



Is it right time for new ideas on representation?

We are only a few weeks away from celebrating the 75th anniversary of our Republic. On 26th January 1950, we, the People of India, adopted the Constitution that gave every Indian the right to vote and made us the masters of our destiny.

These changes, especially for the lower houses of the legislatures - Lok Sabha and State Assemblies - could include synchronised elections and increased number of constituencies with new boundaries, with one-third of the final expanded count reserved exclusively for women.

An electoral system that still relies on the current first-past-the-post system to elect members with the ability to nominate a small additional percentage of members to the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies through nomination by the political parties based on their vote share in the General Election seems worthy of our consideration.

In the first-past-the-post system, the candidate winning the most votes wins the election automatically, even if they do not win a majority of the votes polled. In practice, the number of independents winning elections has been minimal and diminishing by the day, making our elections mainly a fight among parties.



KISHORE POREDDY

proportional representation wherein parties get to nominate members based on the share of votes they receive in the election. This idea has gained little traction because it introduces an entirely new system of voting and also because of the complex voting process for some of its forms.

Additionally, it could disadvantage independent candidates and small regional parties who have acceptability only in focused geographies limited to only a few seats or a small sub-section of society. On the other hand, a system that still relies on the current first-past-the-post system to elect members with the ability to nominate a small additional percentage of members to the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies through nomination by the political parties based on the vote share they receive in the general election seems worthy of our consideration.

converted less of its vote share into seats than the BJP. Firstly, it could provide seats for parties receiving support from many voters, but their voters are dispersed geographically across constituencies. It could help many states get representation in the party ruling at the Center and not feel left out from the dispensation ruling the nation.

achieve this. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is a classic example; the Congress made him a Rajya Sabha member from Assam based on its strength in the state Assembly. Similarly, every major party in the country sent leaders to the Rajya Sabha to be able to use their services for the nation - many a time from states where they never lived or even understood the local language.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)

Several reforms underway in Inter education: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, announced on Friday that significant reforms are being introduced in the State's Intermediate education sector following the TDP-led NDA government coming to power.

For the first time, after I became the Minister for Education, textbooks were provided to students. We have divided students into A, B, and C categories, and bridge courses are being conducted for those struggling in certain subjects. I encourage MLAs to visit the government schools in their respective constituencies and provide valuable feedback. We are now formulating plans to make government degree colleges more industry-centric and improve their overall infrastructure.

have divided students into A, B, and C categories, and bridge courses are being conducted for those struggling in certain subjects," he added. He stressed that the government's efforts are focused on ensuring that government colleges can compete with private institutions like the Narayana Group of Institutions.

"He made several valuable suggestions that we are considering for the betterment of our education system," Lokesh said. Emphasising that the government is focused on improving infrastructure, faculty, and educational material, Lokesh stated that meetings are being held with senior officers of the Secondary and Intermediate Education Boards to develop necessary improvements.

In addition, the Minister outlined plans to regularly review academic results and to keep parents informed. He announced that mega Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) will be held across the state in the first week of December, urging all MLAs to participate. "I encourage MLAs to visit the government schools in their respective constituencies and provide valuable feedback," he added. Addressing infrastructure concerns, Lokesh said that the government degree college at Tagarapuvallasa is currently being run on the KGBV school campus, but an alternative solution will be found soon.

CID to probe...

Continued from Page 1

The Minister explained that under the new excise policy, the government had earned Rs 1,800 crore in application fees and reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the supply of high-quality liquor to consumers. He assured that the number of liquor shops had not been increased, and strict rules would be enforced regarding their operating hours. Ravindra emphasised that any violations would result in penalties or more severe action.

YSRCP slams govt for not fulfilling promises to employees, pensioners

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State Employees and Pensioners Wing president N. Chandrasekhar Reddy has criticised the coalition government for failing to address key issues faced by employees and pensioners in its budget. He alleged that the budget lacks allocations for pending DA arrears, PRC dues, and GPF settlements amounting to Rs 25,000 crore.

Centre okays Naidu's key... India will be... The Chief Minister also made a request to Dr. Jaishankar to revive Singapore's participation in the development of Amaravati. The Union Minister expressed his agreement to the proposal, which could significantly contribute to the capital city's growth.

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Minister Savita to launch free DSC coaching for BC candidates today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is set to launch a major initiative on Saturday to provide free coaching for candidates from backward classes (BC) preparing for the DSC exams. BC Welfare Minister S. Savita announced on Friday that the coaching would be conducted through BC Study Circles across all 26 district headquarters.

A dedicated website will provide expert-led classes, past question papers, and model papers for practice. Eligible candidates must hold a B.Ed qualification and have cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET).

two months, with candidates receiving a monthly stipend of Rs 1,500 and Rs 1,000 for study materials. The government is also rolling out online coaching to benefit those unable to attend physical sessions. A dedicated website will provide expert-led classes, past question papers, and model papers for practice. Eligible candidates must hold a B.Ed qualification and have cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET).

YSRCP slams Naidu for ignoring Rayalaseema interests

PNS ■ KADAPA/ANANTAPUR/KURNOOL

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders from Rayalaseema have lashed out at Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for relocating the Lokayukta and Human Rights Commission offices from Kurnool to Amaravati. Terming the move an injustice to the region, they called for collective action from all political parties to safeguard Rayalaseema's interests.

Court in the region. He lauded former Chief Ministers YS Rajasekhara Reddy and YS Jagan, including declaring Kurnool as the judicial capital and allocating funds for the region's second Law University. Kurnool Mayor BY Ramaiah also condemned Naidu for neglecting Rayalaseema's development. He praised YS Jagan's efforts to make Kurnool the judicial capital and criticised the silence of opposition parties, including TDP, BJP, and Jana Sena, on the issue.

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AP govt partners...

Continued from Page 1

The Department of Education will partner with IIT Madras to offer technical training aligned with industrial requirements for students and teachers, spanning from primary education to intermediate levels. In infrastructure development, the partnership aims to transform airports in Kuppam and Puttaparthi into logistics and maintenance hubs, creating new business opportunities and fostering regional growth. Visakhapatnam is set to be developed as an Internet gateway to enhance global data connectivity, supported by advanced international technologies.

TTD EO visits Sringeri Sarada Peetham



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Officer Syamala Rao paid a courtesy visit to Sri Vidhu Shekhara Bharathi Theertha Swami, the Uttaraadhikari of Sringeri Sharada Peetham, on Friday evening. During his visit to the Sringeri Sankara Peetham in Tirupati, the EO was warmly felicitated by Swamiji, who extended his blessings. Swamiji also discussed with the EO various initiatives planned by the TTD to promote Sanatana Dharma, preserve Vedic traditions, and enhance the dissemination of Vedic education.

All vacant teacher posts will be filled by...

Continued from Page 1

Lokesh also shed light on the history of teacher recruitment in the state, noting that before 1994, teacher appointments were conducted by the respective Zilla Parishads. He pointed out that under the TDP government, 15 DSCs were held to fill a total of 1.8 lakh teacher vacancies. Criticising the previous YSRCP government, Lokesh claimed that it had failed to fill any teacher vacancies during its tenure. He accused the

YSRCP of issuing a DSC notification on February 12, 2024, merely two months before the Assembly elections, without any intention of actually advancing the recruitment process. The Minister also took a swipe at the YSRCP government's controversial GO 117, which he said had caused significant problems for both students and teachers. Under this order, a number of schools were merged, leading to operational difficulties. Lokesh reiterated

the need to involve teachers as key partners in improving the education system and reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing the quality of education in government schools. He assured the Assembly that the Commissioner of School Education is in discussions with teachers' unions regarding the impacts of GO 117 and that the government is working on an alternative to the order to prevent any further harassment of teachers.

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# IIT Madras lauds AP's RTGS for exemplary performance

RTGS, designed to monitor and respond to citizens' requests in real-time, connects all government departments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Real-Time Governance System (RTGS) implemented by the State government was praised by IIT Madras officials for its groundbreaking technological approach to public service. Prof V Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras, hailed the system's integration into the public sector as an example of innovative thinking and technological excellence.

A team from IIT Madras recently visited the RTGS Central Command Control Centre located at the Secretariat, where they were briefed by Chief Minister's Secretary Pradyumna and RTGS CEO K Dinesh Kumar. The officials elaborated on the system's objectives, its impact on governance, and the services it offers to the public.

The RTGS, designed to monitor and respond to citizens' requests in real-time, connects all government departments, ensuring a seamless flow of information and services. The system's ability to track and address public grievances as they arise represents a significant leap in the State's efforts to provide more responsive and efficient governance.



According to officials, the Chief Minister's vision was to harness cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance public service delivery. RTGS uses AI, along with other advanced technologies, to oversee the implementation of various government schemes and ensure that citizens receive timely and effective services.

Professor Kamakoti commended the State government's initiative, describing the RTGS platform as a trailblazer in integrating real-time governance within a governmental framework. He emphasised that IIT Madras is eager to collaborate with the RTGS team for future enhancements to the system.

"This is a remarkable step forward in using technology for public governance," said Prof Kamakoti. "RTGS represents a new paradigm in how technology can transform government services and make them more accessible to citizens."

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## CP issues guidelines for safer online environment



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bold move to curb the rising tide of harmful content and online harassment, Police Commissioner Dr Shanka Brata Bagchi has introduced a comprehensive set of guidelines aimed at fostering a safer online environment. "Social media platforms should not be a place for spreading hatred or division," Bagchi asserted. "We are committed to curbing the spread of harmful content and ensuring that these platforms remain spaces for constructive dialogue."

The newly implemented guidelines target a range of harmful behaviours, including the dissemination of hate speech, the creation of fake profiles, and the sharing of misleading information. "Pornographic, violent, or morbid images will not be tolerated," Dr. Bagchi stated firmly. "Sharing false information is equally unacceptable, as it can mislead and harm entire communities."

To address the issue of online harassment, the guidelines emphasise the importance of respectful interactions. "Deliberately provoking differences or spreading misinformation does more harm than we can imagine," Dr. Bagchi warned. "Trolling and other disruptive behaviours will not be tolerated." Account management practices are also under strict scrutiny.



## Tributes paid to Birsa Munda on Janjatiya Gaurav Divas

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

The vibrant Janjatiya Gaurav Divas celebrations brought together the people here to honour the heroic legacy of tribal leader Birsa Munda. The event, held at the Parvathipuram ITDA, highlighted Munda's contributions to tribal society and the nation.

Dr. DVG Sankara Rao, Chairman of the State ST Commission, emphasised the importance of education in achieving progress and empowerment for tribal communities. He urged the community to follow Munda's legacy of courage and resilience. Dr Rao also expressed concern over student deaths in educational institutions and called for immediate solutions to protect students' well-being.

District Collector A Shyam Prasad reaffirmed the district's dedication to prioritising education and health, particularly in tribal areas. He outlined ongoing efforts to improve hostel infrastructure, healthcare services, and skill development opportunities for unemployed youth. The JANAM programme, with a focus on PVTG villages, has allocated Rs. 15.25 crore to strengthen Van Dhan



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Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) for economic uplift.

The celebrations included vibrant cultural performances by students from various schools, showcasing the rich tribal heritage and artistry of the region. To support local farmers and fishermen, cheques worth Rs. 15 lakh were distributed to farmers for sprinkler units, part of a

Rs. 45 lakh cashew rejuvenation initiative. Additionally, five mopeds equipped with ice boxes and Aadhaar cards were distributed to fishermen to enhance their livelihoods.

The event was attended by the Superintendent of Police, Municipal Chairman, Sub-Collector, and ITDA Project Officer.

## Minister arrives late in Assembly

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP Legislative Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyanna Patrudu has said that ministers should be present in the Assembly to give answers to MLAs. Minister for Labour V Subhash arrived late in the Assembly on Friday. He was supposed to answer a question at the start of the question and answer session. However, in the Minister's absence, the question was initially postponed. When he arrived, members asked the question again. Minister Subhash apologised for being late.

Ayyanna Patrudu spoke to the Minister regarding the issue. He urged the Minister to take the question and answer session seriously. He questioned how it would be acceptable if ministers themselves arrive late.

## Suresh slams govt on education

Says it has failed to allocate adequate funds for programmes like Gorumudda and Vidya Kanuka

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Slamming the coalition government for its failure to prioritise the education system, Former Minister Adimulapu Suresh pointed out that its policies have left key educational schemes in disarray, negatively impacting the future of students.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Friday, Suresh highlighted the failure of the coalition government to allocate adequate funds for flagship programmes like Gorumudda and Vidya Kanuka, which were introduced under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure. He revealed that schemes like Vidya Deevana and Vasathi Deevana are pending payments of over Rs 5,000 crore, depriving students of essential support.



He condemned the budget allocations, saying they do not align with the promises made during the elections.

He flayed the coalition government for dismantling initiatives like Nadu-Nedu, which modernised 45,000 government schools and provided digital boards, clean drinking water, and Byju's

content-loaded tablets. Suresh also criticised the failure of the Taliki Vandanam scheme, pointing out that it has received less than half of the promised Rs 12,450 crore funding.

He warned that the coalition's mismanagement is causing government schools to deteriorate, affecting marginalised communities like SCs, STs, BCs, and minorities who depend on these institutions.

The former minister reminded the public of the YSRCP's successful reforms, including the recruitment of over 21,000 teachers, comprehensive support under Amma Vodi, and improved infrastructure.

He urged the coalition to stop punishing students and parents due to political vendettas.



## Jharkhand Day celebrated at Raj Bhavan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer was chief guest at the Jharkhand State Formation Day celebrations held in Durbar Hall in Raj Bhavan here on Friday, under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat' programme.

Speaking on the occasion,

Abdul Nazeer has said that Jharkhand is a popular destination of travel and adventure because of its unique topography and the natural landscape, lush forests, waterfalls, and the State is a leading producer of mineral wealth in the country. The Governor said that the 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat' programme aims to forge a strong

relationship and bonding among all the people of the country, and promote mutual understanding between different States and Union Territories, through the concept of oneness.

The programme commenced with a video message of Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Governor of Jharkhand, fol-

lowed by Jharkhand traditional folk dance performed by students of Icon public school, Vijayawada. Students from Jharkhand studying in educational institutions in and around Vijayawada attended the programme. Dr M Hari Jawaharal, Secretary to Governor, officers and staff members of Raj Bhavan were also present.

## APSRTC staff plan protests on Nov 19, 20

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) Employees Union has announced a two-day protest on November 19 and 20, to be held across all 129 depots in the state and four zone workshops. Employees will wear red badges and stage protests during lunch breaks, including sit-ins and gate meetings, to demand solutions to their longstanding grievances. The union leaders submitted a letter to the Executive Director (Admin) of APSRTC on Friday, informing the management about the planned protests.

In a statement, union president Palishetty Damodar Rao and general secretary GV Narasayya revealed that they had submitted a memorandum to senior RTC officials on November 7, highlighting critical issues affecting the employees. Despite ongoing efforts to address these concerns at the district and zonal levels, no resolution has been reached, and the problems continue to escalate.

The union leaders criticised the attitude of some lower-level Depot Managers, who they claimed were dismissive of employees' concerns, with some reportedly saying, "We will do things as we please, and no one has the right to question us."

## Collector praises Red Cross Society's humanitarian services

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad lauded the efforts of the Indian Red Cross Society for its significant contributions to society through initiatives such as the timely supply of blood, free blood transfusions, and the distribution of medicines to the underprivileged, including children with thalassaemia.

Speaking at the inauguration of a blood donation camp organised by Round Table India at the Red Cross Blood Bank in Maharanipeta on Friday, the Collector expressed his admiration for the impactful services provided by the organisation. He also visited the thalassaemia centre housed in the same building, where he interacted with children affected by the disease and their families, offering them words of encouragement and carefully listening to their concerns.

"The Red Cross Society has set an example through its unwavering commitment to humanitarian services. It is inspiring to see the dedication of the volunteers and donors who are the backbone of such impactful programmes," said the Collector, acknowledging the donors who actively participated in the camp.



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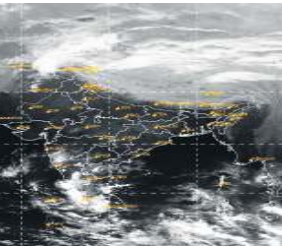
Dr. YS Shiva Nagendra Reddy, Chairman of the Indian Red Cross Society, echoed the sentiments of the District Collector. "We are deeply committed to serving those in need and are grateful for the support from initiatives like Round Table India, which amplify our ability to reach more people," he said. TR Maqsood Ahmed, Area Chairman of Round Table India, emphasised the impor-

tance of collaborative efforts. "Blood donation is a life-saving act, and partnerships like this ensure we can provide help where it is needed most," he noted. The event also witnessed the participation of Red Cross Managing Committee members, representatives of Round Table India, and numerous donors, all of whom contributed to making the initiative a success.

## Heavy rain likely in AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy rain is expected at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours, according to the Meteorological Centre on Friday. In its daily weather update, the centre forecasted thunderstorms accompanied by lightning at isolated locations in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 48 hours, and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours.



Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are also likely at a few places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next four days, and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Yanam during the next 48 hours.

Dry weather is expected to prevail in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh from November 17 to 21, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema from November 19 to 21. The report also mentioned that rain had occurred at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at most places in Rayalaseema over the past 24 hours.

## NEP will revolutionise education: MP Sribharath

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam MP and GITAM Deemed to be University President, M Sribharath, expressed optimism about the potential of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Addressing the Regional Children's Congress 2024 on Friday, he emphasised the policy's role in enhancing both the quality and accessibility of education across India.

"India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is currently a mere 30 per cent, highlighting the urgent need for increased participation," said Sribharath. He further pointed out the significant



employment gap in the field of engineering, with about 90 per cent of graduates facing

challenges in securing jobs due to a lack of relevant skills. To bridge this gap, Sribharath

advocated for government-led skill assessments to identify employment needs and

tailor educational programmes accordingly.

Responding to a student's query about reservations, Sribharath explained their role in creating equitable opportunities for various communities. He also stressed the importance of bilingualism, encouraging students to master both English and their mother tongue. "Proficiency in both languages is crucial for success," he said, adding that AI advancements will help bridge language barriers and foster cultural understanding.

Addressing India's "brain drain" challenge, Sribharath emphasised the need for attracting investments, creating better opportunities, and

offering competitive pay to retain skilled professionals within the country. "The government is committed to developing strategies to ensure India's brightest minds contribute to the nation's progress," he said.

The event, chaired by GITAM In-Charge Vice-Chancellor Prof. Y Gowtham Rao, was attended by students who engaged in discussions about the future of education and employment in India. Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti Deputy Commissioner T Gopalakrishna, GITAM School of Science Dean Prof. KS Krishna, Principal Prof. K Vedavathi, and other dignitaries were also present.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Right to breathe

As Delhi air turns toxic, Delhiites face severe health risks; the capital needs long-term solutions, not knee-jerk reactions

Delhi's air quality has plummeted to hazardous levels, with the city's Air Quality Index (AQI) soaring to a staggering 428, marking the worst pollution levels in the country. As a result, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has announced the enforcement of stringent Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)-3 restrictions starting at 8 AM on Friday. On Thursday, the 24-hour AQI for the city reached 428, signaling a "severe" air quality category, which poses serious health risks to the population, especially children, the elderly and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions. The current AQI level of 428 puts Delhi in the "Severe" category, indicating that the air is dangerously polluted and immediate action is required to prevent further deterioration of public health. In response to the deteriorating air quality, the CAQM has imposed the following GRAP-3 restrictions to mitigate the pollution levels: All non-essential construction and demolition activities in Delhi and the surrounding National Capital Region (NCR) are suspended to prevent dust and particulate matter from exacerbating the pollution. Vehicles that do not meet the latest emission norms are banned from the roads. Specifically, petrol vehicles that do not comply with BS-III (Bharat Stage III) standards and diesel vehicles that fall under BS-IV norms are prohibited from operating within Delhi and parts of NCR.



These measures are expected to significantly reduce the amount of pollutants being emitted into the air, especially from construction sites and older vehicles, which are major contributors to air pollution. The current spike in pollution levels to a combination of factors. The calm winds and a sharp drop in temperature have trapped pollutants in the air, preventing them from dispersing. The weather conditions have created a 'smog blanket' over the city, intensifying the effects of vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, and the burning of crop stubble in neighbouring states. The Supreme Court of India has taken note of the deteriorating air quality and has scheduled a hearing on November 18 to discuss further enforcement measures. The court has emphasised that every citizen has the fundamental right to breathe clean air, as protected under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Delhi's pollution crisis has now drawn significant national and international attention. While the immediate focus is on enforcing short-term measures like the GRAP-3 restrictions, experts argue that lasting solutions require systemic changes, including stricter emissions standards, better waste management, and a push for cleaner public transportation options. As the city continues to grapple with the toxic smog, Delhi residents are urged to stay indoors as much as possible, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, and wear N95 masks to protect themselves from the harmful effects of the air pollution. In the coming days, it is hoped that both weather conditions and Govt interventions will bring some relief, but the long-term health of the city's residents depends on sustained efforts to curb the sources of pollution.

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### PICTALK



Devotees take a holy dip in the Ganga river at a ghat on the occasion of 'Kartik Purnima' festival, in Varanasi

## US-Iran tensions: War clouds over West Asia



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

With regional stability hanging in the balance, the world watches anxiously as West Asia braces for the potential fallout of escalating hostilities

On July 3, 1988, the US Navy's USS Vincennes, in an act of brazen military overreach, shot down Iran Air Flight 655, a civilian airliner carrying 290 passengers, over the Persian Gulf. The Navy's justification—that this was an "unintentional error"—belyes the harsh reality: this was not a mistake, but rather an emblematic instance of Western indifference to the lives of those deemed expendable.

The Navy mistook a commercial flight for an enemy fighter jet, launching two surface-to-air missiles and killing all aboard. Yet, the US response was not to acknowledge a moral failing, but to double down on its denial, offering neither a genuine apology nor reparations to the victims' families. This tragedy was a grim reminder of the West's long-standing practice of dehumanising the peoples of West Asia in its relentless pursuit of geopolitical dominance. For the Iranian people, it was not merely a military blunder; it was a stark dismissal of their humanity, reinforcing the deeply entrenched belief in Western circles that the lives of those beyond its borders are, at best, collateral damage in the pursuit of power.

The echoes of this tragedy persist today, amplified by the volatile relationship between the US and Iran. Just days after Donald Trump's re-election, the US government claimed to have uncovered a plot by Iran to assassinate the president. Iran vehemently rejected these allegations, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi dismissing them as a "third-rate comedy" and accusing the US of fabricating a narrative to justify further aggression. Araqchi's derision—mocking the absurdity of an assassin "sitting in Iran and talking online to the FBI"—renewed the deep mistrust that defines the US-Iran relationship.

Now that Trump has secured a second term and will become the 47th President of the USA, it is clear that his foreign policy, especially towards Iran, could become far more aggressive, with disastrous consequences. His planned appointments of hawkish figures



such as Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defence, Steven C Witkoff as Special Envoy on West Asia Affairs and Mike Huckabee as Ambassador to Israel - suggest that peace in the West Asia is more distant than ever. These choices reflect a growing alignment with Israel's interests, further inflaming tensions and laying the groundwork for a catastrophic conflict—one that could see a war against Iran as the ultimate culmination of decades of Western intervention.

This looming disaster cannot be divorced from the historical legacy of Western interference in West Asia. Iran's relationship with the West has been shaped by centuries of betrayal and manipulation. A defining moment in this fraught history was the CIA-backed coup of 1953, which ousted Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he sought to nationalise Iran's oil industry.

This act, orchestrated by Western powers, reinstated the Shah's brutal regime, sowing the seeds for the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This history of intervention, driven by oil and geopolitics, instilled a deep sense of betrayal in the Iranian consciousness—a sentiment that still defines Iran's foreign policy today.

Divided along sectarian lines and often opportunistic in their foreign policy, Iran's



DIVIDED ALONG SECTARIAN LINES AND OFTEN OPPORTUNISTIC IN THEIR FOREIGN POLICY, IRAN'S NEIGHBOURS HAVE REPEATEDLY FAILED TO PUT REGIONAL UNITY AHEAD OF EXTERNAL PRESSURES

neighbours have repeatedly failed to put regional unity ahead of external pressures. Yet, the geopolitical manipulations that have shaped this region's history are part of a broader pattern: the West's refusal to recognise the sovereignty of nations it deems strategically irrelevant.

The Iranian people have grown ever more resolute in their refusal to capitulate to external demands. This isolation, initially born of necessity, has also transformed into a profound existential struggle. In response, Iran has sought alliances with nations like China and Russia and forged relationships with non-state actors in the region. These alliances—born not of ideology, but of pragmatic necessity—have allowed Iran to exert regional influence, shifting the balance of power in ways the West never anticipated.

In his first term, Trump used a two-pronged strategy to weaken Iran: connecting other Arab nations in favour of Israel through the Abraham Accords, a treaty engineered by his Jewish-origin son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and secondly, targeting key personalities who enabled Iran's influence in the region while funding efforts by Iranians living abroad working against Iran.

In his second term, which could be more refined and sharpened by the experiences he earned in the last eight years—both in office and out-

side the White House—his actions could become far more unpredictable. Consequently, the potential for war against Iran is no longer a distant fear; it is a rapidly approaching reality. It would affirm the West's view that the lives of Iranians, like those across the Global South, are expendable in pursuit of geopolitical dominance, making this a war of choice, not necessity, with existential stakes for Iran. In this context, the responsibility to avoid war does not lie solely with the U.S. or Iran, but with all the nations of the region, including those of the Arab world.

Despite their differing beliefs, histories, and alliances, it is incumbent upon Arab nations to take a united stand against the spectre of war. The voices of Arab leaders, particularly those who have long been caught in the geopolitical crossfire of the US-Iran conflict, must rise in defence of regional peace and stability. Divisions must be set aside in favour of collective action that prioritises the preservation of life and sovereignty over ideological differences. The world, and particularly the nations of West Asia, must strive to find a path of diplomacy and dialogue, to avoid yet another destructive war that will further tear apart the very fabric of the region.

(The writer is a journalist and author; Views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### SIMPLIFY TAX SYSTEM

Madam — The article on simplifying tax structures presents an acceptable argument (14-11-24). The successive governments seem to be under utter confusion and all the changes are found to be further complicating the tax structure rather than making it simple to understand and comply with. GST is further a complicated one in every aspect. The government is not clear even in a matter like what is to be taxed. Essentials are taxed; condoms and bangles are exempted. Falling sick is taxed. Medicines, diagnostic devices and insurance premiums are taxed as if falling sick is a matter of comfort and luxury. Even in the case of direct tax, the government's sense of vengeance over the salaried section is clearly displayed. This section is earning money to spend and save.

Both are good and help build a better economy of the country. But they are made to pay not less than 30 per cent as income tax besides GST on every spending. Besides forgoing a huge part of salary, they have to manage the hardships caused by untamed inflation also. There is no answer on the relevance of toll collections. A road is laid and its expenses are met with one year of toll collection. But collections are carried on for decades and they are never closed. It is this confusion in the mind of the government that drives earners to seek ways and means to avoid tax and accumulate black money. It is high time for the government to overhaul the entire tax system and make it people-friendly.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### STOP ILLEGAL DEMOLITIONS

Madam — The Supreme Court intervened that no government is allowed to rule with a bulldozer, by blazing the houses of the miscreants and culprits like this. The Supreme Court guidelines pace respect to the dreams of the home of every single individual, despite

#### Ensure doctors' safety



Violence against doctors and medical staff by patients' relatives is a serious issue that has been on the rise. Hospitals often deal with life-and-death situations, leading to heightened emotions; for example, when a patient's health condition worsens or dies, relatives may react violently out of grief and frustration. This can be avoided by informing the patient's condition when it wors-

ens, to prepare the relatives for the worst situation. Sometimes families believe that adequate and proper treatment was not provided, which can be cleared by informing them about the disease and line of treatment being provided. Clear and compassionate communication is crucial to satisfying and pacifying them.

Some patients or their relatives may have mental health issues or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which can lead to violent tendencies, which need to be noticed and taken care of by the attending medical staff. Overcrowded hospitals, long waiting times, and inadequate basic facilities add to the frustration of patients and their families, resulting in violence. Hence, a multifaceted approach is required to tackle violence against medical professionals in hospitals.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

that he was the been charged culprit under some legal allegations. So far, the UP government has been popularising itself with the Bulldozer Raaj.

The use of bulldozers to demolish the house of the culprits, to give them a lesson, is turning into the way of governance in Uttar Pradesh. The demolishing of the houses and illegal land encroachment must be followed by a legal procedure of waving official legal notice at least 15 days prior and with full opportunity to appeal by the affected party. The move by the apex court will add more transparency to the justice mechanism, and this intervention by the judiciary will assist the innocent to save the sweet home from the red tape bureaucrats and political leaders, who many times hurt the innocent to show their political status and power.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

#### POLLUTION FROM WASTE

Madam — Instead of resolving environmental problems, Delhi's ambition to convert garbage into energy is creating

health risks. The factory is releasing harmful smoke and ash into the surrounding neighborhoods, despite its goal of reducing landfill waste through rubbish incineration. Significant pollution has resulted, exposing locals to dangerously high concentrations of heavy metals like lead, cadmium, manganese, and arsenic—up to 19 times higher than what the EPA recommends.

Cardiovascular and respiratory disorders, as well as developmental hazards for children, are among the health effects. The absence of crucial safety measures at the plant is criticised by experts. Respiratory problems are common among the locals, and ash contamination has reached neighboring residences, schools, and parks. The intended "green" solution might make Delhi's pollution problem worse if regulatory action is not taken.

Divyansh Pal | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Wooden pallets: Turning timber into treasure



JAY DEEPAK SHAH

Circular economy practices are changing the future of wooden pallets, from innovative recycling methods to tech-driven solutions

Wooden pallets are indispensable in modern logistics, widely used to support the transportation and storage of goods across various industries, including fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), pharmaceuticals, automotive, chemicals and more.



One of the most effective ways to enhance sustainability in the wooden pallet industry is through repair and refurbishment. While pallets generally have a lifespan of 12 to 18 months, many can be used longer with regular maintenance. Instead of discarding damaged pallets, companies can inspect and repair them by replacing broken slats and restoring their structural integrity. This process helps conserve raw materials and lowers the carbon footprint associated with manufacturing new pallets. Adopting repair programmes also reduces the demand for fresh timber, which helps prevent deforestation and minimises waste.

**Repurposing, Upcycling, and Recycling** When wooden pallets are no longer fit for their primary purpose, they can still serve a wide range of functions through repurposing, upcycling, or recycling. Repurposing transforms discarded pallets into furniture, decor, or art, extending their lifespan and keeping them out of landfills. This also supports local economies by providing artisans with reclaimed wood to create unique, eco-friendly products. When repurposing or upcycling are no longer options, recycling can turn pallets into products like particleboard or mulch, which conserves resources and reduces the need for new timber. Together, these strategies help minimise waste and lower environmental impact, encouraging responsible use of resources.

**Sustainable Sourcing as a Foundation for Circularity** To fully align with circular economy principles, the wood used in pallet manufacturing should be sustainably sourced. Certification programmes, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), play a

crucial role in ensuring responsible forest management. These certifications verify that forests are managed sustainably, protecting biodiversity, preventing illegal logging, and minimising environmental impact.

#### The Role of Technology in Enhancing Circularity

Technology is increasingly central to the transformation of wooden pallets, with advancements like the Internet of Things and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) improving pallet management. These technologies allow pallets to be embedded with sensors, which enable real-time tracking of location, condition, and usage. This visibility optimises inventory management and reduces losses. By tracking pallets through their entire lifecycle, businesses can maximise reuse, ensuring that pallets are returned, repaired, and repurposed efficiently. Such technology-driven strategies extend the lifespan of pallets, ensuring they remain in the supply chain as long as possible.

(The writer is CEO & MD at Jay Wood Industry; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN

### THE RISE AND FALL OF EGO

True success lies not in fame or power but in humility and understanding one's purpose of life



RAVI VALLURI

A challenging task or an idea normally releases endorphins, which stimulate the human mind to think out of the box, and when endowed with such an attitude, we scale high altitudes and reach the summit. But there is a flip side. We become attached to the product or the activity flow; consequently, the mind gets entrapped by the adulation. A vivacious model with gravitas, known for scorching the ramp, was chosen for a cinematic role. She executed the role with aplomb and was soon nominated for several awards and managed to win some of them, including the Best New Face award.

The actress was bestowed with several honours and in the process bagged prestigious roles. It was indeed a heady feeling. She was feted at various parties and became a celebrity overnight. However, there was no end to her avarice as her mind and body craved more attention. The "I, Me" syndrome dominated her mind and she spent hours before the mirror, taking selfies, adoring her ravishing beauty and success. At her peril, she ignored the alarm bells, the death knell knocking at her door. She got hooked on alcohol, money, drugs and sex. The talented artiste lost her equanimity, equipoise and equilibrium in a state of feverishness and in the process attracted opprobrium.

The meteoric rise of the artiste was short-lived and her obnoxious behaviour was not acceptable to the industry she was soon stripped of meaty roles and sure enough, lost power and fame. Tragedy struck



in a cruel form as her life was snuffed out at a tender age when she succumbed after a car crash in an inebriated state. Who was to be blamed for this irrational behaviour? False egos play havoc on human minds when the power of discrimination gets obfuscated in the razzmatazz and dazzle of "doership". The breed of such people extends among politicians, entrepreneurs and seekers as they are entrapped by doership and cannot let go and remain humble.

They focus on certain immediate outcomes and in the bargain, lose the plot and larger picture. In the political sphere too, parties become dependent on the success and megalomania of an individual and lose their core strengths of inner democracy and grassroots contact. The spiritual world is not spared either. Seekers, to begin with, tread the path with great courage and conviction and have immense faith in the Master and the path. They unflinchingly participate in sadhana, seva, Satsang, meditation and other activities of the organisation. The Master (Guru) in his magnanimity encourages all his followers. Some progress on the path and others fall aside as the rigour and regimen of spirituality are arduous and crammed with disturbances before the seeker obtains peace of mind. Soon the feverish mind of the seeker feels proximity to the Master and in the process, rubs fellow seekers the wrong way. Some seekers 'like' these photographs on Facebook to ingratiate themselves with those purportedly "close", in anticipation that it could act as a passport to have a glimpse of the Guru. A true spiritual leader or Master cautions the faithful not to be trapped in the quagmire of Guru Mandal. "Under the influence of false ego, one thinks himself to be the doer of activities, while all the activities are carried out by nature as a natural process," expounds Lord Krishna to Arjuna. A genuine seeker should realise that we are infinitesimal in this vast universe. Our acts and deeds, if truly positive and humble, will automatically draw us closer to the Guru and the Laws of the Universe.

*(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)*

# Bangladesh: A nation's press under pressure



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Attacks on media houses and journalists continue notwithstanding the interim Govt's claim that it is committed to upholding media freedom

The media's independence is under severe attack in Bangladesh under the interim government headed by chief advisor Muhammad Yunus. The attack is two-pronged. One of these is directed against media houses and journalists perceived to have been supporters of the Awami League and the government when Sheikh Hasina headed both. The second targets non-aligned media establishments, editors and journalists, including those known for standing up to the Awami League government's repressive media regime. The objective is to pressure them into toeing the line laid down by the young sparks dominating the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM) and rabidly anti-Awami League and fundamentalist Islamist elements in sections of the media and the interim government.

Coming to media houses, eight channels were attacked on August 5, 2024, itself, when Sheikh Hasina left for India. Among them was Ekattor TV's office in Baridhara, Dhaka, which was vandalised and burnt down; also attacked on the same day in Dhaka were the premises of Samay TV, and ATN Bangla. On August 19, an armed mob attacked and severely damaged the establishment of East West Media group, which runs Kaler Kantha (Voice of the times) Bangladesh Pratidin (Bangladesh daily), both Bengali-language newspapers, Daily Sun, an English-language daily, News24BD, a television news channel, Radio Capital, a radio station, and Banglanews24, an online Bengali daily. The mob assaulted journalists, injured a woman journalist and harassed women employees.

As for journalists, according to Reporters Without Borders, a globally-respected international NGO headquartered in Paris, "baseless accusations of killing protesters have been brought against nearly 140 journalists. Twenty-five have been charged with 'crimes against humanity. Many of them have gone into hiding because they fear being arrested and jailed." A number of journalists have been arrested and jailed. Their ranks include Shakil Ahmed, former head of news at television channel Ekattor TV, and Farzana Rupa, its former chief correspondent, who were arrested from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka, on August 21, 2024, when they were about to board a Turkish Airlines flight to Paris via Istanbul, along with their daughter. The two of them remain in prison, as do Mozammel Haque Babu, chief executive officer of Ekattor TV and Shyamal Datta, editor of Bhorer Kagaz (Paper at Dawn) who were arrested on September 15. In a letter emailed recently to Muhammad Yunus, Jodie Ginsburg, chief executive officer of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a respected NGO promoting press freedom and defending the rights of journalists worldwide, urged him to ensure, among other things, respect for the "procedural rights of four incarcerated pro-Awami League journalists: Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mozammel Babu and Shyamal Datta, including their right to a free trial." The arrests are hardly surprising. According to a report in the Dhaka Tribune dated September 19, 2024, the ADSM leader, Nahid Islam who, besides his other hats, is advisor in charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, thundered at a press conference on the previous day that the "instigators" of the July-August massacre



**EIGHT CHANNELS WERE ATTACKED ON AUGUST 5, 2024, ITSELF WHEN SHEIKH HASINA LEFT FOR INDIA. AMONG THEM WAS EKATTOR TV'S OFFICE IN BARIDHARA, DHAKA, WHICH WAS VANDALIZED AND BURNT DOWN; ALSO ATTACKED ON THE SAME DAY IN DHAKA WERE THE PREMISES OF SAMAY TV, AND ATN BANGLA**

[of protesters] would be brought to justice no matter whether they identified themselves as journalists, writers and artists. Doubtless, the interim government was to decide as to who were to be brought to justice.

Just two examples would show how utterly arbitrary and vindictive such decisions have been. The one is the continued incarceration of Shahriar Kabir, an internationally-respected human rights activist, champion of secular humanism, advocate of the bringing war criminals of 1971 to justice, author and journalist. The second is the arrest, on November 6, 2024, of the noted television actor, Shomi Kaiser, daughter of Shahidullah and Panna Kaiser. Shahidullah, a noted writer and journalist, disappeared after being abducted by Pakistani army personnel and their collaborators from the ranks of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and allied organisations like al-Badr, al-Shams and Razakars. His brother, Zaheer Raihan, also disappeared while looking for him. Panna Kaiser was an Awami League Member of Parliament (1996-2001) who worked in the area of youth welfare. Apart from arrests on false charges, the cancellation of accreditation cards, which has reached a total of 167 at the time of writing, is being used as a weapon against journalists. Such cards are important for identifying oneself as a journalist, and securing entry into restricted areas, government offices and meetings. Referring to the matter, Celia Mercier, Head of South Asia Office of Reporters Without Borders,

another globally-respected NGO whose mission is to act for freedom, pluralism and independence of journalism, and defend those who embody these ideals, has said, "The decision to rescind the accreditation cards of journalists considered close to the previous government is politically-motivated and punitive, and has the effect of intimidating the press. It encourages self-censorship and threatens the very existence of opposition media. This decision by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry [of Bangladesh] is incomprehensible, coming just a week after it took a positive step by establishing a mechanism for reporting cases of harassment against journalists. We urge the ministry to return to this more constructive path by establishing a regulated procedure for issuing and rescinding press cards, by ensuring that cases of harassment are examined impartially, and by putting a final stop to political reprisals against media professionals." As for pressures on independent media establishments, editors and journalists, the aim is to make them toe the line laid down by the young sparks dominating the ADSM, and rabidly anti-Awami League and fundamentalist Islamist elements in sections of the media and the interim government. The weapons are threats and harangues. At a meeting to discuss "Role of Media in Creating Fascist Narrative: A Review," Mahmudur Rahman, editor of Amar Desh (My Country) criticized two national newspapers, Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, for their coverage and com-

mentary on Sheikh Mujib and Sheikh Hasina, suggesting that these outlets are paving the way for fascism by creating contrasting narratives. He further said that the media had fostered hatred towards Islam, misrepresented societal divisions, and perpetuated a narrative of eternal gratitude towards India for its role in Bangladesh's liberation. Significantly, Mahmudur Rahman said this in the presence of Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus' press secretary, Shafiqul Alam. Events like this have been creating a climate in which channels and publications, including the two of Bangladesh's leading paper which Rahman criticised, are sought to be put under compulsion to conform to the kind of reportage and comment the interim government expects of them.

All this makes a mockery of the interim government's assertions that it is for the freedom of the press and its moves like the setting up of a commission for hearing allegations of harassment by journalists. An editorial in The Daily Star, dated November 7, 2024, delivered a damning indictment of the situation and the interim government's role when it said, "In our pursuit of a fair, anti-discriminatory Bangladesh, few values are as vital as press freedom. We are, therefore, concerned by the persistent intimidation, harassment, and censorship faced by journalists, which shows how the media landscape remains fraught with obstacles."

*(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer; the views expressed are personal)*

## Punjab by-elections: A Stage for dynastic politics, defections and defamatory rhetoric

In the run-up to the Punjab Assembly by-elections 2024, political leaders seem to have sidestepped pro-people issues

Elections are usually a good opportunity for political leaders to make public statements and seek public feedback on their pro-people works and policies. But the scene in the Punjab Assembly by-elections 2024 eludes the expectation. Along with other states in India, there are by-elections in four Assembly constituencies of Punjab for which voting is to be held on November 20, 2024. In the absence of any public-interest manifestos, political parties rely on the 'candidate-winnability' supporting political apostasy and dynastic politics. Most political leaders in the campaign are relying on defamatory garrulous speeches and irresponsible false claims. The trust deficit of the people in politi-



SUKHDEV SINGH

cal parties and the confidence deficit in their leaders is so high that the oldest and traditionally strongest political party of the state, Shiromani Akali Dal, has preferred to not contest the elections. A conglomeration of its disgruntled leaders, the Akali Dal Reform Movement, is also out of the election contest. The contest is triangular among the ruling party in the state- Aam Aadmi Party, the ruling party

in the centre- Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress. In one constituency, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate is a cousin of the Akali Dal chief and has been a minister in the Akali and the Congress governments. He has apostatised three political tastes before joining the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the Aam Aadmi Party candidate left the Akali Dal shortly before the current by-elections. The Congress party candidate is the wife of the Congress State party president and a 2024-elected Member of Parliament. In another constituency, the Aam Aadmi Party candidate is the son of a 2024-elected Member of Parliament from the same party; the MP had defected

from the Congress just before the 2024 parliamentary elections to contest and win as an Aam Aadmi Party candidate, while the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate has defected Shrimoni Akali Dal; he has been a minister in the SAD government. In the third constituency, the Congress party candidate is the wife of its party MP and a former Deputy Chief Minister. In contrast, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate is a former Akali MLA and the son of a Punjab Assembly speaker in the SAD government. In the fourth constituency, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate has been a former senior Vice-President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and a Congress MLA before deserting the Congress to join



the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the Aam Aadmi Party candidate is said to be a favourite of an MP and a former minister, ignoring its former district chief who is contesting as a rebel. The four vacancies arose because the MLAs in all four contested and won parliamentary elections held in June 2024. In three of the four, the

contesting candidates are the immediate family members of the 2024-elected MPs. As the family members of the MPs, they are assumed to be the 'winning' candidates because their mentors have already proved it by winning the Assembly and then parliamentary elections sequentially. The question arises whether the political parties do not have any other members from any other section of society who can be 'winning' candidates or if some leaders have turned electoral politics into a family monopoly aka 'nepotism', in which there is no room for other party workers, however sincere and hard-working they may be. The current situation is so ridiculous that these leaders

and the political parties criticize each other for dynastic politics, nepotism and party defection. Still, when the opportunity arises, they play the game and present their spouses, children and relatives as the only 'winning' candidates and strengthen political dynasticism justifying it in various ways. Claiming himself the next Chief Minister of the state during his campaign for the BJP candidate, a Government of India Minister compared 'the peasant leaders in protest' with 'Talibans' and threatened action against them after the elections. Not only his threat is defamatory and against the spirit of a democracy, but also an unbecoming rambling coercing votes for the candidate of his party.

Addressing an election meeting in favour of an Aam Aadmi Party candidate, its supreme dubs the sitting Congress MP as "corrupt Randhawa" inviting defamatory threat from him. Further he charges him with 'dynastic politics' ignoring the similar practice by AAP in another constituency where he has campaigned for the candidate on the same day. Thus the Punjab 2024 By-elections are riddled with defection, dynasticism, defamatory rhetoric, irresponsible rambling, bringing with it a sense of deterioration in democracy which both the people and political parties must address. *(The writer is retired professor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; views are personal)*





## Blackpink's Lisa takes centre stage, embraces solo success

**B**lackpink's Lisa is currently experiencing a series of successes! The Thai K-pop star, famous for her confident performance style and irresistible charm, is bringing her solo career to a whole new level. The Blackpink member spoke about the excitement of going solo, confessing she initially experienced fear and anxiety. And what about now? She is enjoying herself immensely. For those curious about the group, Lisa shared some thrilling updates: the group is already preparing for a significant return in 2025. "At first, I was scared and nervous because I never really came out here to do my own stuff," she told Billboard, before lowering her voice as if sharing a secret. "And now I'm having fun," she whispered, adding that fan reactions have been her biggest confidence boost yet. "When [my singles] came out, the reaction from the fans—it's healing me. It's like, 'Oh, my God. Yeah—I did a great job!'" In 2021, Lisa started her solo career with

popular songs *Lalisa* and *Money* and in June 2024, she raised the bar with a rock-'n'-roll track titled *Rockstar*. This debut signalled the beginning of a fresh solo chapter with RCA Records. By partnering with her company, LLOUD, Lisa was able to obtain ownership of her master recordings, a significant advancement in her career. She released two additional singles, collaborating with Rosalia on *New Woman* in August and releasing *Moonlit Floor* in October. The Celine ambassador made it clear that she does not intend to create a business empire or represent other artists through her recently established agency, a trajectory commonly linked to celebrities like Rihanna or Beyoncé. Instead of viewing her company as a business, she considers it her personal sanctuary designed to solely support her artistic growth. She is currently concentrating on creating new music and reaching her goals gradually, one year at a time.



## When Shraddha Kapoor 'jumped' onboard for Naagin

**N**ikhil Dwivedi, the producer, will revive the iconic folklore with his new project *Naagin*, casting Shraddha Kapoor as the legendary character. During a recent chat, Dwivedi shared that Shraddha was his initial preference for the role in the movie. Nikhil discussed his highly awaited movie and provided an update. He said, "Finally, the script is ready now. It has taken us three years to script it. We have redone the entire script three times, and now I can say that it's finally ready." Further speaking about why he decided to make *Naagin*, he said, "Firstly, it's a completely brand-new subject. It has no connection with previous films. The reason for me making this film is that Indian folklore is actually very rich in ideas. We get very excited when a spider bites a man and he becomes 'Spider-Man'. But we kind of look down upon a woman turning into a snake. Give us a chance and we'll turn it on its head and you will see quite a supernatural and different film."

When asked about his casting decision, Dwivedi said that Shraddha's versatility and screen presence made her an ideal choice for *Naagin*. "It was decided from the beginning that only Shraddha Kapoor would play Naagin. We're thrilled that she's on board. She has an ethereal quality about her," Dwivedi said. Talking about her reaction to the film, Dwivedi said, "She jumped at it. She was the first one to come on board. I approached her first with the idea and she was sold. She can't wait to start the shoot, now that the script is ready! We are just figuring out how to take it on floors as soon as possible. It will most likely go on floors next year." *Naagin* was announced a while ago but was said to have been delayed. Shraddha achieved great success with *Street 2*, breaking numerous records upon its launch and establishing her place in the industry.



## Cameron Diaz and Jamie Foxx, Back in Action



**A**ctors Jamie Foxx and Cameron Diaz are all set to share screen space in the high-energy espionage comedy, *Back in Action*. Netflix dropped the teaser trailer of *Back in Action*, which shows Foxx and Diaz on a thrilling ride as a married couple forced back into their old jobs as spies. "Years after giving up life as CIA spies to start a family, Emily and Matt find themselves dragged back into the world of espionage when their cover is blown," a synopsis reads. The Seth Gordon-helmed action comedy stars Diaz and Jamie Foxx as Emily and Matt. Glenn Close, Kyle Chandler, Andrew Scott, McKenna Roberts, Rylan Jackson and Jamie Demetriou also star in *Back in Action*. Seth Gordon, known for *Horrible Bosses*, has directed the film, which he co-wrote with Brendan O'Brien. "*Back in Action* stands out as Diaz's first movie role since 2014's *Annie*,

which Foxx also starred in. Diaz's return to acting was first announced in June 2022 and she and Foxx were later seen filming the action comedy as soon as December of that year. Production on the movie continued through January 2024. The film's production made headlines in April 2023 when Foxx had a medical emergency that interrupted filming for a period of time," according to reports. Foxx returned to set in January after being hospitalised and assuring supporters that he was "on his way to recovery" in May 2023. *Back in Action* marks the third time Foxx and Diaz have collaborated onscreen together after 1999's *Any Given Sunday* and *Annie*. Diaz will follow up the role with a part in Jonah Hill's upcoming film *Outcome*, reported People. *Back in Action* will start streaming on Netflix on January 17, 2025.

## Taapsee says Haseen Dillruba's narrative didn't rely on Vikrant playing quintessential hero!

**P**rior to the launch of *The Sabarmati Report*, Vikrant Massey is present in various locations promoting the film in which he is the main star. This is the first movie he has released in theaters since the huge success of *12th Fail*. During an interview, he was questioned about the discussions regarding the film *12th Fail*, which reportedly did not have a big star leading the cast. In an intriguing manner, Taapsee Pannu also mentioned before *Haseen Dillruba* that the actor playing the hero was not important in the movie. "Honestly, I don't take offence to these things," said Vikrant, adding, "It is true that *12th Fail* didn't have a massive star." Clarifying that he did receive positive feedback for his acting, it didn't really translate into box-office numbers. "On the commercial angle, I didn't even have a strong solo film hit the theatres before *12th Fail*. So, I understand that such statements weren't made in a condescending sense," said the actor, who shares that such healthy arguments are an important aspect of conversations. "We should healthily

agree to disagree. Unfortunately, in social media, and in life, we are seeing how friendships are being broken due to differing political ideologies and tolerance capacities. You just can't seem to agree to disagree anymore. That is disturbing."



## FUN

### ARCHIE



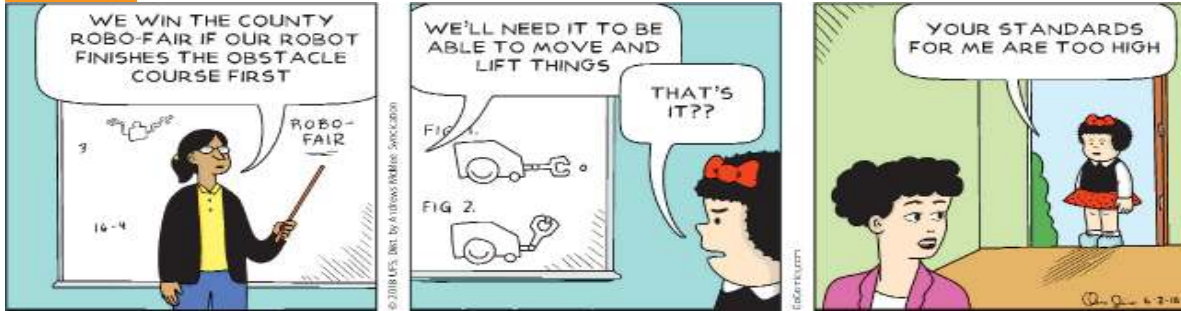
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



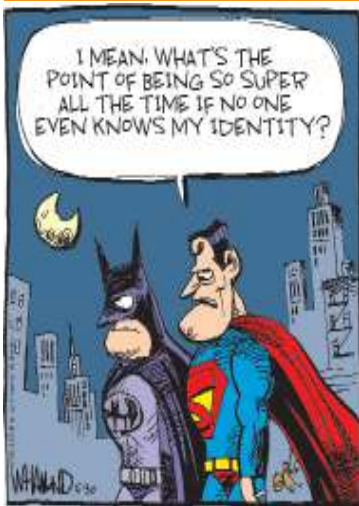
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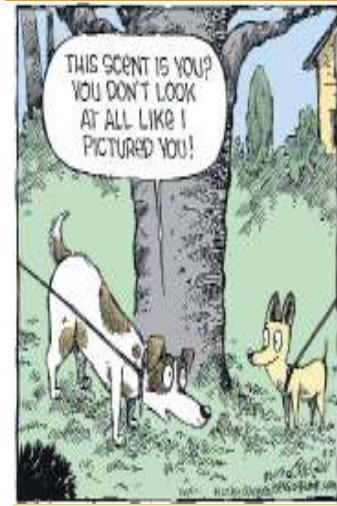
### GINGER MEGGS



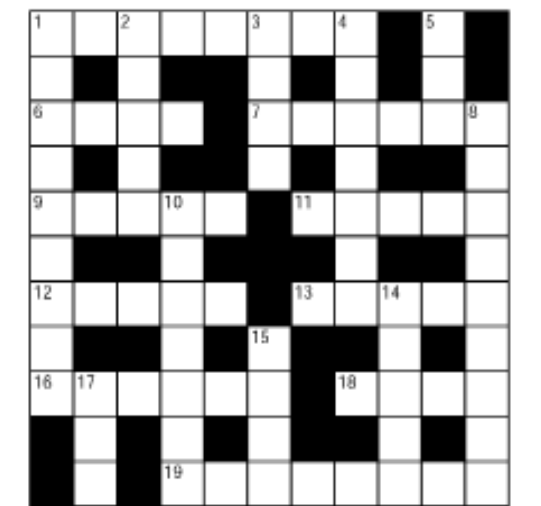
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- Train stops
- Tumble over and over
- Young cows
- A tall type of building
- A feeling of rage
- Bees make this
- One third of twenty-one
- Instructions for cake making
- The part along the side or end of something
- Always ready to give away or share what you have
- Complete quiet
- Tell a fib
- People unknown to you
- The late part of the day
- A machine that can record television programmes
- A type of blood vessel
- Poole

### DOWN

- A thing with handles for carrying an injured person
- Let
- Say this when you get hurt

SOLUTION

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## 'Hyderabad dreams with you and grows with you'

**GROWING UP IN HYDERABAD, APPALLA SAIKIRAN DISCOVERED THE PERFECT BLEND OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION THAT WOULD SHAPE HIS FUTURE. TODAY, HE SHARES HIS HEARTFELT CONNECTION WITH THE CITY!**

When Appalla Saikiran, founder and CEO of SCOPE, speaks about Hyderabad, he doesn't just recount memories; he shares a deep-rooted connection that has shaped both his personal and professional journey. Growing up here, Saikiran was profoundly influenced by his father, A.V. Prabhakar, who works as the group head in clinical data acquisition management at Novartis.

"My family has always been based here and seeing my father's dedication to his work in Hyderabad inspired my own

path," he says. For him, Hyderabad isn't just a hometown; it's the foundation of his entrepreneurial drive and sense of belonging.

He acknowledges that Hyderabad has been incredibly supportive of his ambitions. "The city offers an unmatched blend of culture and technology, making it the ideal environment for growth and innovation," he says. He feels Hyderabad has opened doors for him in unexpected ways, providing access to a vibrant ecosystem filled with talent, opportunities and

mentorship that have fueled his progress.

Although he never needed to migrate elsewhere, he understands why Hyderabad is so attractive for others. "I've travelled to many cities, but Hyderabad combines a unique warmth with ambition," he reflects. He admires how the city welcomes dreamers with open arms, offering a nurturing ground for anyone looking to build something meaningful.

"Hyderabad is forward-thinking yet deeply rooted in tradition making it a perfect balance of past and future."

For him, Hyderabad's biryani is more than a dish; it's a reminder of the city's harmonious blend of tradition and flavour. "It represents Hyderabad's ability to keep heritage alive even as it embraces modernity," he explains, capturing the cultural richness that defines his hometown.

Reflecting on his younger years, one of his fondest memories is walking

through the campus of his old school. "My childhood was filled with exploration, ambition and big dreams," he recalls. Growing up in Hyderabad, with a family that always supported his curiosity and passion, he found the seeds of his love for technology and entrepreneurship early on.

Hyderabad's rapidly advancing tech infrastructure and business-friendly government policies have played a key role in the company's expansion. "The talent pool here, especially in tech, is exceptional," he says proudly. Building a team that understands both global trends and local dynamics has allowed his company to thrive and grow.

The city's advanced healthcare infrastructure is another point of pride for him. It's one of the reasons his father's career in clinical data and healthcare has prospered in Hyderabad. "We have top-tier hospitals, research facilities and a strong network of healthcare professionals," he notes, adding that the city's healthcare resources are a great reassurance to anyone living here.

When asked what he loves about Hyderabad, he points to the city's openness and diversity. "It has a charm that's both welcoming and aspira-

tional," he says. However, as Hyderabad continues to expand, he hopes it will develop more green spaces to balance urban growth with natural beauty.

As a native, he has seen Hyderabad evolve from his childhood to today. "I didn't move here; I grew up here and that's why I've seen the city transform firsthand." From exploring as a child to returning with fresh perspectives as an entrepreneur, he's witnessed Hyderabad flourish as both a tech and startup hub, all while preserving its soul.

When friends and family come to visit, he enjoys showing them the two sides of Hyderabad. "Everyone wants to bring back Hyderabad's famous biryani and pearls," he says with a smile. "Charminar is always a must-see and they love the contrast between the old city's charm and HITEC City's energy." His guests experience Hyderabad as a place where traditional and modern worlds coexist seamlessly.

To him, Hyderabad is more than just a city; it's his partner in dreams. "Hyderabad is a nurturing ground for ideas," he says warmly. "It's where I started my entrepreneurial journey, supported by my family and where I learned that no dream is too big. This city dreams with you and grows with you."



## Breathe easy! Combating India's smog crisis with preventive measures



As the seasons change in India, a familiar haze begins to settle over the cities, especially in the northern region. This smog, a blend of smoke and fog, intensifies as winter approaches, posing a serious health risk to millions. The rise in pollution levels and the associated respiratory hazards has become a recurring issue, triggering concerns among health professionals and residents alike.

Speaking on the issue, Dr. Piyush Goel, Consultant, Pulmonology, Manipal Hospital, highlights, "Respiratory infections are surging as winter arrives, coinciding with increased levels of air pollutants, especially in North India. There are several contributing factors to it, high pollen counts, low humidity, which stagnates the air, causing its inability to disperse pollutants and, therefore, results in the formation of smog. Elevated levels of PM2.5 and PM10 particles are very porous as well as deeply penetrating the lungs, which aggravates existing lung conditions. Breathing in polluted air can irritate the airways, resulting in shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, asthma attacks and chest pain. Excessive exposure to air pollution is linked to several acute and chronic respiratory illnesses, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, respiratory allergies, and in extreme cases even lung cancer. Additionally, it can contribute to the rapid progression of chronic illnesses as well."

Dr. Goel advises having a prepared plan of action beforehand, an inhalator one can refer to, especially in patients with asthma and regular inhalation therapy; monitoring your lung condition through a peak flow meter can be another step in maintaining care for your condition better as well.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO MINIMISE SMOG EXPOSURE

- Taking precautions against smog is essential for everyone, particularly for those in urban areas where pollution levels reach alarming heights. Here are some effective strategies to protect yourself and reduce your exposure to polluted air:
- Limit outdoor activities:** Avoid going outdoors when pollutants are in high concentration, usually during peak hours, in the early morning and late evening. Avoid strenuous exercises like jogging or cycling since exercising causes one to breathe faster and take in more of pollutants. If outdoor activity is required, schedule it for the afternoon, when the air quality may improve slightly.
  - Improve indoor air quality:** Use HEPA filters in air purifiers and HVAC systems to remove pollutants from the air. Do not burn candles, incense, or use a wood-burning fireplace since all those can increase indoor air pollutants. It is advised to keep the windows open for ventilation if the outdoor air quality is acceptable.
  - Monitoring your health:** It is of utmost importance to observe your respiratory health. If you notice some symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, or irritation in your eyes, visit your doctor. Patients with other underlying respiratory diseases, such as asthma or COPD, must be more vigilant about this condition and strictly adhere to recommended treatment plans.
  - Wear N95 masks:** If you need to go outside, wearing an N95 mask can help filter out some of the pollutants, offering a protective barrier. Unlike regular masks, N95 masks are designed to capture fine particles in the air, which can be particularly harmful. It protects your respiratory system entirely since N95 respirators filter at least 95 percent of airborne particles as small as 0.3 microns, which is significantly more than regular cloth masks.
  - Stay hydrated:** Drinking plenty of water helps to keep your respiratory system moist and can aid in clearing out pollutants. Hydration is crucial for overall health and can support your body's natural defenses.
  - Portable air purifier:** As advised by doctors, a few precautions can be taken for people with an already infected lung disorder. It is advisable to carry a portable air purifier - this can help reduce the amount of polluted air inhaled, especially in closed spaces.



## Trishna Ray's rise to Miss Teen Universe 2024

**With her dazzling smile, infectious confidence and a heart full of passion, Miss Teen Universe 2024 Trishna Ray sits down with The Pioneer as she opens up about her incredible journey, from her humble beginnings to her triumphant win, personal struggles and her vision for a brighter future.**

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Representing the vibrant spirit of youth and excellence, Trishna Ray, Miss Teen Universe 2024, is a talented and driven individual who has captured the hearts of millions. As she embarks on her reign as Miss Teen Universe, she aims to inspire positive change, promote cultural exchange and empower young women to pursue their dreams, leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Trishna, the newly crowned Miss Teen Universe 2024, is still basking in the glory of her historic win. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, she opens up about her incredible journey, from her army background to her passion for fashion technology and shares valuable advice for future contestants.

Her win is an attestation to her dedication and perseverance. When asked about her initial reaction to being crowned Miss Teen Universe 2024, she exclaimed, "It feels like a dream I've been working towards for a very long time. Achieving it now is surreal and it's taking time to sink in." She recalled the moment her name was announced, saying, "My first thought was, 'Did I hear it right?' I was praying to God and my heart dropped. It was a moment I had been waiting for so long, and my parents had been waiting for. It was surreal when they announced India."

Born into an Army family, she has moved every two years, adapting to new environments and learning new skills along the way. "I come from an army background and I'm from Cuttack, Orissa," she shared. "I've kept moving every two years, and every place I went to, I started to learn something new. All those skills added up to this one moment." Trishna is also pursuing a degree in fashion technology, which she believes helped her in the pageant. "Everything that I've been working on has helped me to this moment in life."

Her journey to the crown wasn't without its challenges. She faced difficulties obtaining a visa to participate in the competition. After being rejected once, she chose to work twice as hard and eventually made it to the pageant. "I think that's what got me here," she said. "I didn't give up, and I made sure that when I did go, I would bring it home." Her determination and resilience are an inspiration to many.

One of the most memorable moments for her was when she was announced as the win-

ner and her fellow contestants, who had become like family, were overjoyed. "They started crying, and when I went back, they all came to hug me," she recalled. "It made me feel like I truly won. I didn't have anyone else from India there, no team or parents. That moment made it feel like I was still at home." How overwhelming!

Going ahead, she credits her mentor, Ritika Ramtri, from the Tiara Pageant Studio, for her success. "She has been my mentor for two years and has taught me everything from walking to conducting interviews and etiquette. She stuck by me through all my times, and I couldn't have asked for a better mentor." Of course, her training and preparation played a significant role in her win.

As the new Miss Teen Universe, her plan is to focus on body positivity and teaching dance to underprivileged children. "I want to help teenage girls overcome unrealistic beauty standards and focus on their inner potential," she emphasised, also stressing the importance of self-positivity, sharing how she used to stand in front of the mirror and tell herself positive affirmations to combat criticism. "I used to receive criticism about my weight, but I trained my mind to make everything into a positive notion," she said.

Participating in the pageant has helped the teen beauty queen grow as a person, gaining skills she wouldn't have otherwise acquired. "I completed my foundation course at Anupam Kher's institute, started freelance modeling and pursued my interest in dance again," she said. "I became more conscious about my health and well-being. I started paying attention to my academics and eating healthily. These are things I probably wouldn't have done if it weren't for the pageant."

Representing India on the global stage is an honour Ray cherishes deeply. "It's a feeling I don't think I'll ever be able to describe," she said. "When I put on the sash with India's name, I had tears in my eyes. It gave me the motivation to work harder and bring the crown home." She believes that people outside of India celebrate the country's diversity and culture more than Indians themselves. "I was happy to see that my fellow contestants wished me a Happy Diwali," she shared.

Her experience at the pageant was enriching, and she has valuable advice for future contestants. "Never give up and always try to convince your parents to support your dreams. If you have your parents' support, there's no force that can stop you from achieving your dreams. My parents left no stone unturned in sending me to South Africa and that's why I'm here today."



## 'Balakrishna didn't use body double; everything you see is real'

Nandamuri Balakrishna and director Bobby Kolli have teamed up for a new film and the makers have officially announced the title and release date. On Friday, they revealed the film's title as *Daaku Maharaj* and released an action-packed teaser. The teaser showcases Balakrishna in a complete mass-appeal avatar, delivering intense action sequences and punch dialogues. Director Bobby promised to present Balakrishna in a stylish, rugged and massy avatar like never before and he has kept his word. "Whatever you see on the screen is real; there's no body double," he

confirmed.

The film features challenging action scenes, including one where Balakrishna rides a horse. "He didn't want to use a body double for any of the action sequences. He insisted on doing everything himself," shared the director. He recalled an incident during a late-night shoot: "We were working at 2 a.m. and I had arranged for a body double to ride the horse for a stunt. But Balakrishna immediately asked why someone else was doing it. He said, 'I should be there. I don't like using a body double. That shows his stamina and dedication to cinema.'" Director Bobby also praised Balakrishna for his respect towards filmmakers. "I read an interview where Balakrishna said he treats his directors like a father figure. True to his words, he treated me with utmost respect on the sets," said Bobby.

The teaser promises stunning visuals and high-voltage action sequences, designed to thrill Balakrishna's fans.

"This is Balakrishna's most stylish avatar in recent times," the makers stated. Thaman's powerful background score enhances the teaser and is expected to be a major highlight in the film.

Bollywood actor Bobby Deol plays the antagonist in *Daaku Maharaj*, which is produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya. The film is set to hit theatres on January 12, 2025, just in time for the Sankranti festival. "There are many more surprises waiting for fans in theatres. I'm proud to be directing such a big star," concluded Bobby. Meanwhile, Telugu cinema fans have reason to celebrate as Pragna Jaiswal joins Nandamuri Balakrishna for another much-anticipated release, *NBK 109*, now titled *Daaku Maharaj*. Following their blockbuster collaboration in *Akhanuda*, which captivated audiences and broke box office records, this film marks their second venture together, stirring excitement for fans eager to see them on screen again.



## 'Working with three music directors for lone film is not healthy situation'

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Music director SS Thaman is one of the most sought-after personalities in Tollywood, collaborating with top stars like Pawan Kalyan, Prabhas, Ram Charan, Allu Arjun and Balakrishna, while also working with younger talents like Siddhu Jonnalagadda. "With stories spanning different genres, it's not difficult for me to adapt," says Thaman.

Reflecting on his journey, Thaman admits to a period of routine compositions. "Around 2013-2014, I was criticised for doing stereotypical music. That made me more selective now," he shares. He is particularly proud of his work in Pawan Kalyan's *OG*. "Many criticise Telugu films and their music, but *OG* will stand as proof of what we can achieve musically," he asserts.

Thaman draws inspiration from the stories he scores. "When directors narrate their stories, that becomes my starting point. Later, the film's visuals guide me in crafting the background score," he explains.

For the upcoming Sankranti, two of Thaman's projects—*Daaku Maharaj* and *Game Changer*—are slated for the release. Working with director Shankar on *Game Changer* was a dream come true for Thaman. "At the *Vakeel Saab* event, producer Dil Raju shared the news of me meeting Shankar in Chennai. I was initially scared—it took me 20 years to work with him. He introduced me as an actor in *Boys*, but my dream was always to compose music for him," he recounts.

Thaman describes *Game Changer* as a milestone in his career. "It's the fastest composition I've done. We are planning a major event in the USA, releasing songs in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil and English," he reveals.

Thaman also worked on *Pushpa 2* by composing background music for specific portions. "Due to my friendship with Bunny (Allu Arjun), I agreed. Although working with multiple composers isn't ideal, it was necessary here. We coordinated well, but the timeline was tight—I had just 15 days to complete my part," he says.

Having completed 160 films over 29 years, Thaman is now focusing on taking Telugu cinema to global audiences. "For Prabhas' upcoming film, we're collaborating with Korean artists to promote it internationally," he reveals.

Thaman credits AR Rahman as his biggest inspiration. "At 57, Rahman sir competes with young composers like Anirudh. It amazes me how he connects with audiences even now," he says. Thaman candidly admits to early career missteps, including being trolled as a "copycat." "I wasn't mature then. People trolled me because I wasn't smart enough to hide it. Now, I've learned and grown," he admits.

Unlike many top composers, Thaman prefers working from Hyderabad. "I want to stay close to directors and producers. Hyderabad also has great cricket facilities, which I love," he says. His passion for cricket doubles as his stress buster, often inspiring fresh tunes after matches.

Thaman's vision for Hyderabad includes building a world-class studio and establishing an affordable music school. "I'm in talks with the government for affiliation. Music spaces reduce crime rates drastically," he says.

On a personal note, Thaman's son is studying at IIT Chennai and his wife manages his accounts while pursuing her musical interests. They plan to shift to Hyderabad next year. Celebrating his birthday on Saturday, Thaman plans to spend the day in Tirupati, reflecting on his remarkable journey and future goals.



**Music director Thaman talks about his upcoming projects, stress busters, love for Hyderabad and plans for a world-class studio**

## 'Unscripted & unedited,' contends Rana

Rana Daggubati is coming up with a talk show called *The Rana Daggubati Show* which is going to stream on Amazon Prime from November 23, with each episode being telecast on every Saturday. Talking about the show, Rana said that his show is completely different from many talk shows. "This is unscripted and unedited and an authentic show," he said.

There are many celebrities sharing their views with Rana in this show, including Rajamouli, Nani, Sreeleela, Siddhu Jonnalagadda,

Dulquer Salmaan, Rishabh Shetty and Rana's wife Miheeka. A glimpse of this show was released on Friday at an event. In that glimpse, Naga Chaitanya's answer to a question is interesting. When Rana asked Chaitanya about how he wants his family, Chaitanya replied, "I wanted to get married and then have children."

"Four kids like Venky Mama," asked Rana and then Naga Chaitanya laughed. Rana Daggubati and Naga Chaitanya are real cousins and Chaitanya is getting married to Sobhita Dhulipa

on December 4. Venkatesh is Naga Chaitanya's uncle (mother's brother). So, Naga Chaitanya's answer is now going viral everywhere.

The difficult interview was with Rishabh Shetty, reveals Rana. "He doesn't know Telugu and I know only a little bit of Hindi, so we managed in Tamil," said Rana. He added that the celebrities who appeared on this show were his friends. Asked about his wife Miheeka, who is also there in the show, he said, "Some of the answers she gave were edited because of me."

Rajamouli and Ram Gopal Varma are also there in the talk show. "I went to Rajamouli's place to shoot the episode. Sometimes it is good to travel to their place and talk with them," he said.



## Kubera teaser: The wait ends, anticipation begins

The wait is over! The first glimpse of *Kubera*, featuring the powerhouse trio of Nagarjuna Akkineni, Dhanush and Rashmika Mandanna, has struck like a bolt of lightning, creating a thunderstorm of anticipation nationwide. Directed by the National Award-winning Sekhar Kammula, *Kubera* is shaping up to be an unforgettable cinematic spectacle.

The teaser released by Mahesh Babu, a whirlwind of stunning visuals and intriguing story hints, has fans buzzing. Posters had

previously depicted Dhanush with a rugged, beggar-like look, complete with long hair and a beard. But the teaser revealed a striking transformation: Dhanush appears in a clean-shaven, polished avatar, exuding wealth and mystery. This unexpected shift has left fans eager to uncover the story's layers.

Meanwhile, Nagarjuna Akkineni takes on a complex role, bringing a fresh dynamic to the narrative. Rashmika Mandanna's involvement adds further star power, mak-

ing *Kubera* a true cinematic juggernaut.

Crafted as a Pan-India film, *Kubera* will release simultaneously in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi. This socio-drama, with its ambitious narrative and compelling characters, is set to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. Adding to the cinematic storm is Devi Sri Prasad's electrifying soundtrack, which will undoubtedly amplify the film's impact.



## VD recalls initially sidestepping *Sahiba!*

In an industry where music videos are commonplace, Vijay Deverakonda has long been an outlier—until now. The *Arjun Reddy* star has teamed up with singer-composer Jasleen Royal for the song *Sahiba*, marking his first foray into this popular medium. In an interview, Deverakonda shares how his initial reluctance was no match for Royal's determination and the song's undeniable appeal.

"From the moment I heard it, I knew it was something special," he says, admitting he recognised *Sahiba* as a hit right away. However, appreciation didn't mean he was ready to jump in. "I usually don't like doing music videos, but Jasleen is this persistent, stubborn girl who wouldn't take no for an answer," he laughs, sharing how Royal's hit *Heeriyee* had already become a household favourite, played daily at his home.

VD has yet again showcased his lover-boy charm on screen, and it's absolutely captivating. However, Deverakonda recounts how he initially tried to sidestep the project, even cutting his hair to avoid fitting Royal's vision. "But she just wouldn't let up. At some point, I gave in," he recalls with a chuckle.

It was ultimately the passion of Royal and director Sudanshu Saria that won him over. "They were so genuinely excited—it reminded me of how I feel when working on a film," Deverakonda reflects. Their enthusiasm made him realise that sometimes, stepping out of one's comfort zone is the best choice.

As for romancing on camera in a music video? Deverakonda found it easier

than expected. "With a clear script, a director and a storyline, it was actually pretty simple," he explains. *Sahiba*, he concludes, was a chance worth taking, and he hopes fans feel the same.

