sudhakar and KV Prasad.

Distributed by Parthu Reddy through One Media, *Sangharshana* features a compelling musical score by Adithya Sri Ram. The film is expected to offer an engaging experience for a diverse audience. Producer Valluri Srinivasa Rao expressed his excitement about presenting a film that is anticipated to resonate well with viewers, emphasising the pleasure of delivering a well-received movie.

## Super Good Films' Bhavanam promises fun-filled horror comedy

Super Good Films, renowned for delivering blockbuster hits, is set to captivate audiences with its latest project, *Bhavanam*. This horror-comedy entertainer, directed by Balachari Kurella and featuring an ensemble cast including Saptagiri, Dhanraj, Shakalaka Shankar, Ajay, Malavika Satish and Sneha Ullal, is set for a grand worldwide release on August 9.

At the recent trailer launch event, hero Saptagiri expressed his excitement, stating, "It's a privilege to be part of Super Good Films' 95th production, marking their first foray into the horror-comedy genre with such a talented cast of comedians. Working with this production house has been a long-standing dream. I am grateful to director Balachari Kurella for the opportunity and to RB Chowdary for the unwavering support. The music by

Charan Arjun is fantastic. I hope this film brings great success to everyone involved. I encourage all audiences to watch and support the film in theaters on August 9."

Heroine Malavika Satish expressed her gratitude, "This film is a delightful horror-comedy with elements of family drama. I am thankful to everyone who worked on this project. I look forward to seeing everyone on August 9."

Director Balachari Kurella reflected on his journey, "RB Chowdary allowed me to direct *First Student* and now *Bhavanam*. I will never forget their support. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this film. The actors and technicians did an outstanding job. Special thanks to RB Chowdary and Wakad Anjan Kumar. The film is going to be great and will entertain everyone."



## SDT: Audience should make Usha Pariyanam a theatrical hit

Director Vijaya Bhaskar, known for his knack for crafting engaging family dramas, has unveiled his latest film, *Usha Pariyanam*, subtitled *Love is Beautiful*. This feel-good entertainer is set to hit theaters on August 2nd, with the pre-release event taking place this past Sunday. The event was graced by the esteemed Supreme Hero Sai Durga Tej, who served as the chief guest.

The film is produced by Vijaya Bhaskar Kraft and marks a significant entry for Sree Kamal, Vijaya Bhaskar's son, who takes on the lead role. Tanvi Akaanksha, a rising talent from Telugu cinema, is introduced as the heroine, making her much-anticipated debut.

At the pre-release event, Sai Durga Tej spoke fondly of his connections to the film and its cast. "I am here as the elder brother of Tanvi Akaanksha," he said, adding, "I had previously been set to star in a film directed by Vijaya Bhaskar, titled *Prema Kavali*, but unfortunately, I missed the opportunity. Meeting Kamal at the gym, I found him to be a dedicated and hard-working individual. The music by RR



Dhruvan is exceptional and Tanvi, who is very dear to me, earned her place in this film through her perseverance and work in short films. I encourage everyone to support this film, as it represents the promising new talent in our industry."

Director Vijaya Bhaskar expressed his deep appreciation for the support received during the film's production. "It's been wonderful seeing Sai Durga Tej after fourteen years; he embodies the generosity and

warmth reminiscent of Chiranjeevi garu. This project was made possible with the backing of my family and a dedicated team. Dhruvan's music adds a special touch to the film. Tanvi is a delight to work with and the entire crew contributed their best to bring this film to life," he remarked.

With its blend of family warmth, romantic undertones, and a fresh new cast, *Usha Pariyanam* is poised to captivate audiences when it premieres on August 2.

## 'Fan India' glimpse brings back Prabhas' vintage charm!

Following the monumental success at the box office, Prabhas, famously known as the Rebel Star, is all set to win the audience once again with the much-anticipated PAN India film, *The Raja Saab*. The makers unveiled a thrilling first glimpse of the film, with Prabhas looking dashing and bringing back his vintage energetic charm. The glimpse also revealed that *The Raja Saab* is slated for a grand theatrical release on 10th April 2025, promising a proper feast for fans. Prabhas is seen in vintage car and he is all set to charm everyone with romantic horror comedy. Maruthi



presented Prabhas in a stylish look that satisfied movie lovers and darling fans. Currently, 40% of the film's shoot is completed and another massive schedule is set to commence from August 2nd. The film features music by composer SS Thaman, with Ram Laxman Masters and King Solomon handling the fight choreography, guaranteeing whistle-worthy moments on the big screen.

*Baahubali* fame Kamalakannan R.C. is in charge of the VFX, ensuring a visual spectacle is delivered on the big screen. Directed by Maruthi and produced by Viswa Prasad under the banner of People Media Factory, *The Raja Saab* will be released in five languages: Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi. People Media Factory is producing the movie *The Raja Saab* in a grand manner without compromising anywhere with huge production values.

## Madhubala is a daring spirit as 'Pannaga' in Kannappa

Team *Kannappa* is thrilled to unveil Madhubala in the role of Pannaga, a character that embodies strength and courage. As the chief of her clan, Pannaga is not just a leader but a formidable force with a fierce and daring spirit.

Madhubala's portrayal of Pannaga promises to be nothing short of extraordinary. With her commanding presence and intense performance, she brings to life a character who stands as a beacon of resilience and power. The film *Kannappa*, crafted on a grand scale, is set to be a visual extravaganza with its extensive use of VFX! The filmmakers are dedicating significant time to perfecting the post-production phase. This project represents a monumental endeavour for Vishnu, who is leaving no detail overlooked to ensure a spectacular presentation for the audience. The movie's teaser has already generated global buzz, having made a

significant impact at the *Cannes Film Festival*. It has also been met with enthusiastic responses from Indian audiences, setting high expectations for the film's release. *Kannappa* stands as a groundbreaking Indian film, distinguished by its ambitious scope and compelling narrative. The film delves into the rich cultural heritage of India, recounting the revered story of Bhakta Kannappa, known for his profound devotion to Lord Shiva. This theme of devotion and loyalty is timeless and promises to resonate with viewers across the globe.

Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh and produced by Manchu's AVA Entertainment and 24 Frames Factory, *Kannappa* features a stellar cast including Mohan Babu, Prabhas, Akshay Kumar, Mohan Lal and Kajal Aggarwal. *Kannappa* is planned for a worldwide release in December.

