

# the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY  
The pioneer

What is your (KCR) sorrow and what is your (KCR) pain? Come to the Assembly. Let us have a debate. Come to the people and speak. The government is ready to solve all valid issues raised by KCR. KCR won't come but sent two (KT Rama Rao and T. Harish Rao) cheap fellows. KCR is not coming but two 'petty guys' are creating trouble



- Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

P4

India, China to focus on stabilising relations

MASTER FLUTIST REDEFINING INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Vishwak Sen sets record straight on Mechanic Rocky and Gangs of GODAVARI!

**DON'T MISS...**  
TDP addresses water supply issues

MP Kesineni Sivanath and MLA Gadde Rama Mohan have stated that the main aim of the Telugu Desam Party is to solve public issues. The duo, along with Municipal Commissioner Dhyanchandra, visited APIIC Colony of East Constituency on Tuesday morning. They held a special meeting to solve the drinking water problem that has been faced by the residents of Jamac Apartment for a ...

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Drone-driven policing launched

Prakasam district SP A R Damodar has launched a special training programme aimed at incorporating advanced technology into policing by training officers in the use of drone cameras. On Tuesday, the SP himself operated a drone as part of a training session for women police constables at the district police office. He demonstrated how to fly, rotate, navigate, and direct drones while ...

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'Haryana too has a right over Chandigarh'

Haryana also has a right over Chandigarh, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said on Tuesday, justifying the state's move to have an additional Vidhan Sabha building in the Union Territory, much to Punjab's chagrin. Saini said the construction of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha complex in Chandigarh is a serious issue and all political parties in the state should rise above politics and present their views unanimously. On Tuesday, during the ...

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EV industry seeks GST cuts on batteries

GST on batteries and charging services needs to be cut to keep electric vehicles competitive and boost customer adoption, FICCI Electric Vehicle Committee Chair Sulajja Firodia Motwani said on Tuesday. Speaking at the sidelines of FICCI National Conference on EVs here, she also stressed enhancing PM E-Drive corpus to support enhanced sales of EVs. 'We would be making a recommendation to the GST Council to rationalise the GST taxation on EV-related ...

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River-linking key to tide over water crisis: CM

Reiterates that the Polavaram Project will be completed by 2027

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu reiterated that the Polavaram Project will be completed by 2027, with the dam height set at 45.72 meters. Addressing the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, Naidu highlighted that under the previous TDP government, ₹16,493 crore was spent on the project, compared to just Rs 4,099 crore spent by the current government.

The CM stressed that the completion of the Polavaram Project and river linking are critical to resolving Andhra Pradesh's water crisis. He proposed that linking major rivers like the Godavari, Krishna, and Penna would eliminate drought conditions and provide water to every acre of farmland, ensuring agricultural prosperity. Naidu emphasised that providing water to farmers would transform the state into an agriculturally thriving region.

Initially, the Polavaram dam was planned at a height of 170 feet, which was later revised to 208 feet, aiming to store between 340 to 700 TMC of water. While the project's cost has ballooned from

Naidu proposed that linking major rivers like the Godavari, Krishna, and Penna would eliminate drought conditions and provide water to every acre of farmland, ensuring agricultural prosperity. Naidu emphasised that providing water to farmers would transform the state into an agriculturally thriving region

Rs 129 crore to Rs 55,000 crore, Naidu blamed the YSRCP government for deliberately stalling progress after coming to power in 2019. He accused them of neglecting the project, leading to delays and escalating costs.

During the TDP tenure (2014-2019), significant progress was made, including coordination with PPA and CWC to speed up construction.

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SIPB nod for Rs 85K cr investments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB), chaired by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, approved investments worth Rs 85,083 crore during its first meeting on Tuesday. These investments are expected to generate 33,966 jobs across various sectors, marking a major boost to the State's industrial growth and employment opportunities.

In his address, Chief Minister Naidu emphasized the growing competition among states for investment and pointed out that the previous government's policies had led to stagnation in industrial growth over the last five years. He noted that many agreements were abandoned due to a lack of proactive governance and ineffective policy measures.

Naidu underlined the need for state policies that would support both industrialists and the local communities. He stressed that industrial development should benefit not only investors but also the people of Andhra Pradesh. The

CM proposes land pooling model, akin to one used for Amaravati capital, for major industries

10 MAJOR PROJECTS			
ArcelorMittal & Nippon Steel Rs 61,780 cr (21,000 jobs)	LG Electronics India Pvt Ltd Rs 5,001 cr (1,495 jobs)	Kalyani Strategic Systems Ltd Rs 1,430 cr (565 jobs)	Tafe Ferencia India Pvt Ltd Rs 76 cr (250 jobs)
Phillips Carbon Black Ltd Rs 3,798 cr (200 jobs)	Azad India Mobility Ltd Rs 1,046 cr (2,381 jobs)	Greenco Solar IREP Pvt Ltd Rs 2,000 cr (1,725 jobs)	Ecoren Energy India Pvt Ltd Rs 1,662 cr (350 jobs)

Dallas Technology Center LLP Rs 50 cr (2,000 jobs)  
Asta Green Energy Ventures Pvt Ltd Rs 8,240 cr (4,000 jobs)

Chief Minister called for policies that promote job creation, especially for the youth, and urged officials to provide full cooperation to investors.

On the issue of land acquisition for large industries, Naidu proposed the adoption of a land pooling model, similar to the one used for the Amaravati capital region. This model would involve pooling land from local farmers, ensuring they receive adequate compensation and resettlement benefits. Additionally, he suggested that companies receiving land should offer skill development programs to help local residents gain employment in these industries. In case land pooling is not feasible, Naidu advocated for exploring alternative land acquisition methods, ensuring the best compensation for affected landowners.

Continued on Page 2



Russian Prez Putin may visit India next year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin may visit India next year as part of a laid down structure between the two countries for reciprocal annual visits by their leaders, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday.

The two sides are looking at the possibility of the visit but nothing has been finalised yet, they said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the Russian President to visit India when the two leaders held summit talks in Moscow in July.

He also visited Kazan in Russia last month to attend the BRICS summit.

Earlier Tuesday, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov in a video interaction with senior Indian Editors in Delhi referred to the strong bilateral relationship between India and Russia, and added Putin's visit is on the cards. He did not give any specific timeline or make a definitive announcement of the visit.

'We are looking forward to the visit. The dates will be mutually worked out soon,' Peskov said.

Continued on Page 2

SC issues notices to Avinash in Viveka case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court has issued notices to YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy in connection with the murder case of his uncle, former minister Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy. The notice comes in response to a petition filed by Vivekananda's daughter, Sunitha, who has accused Avinash Reddy of being involved in the case and has sought the cancellation of his bail.

Sunitha's lawyer, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, informed the court that Chaitanya Reddy, an approver in the case and the son of Shivasankar Reddy, had been allegedly intimidated by Avinash Reddy. Taking up the petition, the Supreme Court bench, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Sanjiv Khanna, issued the notice in response to Sunitha's request for a review of Avinash Reddy's bail.

Continued on Page 2

Centralised dumping yards for village clusters: Dy CM Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj & Rural Development, K Pawan Kalyan, has announced that the State government is planning to establish centralised dumping yards for clusters of 10 to 15 gram panchayats, as there is insufficient government land to set up individual dumping yards in each village. This initiative is aimed at improving waste management in rural areas by optimising resources and ensuring more efficient waste disposal systems, he said.



During the Question Hour in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan responded to a notice raised by YSRCP member Vanka Ravindra Nath. He explained that the proposed cluster dumping yards would serve as shared facilities for multiple gram panchayats, thereby reducing the need for separate waste management sites in each village. He further added that the state government is examining the feasibility of establishing these cluster dumping yards across Gram Panchayats.

Continued on Page 2

Law student gang-raped; all four accused arrested

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A third-year student of NVP Law College in Madhurawada of the city was allegedly gang-raped by four persons. The crime, spanning over two months, has sparked outrage and renewed calls for stringent measures to protect women.

According to police, the ordeal began when the victim befriended her classmate, Vamsi, who lured her with false promises of marriage. On August 10, Vamsi reportedly took her to Kambalakonda and sexually assaulted her. Days later, on August 13, he brought her to his



friend Anand's residence in Daba Gardens, where he again raped her. Subsequently, Anand, along with his friends Rajesh and Jagdish, joined in the assault, recording the crime on their phones.

The accused used these recordings to blackmail the victim, subjecting her to repeated abuse over the next two months. When she sought Vamsi's help to stop the threats from his friends, he too turned against her, further harassing and pressuring her.

Unable to cope with the trauma, the victim attempted suicide by hanging herself. Her father's timely intervention saved her life and led to her revealing the harrowing details of the assault. He immediately approached the Visakhapatnam Two Town police, who registered a case and arrested all four accused.

Continued on Page 2

RGV skips police questioning Seeks HC protection from arrest

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Popular film director Ram Gopal Varma (RGV) failed to appear before the Prakasam district police on Tuesday for questioning in connection with criminal cases related to derogatory posts against political leaders Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan on social media.

The Prakasam district police had served a notice to RGV, asking him to appear for questioning, but he did not turn up on the scheduled date. The police confirmed that RGV had failed to attend the inquiry.

According to police sources,



RGV sent a text message to Ongole Rural Circle Inspector (CI) Srikanth, explaining that he could not appear for questioning.

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RUSHIKONDA BUILDINGS

Previous govt violated CRZ norms: Kandula

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Cinematography, Kandula Durgesh, has accused the previous YSRCP government of violating building plans and regulations while constructing buildings on Rushikonda Hill. He said that the government spent Rs 451 crore on the project, despite receiving approvals from the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) and the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ). However, the minister claimed the construction did not adhere to the approved plans.

Speaking in the 46th session of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council on Tuesday, Durgesh responded to a question raised by TDP members Duvvarapu Rama Rao, Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao, and Pancharthi Anuradha, regarding the permissions



for the Rushikonda buildings. He confirmed that the previous government had obtained necessary clearances, but violated these approvals by constructing seven blocks instead of following the original CRZ guidelines, which permitted development on just 9.88 acres. Durgesh further criticised the YSRCP government for demolishing 58 luxury rooms at the Haritha Resorts, promising better resorts in their place, but ultimately constructing only seven rooms.

Continued on Page 2

Lokesh's team helps stranded Ayyappa devotees in Kerala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A group of Ayyappa devotees, who found themselves stranded in Kerala after their vehicle met with an accident while en route to the Ayyappa shrine, received prompt assistance from Minister Nara Lokesh's team. The devotees, unfamiliar with the local language and far from home, were facing considerable distress after the mishap.

Following the accident, the devotees were taken to a local police station in Kerala, where they were temporarily held up. As soon as the Andhra Pradesh government was informed of the situation, Minister Nara Lokesh took immediate action. The stranded devotees, seeking help from their home state, reached out to Lokesh through media representatives.

Minister Lokesh swiftly coordi-



nated with Kerala police officials to ensure the devotees' release without any charges. Upon receiving the information, the police also provided the devotees with food and other necessary arrangements, allowing them to continue their journey without further obstacles. The grateful devotees, hailing

from the Gangadhara Nellore constituency, especially from Godugu Chintu village, expressed their heartfelt thanks to Minister Lokesh for his timely intervention. They also extended their gratitude to the Andhra Pradesh government, MLA Thomas from Gangadhara Nellore, TDP Parliamentary Coordinator

from Tirupati Bheemineni Chittibabu Naidu, and the media representatives who played a crucial role in facilitating communication.

The devotees praised the swift response and support from Minister Lokesh and the Andhra Pradesh government during their moment of need.

After an accident in Kerala, the devotees were taken to a local police station, where they were held up. As soon as the AP govt was informed of the situation, Minister Nara Lokesh took immediate action. The stranded devotees, seeking help from their home state, reached out to Lokesh. He swiftly coordinated with Kerala police to ensure the devotees' release without any charges

# Time to nip in bud politically disturbing trends in social media

Social media is raising its ugly head by spoiling values in public service, which are crucial for all political organisations. The social media wings of political parties, which engage activists, seem to have adopted the way of attributing wrong motives to their political opponents with the sole purpose of drawing political mileage for the organisations they represent. Their incendiary comments lead to wordy wars between political parties. Often highly objectionable words are being used by social media wings of political organisations against their opponents with a view to defame them and for character assassination of their targets. It leads to disgusting feelings among the persons who are at the receiving end. The social media wings of

political outfits operate at the behest of the brass of the organization concerned. Those who criticise the leadership of party may become easy targets for them for using unprintable words under the impression that such reaction might be a fitting reply to the latter. This is an unhealthy trend for those in public life as every leader has to prove himself by only by service.

Certain recent developments in the political arenas of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states suggest how political activities are being taken up in the name of reaching out to people at the grassroots level. No doubt social media is now a platform for people in all walks of life. Sharing our views with people at large is just a click away and the platform too provides them

**Even family members of targeted political leaders are not spared by the social media wings of political parties. For instance, former chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's mother YS Vijayalakshmi and sister YS Sharmila have been targeted by the social media wing of YSRCP. No one will believe that such tirades against family members would have been initiated without the knowledge of Jaganmohan Reddy**



**M D RATNA KUMAR**  
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an opportunity to exchange their views with people across the globe. So, it is natural for social media wings of political parties to propagate their ideologies through this medium with very little expenses. However, social media is being used to target political opponents on a daily basis.

As things stand today, there is no purity in politics with many leaders going back on

their promises. For instance, Nara Chandrababu Naidu, during his first stint (2014-19) in the residual state of Andhra Pradesh, did not fulfil his poll promise of waiving loans taken by farmers all over the state. Former chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy also had backtracked on his assurances concerning total prohibition and the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) for employees of

the state government. Both leaders were targeted by the social media wings of their opponent political parties for their failure to implement poll promises made in the presence of the electorate. Instead of constructive criticism over non-fulfillment of promises, social

media posts are full of wordy duels between political rivals.

Even family members of targeted political leaders are not spared by the social media wings of political parties. For instance, former chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's mother YS Vijayalakshmi and sister YS Sharmila have been targeted by the social media wing of YSRCP. No one will believe that such tirades against family members would have been initiated without the knowledge of Jaganmohan Reddy. In a way, combined AP's former CM and Congress leader Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy's legacy and reputation have been tarnished by the feud among siblings. It can be said that social media activity has taken away the decency and values left in politics.

Some people argue that using social media is nothing but a vehicle that enables free-

dom of expression bestowed by the basic statute of the country to its citizens. The use of social media can be described as right only if it is accompanied by the use of decent language. It may be recalled that two young women were arrested under the provisions of the IT Act for expressing their views on the tense situation that prevailed after Shiv Sena patriarch Bal Thackeray passed away. There was widespread condemnation across the nation over this incident that focused on the right of freedom of expression.

Social media activists of YSRCP highlighted the alleged strain in the relations between AP CM Chandrababu Naidu and his brother, former legislator Ramamurthy Naidu, who died recently following prolonged illness. They alleged that Chandrababu had deliberately opposed his brother

seeking ticket from the Chandragiri constituency of Chittoor district during the 1994 elections but then TDP president NT Ramarao gave him the ticket. Nara Rohit, film star and son of Ramamurthy Naidu, had to intervene in the matter and condemn criticism made by political opponents.

Due to distortions and excesses in social media posts, leaders of certain political parties are of the considered opinion that there should be a piece of legislation to curb the indecent usage of social media platform by political rivals. The AP Assembly may take a step further in this regard as the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is firm on the issue. For, damaging the reputation of any person is just a click away. This dangerous trend has to be curbed with stringent laws and nipped in the bud.

## APSSDC ties up with Pearson for English skills assessment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) has entered into a strategic partnership with Pearson, a global leader in educational publishing and assessment, to conduct an English skills assessment as part of the state's Skill Census pilot project in the Mangalagiri constituency. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed under G. Ganesh Kumar, IAS, Managing Director and CEO of APSSDC, and Prabhu Ravindran, Director of Pearson. This collaboration marks a significant step towards strengthening the skill development ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh.

As part of this initiative, Pearson will provide a 30-minute English language assessment, the Versant (pre-diagnostic) test, which will be integrated into the Naipunyam app. This assessment will serve as a benchmark to gauge participants' English proficiency and guide their future skill development.

### Highlights of the partnership

- Pearson will offer technical support throughout the integration of the English assessment into the Naipunyam app.
- A comprehensive project plan will be provided to APSSDC to ensure the smooth execution of the pilot phase.
- English assessment scores will be included in participants' skill cards, adding an important dimension to their profiles and improving their employability.
- A total of 200,000 assessments will be conducted during the one-year pilot phase.

The partnership seeks to address the increasing demand for English language proficiency across various industries,



thereby improving the employability of individuals and aligning skill development with industry needs. By incorporating English assessment scores into skill cards, APSSDC aims to provide a more holistic view of an individual's capabilities, helping them stand out in the competitive job market.

Prabhu Ravindran, Director of Pearson, and Bhavya Suri,

Director at Pearson, expressed their enthusiasm for the collaboration, emphasising the importance of this initiative in empowering individuals and advancing skill development efforts in the region.

Ganesh Kumar highlighted that the collaboration with Pearson is a key milestone in APSSDC's ongoing efforts to equip citizens with the skills

necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving job market. This partnership also aims to foster greater inclusivity and ensure access to quality education and training resources for people across Andhra Pradesh.

Visit the official APSSDC website for more information on the initiative and the skill development programmes offered.

## Govt committed to promotion of handloom industry: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC, EBC, Handloom and Textiles, S Savitha, has outlined the government's commitment to promoting the handloom industry and ensuring year-round employment for weavers. In a discussion during the Legislative Assembly budget session on Tuesday, Savitha highlighted that the government plans to organise handloom exhibitions both in other states and internationally to market handloom products more effectively.

Savitha responded to questions taken by various members regarding steps being taken to support the handloom industry, stressing that the government aims to increase sales and offer continuous employment opportunities for weavers.

Criticising the previous Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government, Savitha accused it of neglecting the handloom sector. She claimed that under Jagan's leadership, there was no support for marketing handloom products or the welfare of weavers, which contributed to a rise in suicides among workers. In contrast, she praised former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for his efforts between 2014 and 2019 to prioritise the handloom industry, introduce welfare schemes, and provide financial assistance to weavers.

The Minister further accused the previous government of betraying the weavers, alleging that although promises of support were made during Jagan's election campaign,



they were later abandoned after his victory. However, Savitha outlined various initiatives taken by the current government, such as the establishment of Weaver Halls in Mangalagiri and the introduction of welfare programmes, including pensions and health insurance for weavers.

Savitha reported positive developments in handloom product sales, pointing to a 9.8% increase over the past five months, thanks to initiatives like the establishment of Apco showrooms. Additionally, online sales platforms have been launched, generating ₹32.5 lakh in sales since the current government took office.

The Minister also announced plans to host handloom exhibitions abroad and set up new Weaver Halls in areas like Vizianagaram and Kurnool. She encouraged the public to support the handloom industry by wearing handloom products at least once a week and urged everyone to contribute to preserving

the state's traditional craftsmanship.

In a significant move for the welfare of handloom workers, Savitha revealed that the government will introduce a new pension scheme for handloom workers aged 50 and above, providing them with a monthly pension of ₹4,000. Furthermore, 10 new handloom clusters will be created in collaboration with the Aditya Birla Group to enhance the industry and improve the working conditions of weavers.

To provide financial relief, the Minister stated that the government will reimburse 5% GST on handloom sector products. Additionally, handloom units will receive free electricity—200 units for traditional looms and 500 units for modern looms. Subsidies on yarn purchases will help reduce production costs for weavers. The government is also set to launch a health insurance scheme for handloom workers to ensure they have access to necessary medical care, Savitha added.

## Centralised dumping yards ...

Continued from Page 1

Additionally, the Deputy CM highlighted that the government has developed Solid Waste Processing Centres (SWPCs) in 10,808 Gram Panchayats across the state under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). However, he noted that 2,518 Gram Panchayats still lack these SWPCs. To address this gap, the government has prepared an action plan to implement SWPCs in these villages in the year 2025-26.

Out of the 10,808 SWPCs built, 9,382 are fully or partially functional, with 5,556 fully operational and 3,826 partial-

ly functional. The Deputy CM assured that the partially functional SWPCs would be upgraded to full functionality by March 2025. Additionally, 1,426 non-functional SWPCs would be revived and made operational by March 2024, he said.

Minister Pawan Kalyan also mentioned that the government is taking steps to ensure that Gram Panchayats maintain these SWPCs regularly so they can become self-sustainable by the end of 2026. He added that the state government is working on securing funds from the 15th Finance Commission, in addition to regular allocations, to support the operation and maintenance of SWPCs.

## Ex-minister Rajini flays govt for ignoring key welfare schemes

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Former Minister Vidada Rajini has accused the TDP-led NDA government of neglecting vital welfare schemes, including the Aarogyasri health programme, ambulance services, and the construction of medical colleges. Addressing a press conference in Guntur on Tuesday, Rajini criticised the government's failure to continue important initiatives and alleged that the state administration was moving towards privatising essential public welfare services.

Rajini specifically took issue



with the claims made by the current Health Minister, accusing them of spreading misinformation about the health sector during the tenure of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. "The present government is twisting facts and

creating a false narrative about the progress made in the health sector under our leadership," Rajini said, adding that the government appeared to be shifting towards the privatisation of key health services.

Rajini pointed out that during YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership, plans were made to construct 17 new medical colleges in three phases. "In the first phase, five medical colleges were completed, adding 750 seats for medical students by 2024. Construction for another five colleges had already begun in the second phase," she explained.

TODAY	
ALMANAC	
Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Panchami:	Nov 19 05:28 PM to Nov 20 04:49 PM
Shashthi:	Nov 20 04:49 PM to Nov 21 05:03 PM
Nakshatram:	
Punarvasu:	Nov 19 02:56 PM to Nov 20 02:50 PM
Pushya:	Nov 20 02:50 PM to Nov 21 03:35 PM
Rahukalam:	12:01 PM to 1:25 PM
Yamaganadam:	7:51 AM to 9:14 AM
Varjyam:	11:05 PM to 12:44 AM
Gulika:	10:38 AM to 12:01 PM
Amritakalam:	12:27 PM to 02:02 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	NIL

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER	
Forecast:	Sunny and light winds
Temp:	32°
Humidity:	56%
Sunrise:	6:20 AM
Sunset:	5:32 PM
Updated:	November 19, 2024 5:00 PM

## SC issues ...

Continued from Page 1

In addition, the Supreme Court has also issued notices to Chaitanya Reddy, following allegations of intimidation. The petitioners, which include Sunitha, her husband Rajasekhar Reddy, and CBI Superintendent of Police Ramsingh, have challenged previous orders passed by the Andhra Pradesh High Court. They argue that the cases filed against them should be quashed. The court has initiated proceedings and sought responses from the parties involved, marking a significant development in the ongoing investigation into the high-profile murder case.

## Previous govt ...

Continued from Page 1

These rooms were allotted for the use of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, his family, and ministers' transit offices. He highlighted that before the demolition, Rishikonda had been generating revenue of Rs. 7 crore to Rs. 16 crore annually for the Tourism Department.

The Minister accused the previous government of wasting public funds on the Rishikonda palaces, asserting that the intention was not to develop the region for tourism but to serve the personal interests of the Chief Minister and his family. Despite opposition from various parties and the public, the YSRCP proceeded with the construction, Durgesh said.

## RGV skips...

Continued from Page 1

When he did not receive a response from the CI, RGV sent a formal request through his lawyer, seeking additional time to appear. RGV cited his ongoing commitments to film shootings as the reason for his absence, police officials said.

The case stems from a complaint filed by TDP activist Ramalingam with the Maddipadu police, accusing RGV of uploading derogatory posts and morphed images of Chandrababu Naidu, N. Lokesh, and Pawan Kalyan on the social media platform 'X'. Following the complaint, cases under seven sections of the law were registered against RGV on November 10, and he was served a notice asking him to appear before the police on November 19.

## Law student ...

Continued from Page 1

"We have taken all four into custody and are conducting a thorough investigation. Justice will be done for the victim," a senior police official said.

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha expressed shock and anger over the incident. She spoke with City Police Commissioner Shankabrata Bagchi, instructing him to ensure stringent action against the accused. "It is tragic and unacceptable that such a heinous act was committed against a law student. The government will take all steps to prevent such incidents in the future," she stated, extending her support to the victim's family.

The incident has drawn widespread condemnation. Women's rights activists emphasised the need for both legal and societal reforms to curb such crimes.

## River-linking key to tide over...

Continued from Page 1

The project team even set a Guinness World Record for pouring 32,215 cubic meters of concrete in one day.

Naidu also highlighted the successful completion of other irrigation projects like the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme, which brought Godavari water to the Krishna Delta, alleviating regional water scarcity.

Despite setbacks, the CM committed to completing the Polavaram Project by 2027 and introduced plans to

expedite construction, including the use of German technology for the diaphragm wall. He also proposed linking several rivers across the State to address water scarcity in areas like Rayalaseema and drought-prone districts.

Naidu assured that his government would address water shortages in all regions, with projects like Telugu Ganga, Galeru-Nagari, and HNSS aimed at ensuring sustainable water supply for drinking and irrigation.

## SIPB nod for Rs 85K cr ...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of balancing industrial growth with the welfare of displaced communities. He pointed out that large-scale industrial projects, such as the ArcelorMittal Steel Plant, would not only provide direct employment to thousands but also generate indirect employment for lakhs of people, thereby contributing to the region's socio-economic development.

Naidu directed ministers and officials to closely mon-

itor the progress of these investments and ensure any hurdles are swiftly addressed.

He emphasized the need to create infrastructure and social amenities, such as housing colonies and essential services, around industrial hubs to improve the quality of life for workers and residents.

The meeting was attended by key officials including Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, Ministers Nara Lokesh, Atchennaaidu, and other cabinet colleagues.



## Rs 456-cr Vizag Rly Station project remains stalled

Disputes with contractors, allegations of bribery derailed project

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Two years after plans were announced to develop the Visakhapatnam Railway Station at a cost of Rs 456 crore under the Amrit Bharat Scheme, the project remains stalled amid allegations of corruption. Despite Central government funding and tenders being awarded, progress has been negligible, causing concerns among residents and officials alike.

The redevelopment, which began 20 months ago, included ambitious plans to construct platforms 9 and 10 near Gnanapuram, install 20 lifts and escalators, and build two multi-level parking facilities. However, disputes with contractors and allegations of bribery have derailed the project.

The first contractor was terminated six months after work began, reportedly due to poor performance. A second contractor was appointed, but also abandoned the project within six months, citing challenging site conditions such as loose soil and hard rock.

"We cleared trees and even closed Gate No. 4 to facilitate

The redevelopment, which began 20 months ago, included ambitious plans to construct platforms 9 and 10 near Gnanapuram, install 20 lifts and escalators, and build two multi-level parking facilities. However, disputes with contractors and allegations of bribery have derailed the project

construction, but nothing has progressed," said a station employee, who wished to remain anonymous. "We are stuck with half-completed work and no clarity on when it will resume." Recent tenders have failed to attract bidders, with allegations surfacing that officials from the Waltair Division are demanding hefty bribes and commissions for approving bills.

Concerns about corruption were amplified recently when DRM Saurabh Prasad was arrested by the CBI in Mumbai for allegedly demanding a Rs 25-lakh bribe to clear bills

worth Rs 3.17 crore and reduce fines for project delays. "This incident is a clear indicator of the systemic corruption plaguing the railway sector," said a local activist. "Contractors are hesitant to take up projects due to fear of harassment and unreasonable demands."

The corruption allegations are not limited to construction contractors. Vendors at the station have also voiced grievances, claiming they are forced to pay commissions to officials despite holding valid licenses. "If we refuse, they threaten us with accusations of selling adulterated food or even cancel our licences," alleged a vendor who sells packaged snacks at the station. A city-based bakery was reportedly banned from selling its products after declining to pay bribes. Residents and commuters are now demanding a thorough investigation into the corruption allegations.

"Visakhapatnam deserves a world-class railway station, but corruption is robbing the city of its progress," said Satish Kumar, a frequent traveller. "The CBI must take immediate action to ensure accountability and revive this critical project."

## 35 red sanders logs seized; 4 smugglers arrested

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) seized 35 red sanders logs and arrested four smugglers in two separate incidents.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) G. Balireddy informed the media that two police teams, led by Revenue Inspector (RI) Suresh Kumar Reddy and KSK Lingadhar, conducted a combing operation in the forest area. During the operation, a task force team spotted red sander smugglers loading logs into a car near the Chintalapalem check post area in Yeredu mandal. The team seized 10 red sander logs, the vehicle, and arrested three smugglers.

In another operation, a different task force team observed suspicious movement at a dumping yard in Pathapati Vari Palli village, Chandragiri mandal. The police arrested one individual, seized 25 red sander logs, and impounded a lorry.

Among the arrested smugglers, three are from Tamil Nadu, and one is from Karnataka. Task Force Circle Inspector Suresh Kumar registered cases against the smugglers. Task Force Superintendent of Police (SP) P. Srinivas announced rewards for the task force personnel involved in the seizure of the logs and the arrests.

# TDP leaders address water supply issues at APIIC colony

MP vows to solve public issues with support of Central and State govts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath and MLA Gadde Rama Mohan have stated that the main aim of the Telugu Desam Party is to solve public issues. The duo, along with Municipal Commissioner Dhyanchandra, visited APIIC Colony of East Constituency on Tuesday morning. They held a special meeting to solve the drinking water problem that has been faced by the residents of Jamac Apartment for a long time.

Speaking during the visit, the MP said that addressing public concerns has always been the core goal of the TDP. He highlighted that residents of Jamac Apartments have been struggling with a drinking water shortage for a long time, an issue that was totally ignored by the previous government. He explained that the problem arose due to a small issue between the IALA and Jamac Apartments, which had resulted in a disruption of the water supply.

The MP assured the residents that he, along with the MLA and the Municipal Commissioner, were actively working to resolve the issue. "We are discussing this problem with the concerned authorities and will ensure that the water supply is restored as soon as possible," the MP said.

In another meeting with MP Kesineni Sivanath has assured that he will resolve the issues faced by the public with the cooperation of both the Central and State governments. Speaking at a review meeting on the development



of Vijayawada, held at the command control room in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation along with MLA Satyanarayana Chowdary (Sujana Chowdary), the Municipal Commissioner and various department heads.

The meeting focused on discussing the development needs of Vijayawada and the challenges faced by its resi-

dents. A key objective of the meeting was to plan the mobilisation of funds from the Central government by discussing the issues in Parliament. Several infrastructure projects were discussed, including the construction of railway underbridges, over-bridges, and roads connecting the BRTS road to the railway station,

which are necessary to alleviate traffic congestion. The participants also discussed plans to build bridges in the Singh Nagar area and from Rajarajeswari Peta to Errakatta to ease traffic flow.

MP Kesineni stressed the ongoing efforts to improve basic infrastructure in the main urban areas, outskirts, and hilly regions of Vijayawada. He urged the Corporation to meet its annual revenue targets and take necessary steps to increase income generation. Kesineni also highlighted plans to transform Vijayawada into a "Smart City" with the support of both the Central and State governments. He also pointed out the importance of developing sports infrastructure by building stadiums to promote sports in the city.



Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad attending World Toilet Day observance at Anandapuram District Parishad School

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad stressed the importance of hygiene and sustainability during a World Toilet Day event at Anandapuram

District Parishad School. He urged students to take personal responsibility for cleanliness. "Cleanliness is not just a duty but a responsibility we all share. As Gandhi said, change begins with us. Let's ensure

## Collector emphasises hygiene and sustainability on World Toilet Day

Exhorts public representatives to help make the district open defecation-free

hygiene and proper use of toilets every day, not just this week."

The Collector called upon public representatives to help make the district open defecation-free. "If anyone requires toilets, they should report it to local authorities. Officials must also expedite proposals for constructing community sanitary complexes and repairing toilets in 79 panchayats," he directed. Highlighting water

scarcity, Prasad emphasised judicious use of water. "In regions like Rayalaseema, people demonstrate how to use drinking water sparingly. It's essential we adopt similar practices, use recycled water for agriculture, and protect our resources," he advised. He reassured residents that drinking water connections would soon reach every household under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Prasad expressed his hopes

for the students' future. "I see many bright faces here. With hard work and determination, you will achieve great things." He reminisced about his own school days, adding, "Having a school in the village is a blessing, and I know its value deeply." The Collector pledged district administration's support to complete the school's pending construction projects and promised to bring the issue of junior college land allo-

cation to the government's attention.

As part of the event, Prasad distributed prizes to outstanding students and participated in a sapling plantation drive. "Planting trees today ensures a greener tomorrow. Let's make our environment sustainable," he remarked. The event was attended by DPO Srinivasa Rao, DEO Prem Kumar, local public representatives, teachers, and students.

## Vamsi's followers held for attack on TDP leader

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The police have arrested several followers of YSRCP leader and former Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan in connection with the attack on Kananeni Rangababu, the former president of the Gannavaram Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society (PACS) and TDP leader. Among those arrested were Vamsi's key aide, Olupalli Mohanaranga, Gannavaram Mandal Parishad President (MPP) Anagani Ravi, Bhimavarapu Yatendra Ramakrishna (alias Ramu), along with several others. The arrests took place early this morning, around 3 AM, at different locations.

According to the case details, Rangababu, who was initially with YSRCP, had switched his allegiance to TDP ahead of the elections. This decision angered Vamsi's supporters, who allegedly attacked Rangababu at Park Elite Hotel near Gannavaram in January this year, leaving him injured. Following the attack, Rangababu filed a police complaint naming Vamsi's supporters as the culprits.

In his complaint, Rangababu claimed that he was lured by the attackers under the pretext of discussing a farmland issue, only to be assaulted later. Despite his

complaint, no action was taken during YSRCP's rule. However, after the change in government, the case was reopened, leading to the recent arrests.

Along with Mohanaranga, other arrested individuals include Anagani Ravi, Bhimavarapu Yatendra Ramakrishna (alias Ramu), Machineni Venkateswara Rao (alias Babu), Surapaneni Anil, G. Seemayya, and Gurram Anjaiah (alias Nani). Some of the arrested individuals have been taken to the Kankipadu Police Station, while others have been sent to different police stations. Reports indicate that another close aide of Vamsi, identified as Seshu, managed to evade arrest, and police are currently searching for him. After the preliminary investigation, the arrested individuals are expected to be presented before the Gannavaram Court.

Meanwhile, YSRCP leaders and supporters gathered outside the Kankipadu Police Station and staged a protest against what they termed as "revenge actions" by the government against YSRCP leaders. Penamaluru in-charge Devabhaktui Chakravarthi and other YSRCP leaders condemned the arrests, accusing the government of political vendetta.

## GCC chief promises to protect interests of tribal communities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Kidari Sravan Kumar, the newly appointed Chairperson of the Andhra Pradesh Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC), emphasised his commitment to safeguarding the interests of tribal communities during his first interaction with the media on Tuesday. Speaking at the GCC headquarters, Sravan Kumar outlined initiatives aligned with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision to empower tribal farmers and promote their products on a national scale.

A grand reception marked his arrival, with a vibrant display of tribal culture, including the Dhimsa dance performed by women in colourful saris and the rhythmic beating of drums. Accompanied by GCC Vice-Chairperson and Managing Director Kalpana Kumari, Sravan Kumar toured the office complex and engaged with officials and staff.

Highlighting the corporation's goals, Sravan Kumar said: "The GCC was established to protect and uplift tribal communities. We will take every step necessary to ensure it lives up to this purpose. One of our key priorities will be to promote Araku



Coffee across major cities in India. This product has already garnered international recognition, and we aim to further enhance its reputation," he said.

He also announced plans to ensure better remuneration for tribal farmers by securing fair prices for crops such as pepper and turmeric. The Chairperson unveiled plans to open new GCC petrol bunkers at Seethammampeta and Parvathipuram, creating employment opportunities for the tribal youth.

Kalpana Kumari shared future infrastructure plans. "We are set to begin construction of a 15-storey building at the GCC headquarters within the next five months. This will be a landmark development for the corporation and the city."

## Varudu Kalyani slams coalition govt over women's safety

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MLC Varudu Kalyani has strongly criticised the coalition government for its failure to ensure women's safety, citing the assault of a law student in Visakhapatnam and deteriorating law and order situation in the State.

Speaking to the media at the party's central office on Tuesday, Kalyani expressed deep concern over the increasing number of crimes against

women in the State, accusing the government of neglecting safety measures such as the Disha app. She claimed that the government's priority had shifted from public welfare to political vendettas, leaving women's safety and justice for victims in jeopardy.

"The recent incident in Visakhapatnam is just one example of the alarming rise in crimes against women. The Home Minister herself admitted in the Assembly that 49

crimes against women occur every day in Andhra Pradesh. This is a serious issue that cannot be ignored," Kalyani said.

The MLC also pointed to several high-profile incidents of violence, including assaults, murders, and rapes, and criticised the government's failure to implement preventive measures or provide adequate justice to victims. Kalyani reminded the public that during the previous YSRCP administration, initiatives such as POCOS courts,

women's police stations, and special vehicles for immediate response had been introduced to address such issues effectively. In addition to the safety concerns, Kalyani also addressed allegations regarding the construction of buildings at Rushikonda. She clarified that these buildings were constructed with all necessary approvals and modern technology, contrasting them with the substandard structures built during the previous Telugu Desam Party regime.

# Collector launches initiative to empower technical students

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

District Collector A Shyam Prasad has devised a plan to harness the technical skills of students in polytechnic and ITI institutions to improve welfare hostels and educational facilities in the district. During a meeting with principals of these institutions, he emphasised the dual benefits of the programme. "This initiative not only equips students with practical voca-

tical experience, but also enhances the infrastructure of our welfare hostels and schools."

The programme, linked with the 'Palle Nidra' (sleeping in villages) and Gram Darshini schemes, involves assigning students to repair tasks in government institutions across the district. Based on reports from officials, the Collector directed ITI and polytechnic students to address maintenance issues such as fixing



electrical systems, plumbing, welding, and repairing furniture in schools, hostels, Anganwadi centres, and junior colleges. To ensure efficiency, every two mandals have been connected to one ITI and one polytechnic college.

Over the past week, students have been actively visiting these institutions and making improvements. Highlighting the future prospects for participants, the Collector announced,

"Students contributing to this initiative will receive an Apprenticeship Certificate after 10 months, which will add immense value to their vocational journey."

District Intermediate Vocational Education Officer D Manjula Veena, who serves as the Nodal Officer for the programme, commended the students' efforts. "Students from Saluru Government Junior College and the Fire Department Centre have

Also enhances infrastructure of welfare hostels and schools

already completed repairs like fixing gates, fans, and painting work. More such initiatives are underway in other locations," she stated.

Principals and welfare officers described the programme as highly impactful. A hostel principal said, "This is a remarkable initiative. It's heartening to see students contributing to the development of educational institutions while gaining hands-on experience."

# Contractors directed to speed up road repair works

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Collector J Venkata Murali has instructed contractors to complete road repair works without delay, stressing that the State Government is treating the road repairs as a high priority.

In a meeting with R&B officials and engineers on Tuesday, the Collector reviewed the progress of ongoing road repairs. He firmly directed the officials to take strict action against contractors who fail to carry out the work expeditiously, including terminating their contracts if necessary.

"The State government has released adequate funds to ensure that all roads are pothole-free, and the officials must ensure that repairs are completed on a war footing," the Collector said. Expressing



"The State government has released adequate funds to ensure that all roads are pothole-free, and the officials must ensure that repairs are completed on a war footing," the Collector said

his frustration, he pointed out that despite clear guidelines from the government, repairs had not been initiated at certain locations.

In Bapatla district, 67 road repair works were identified

across 337 km of roads, with the State Government allocating Rs 17.23 crore for the repairs. However, the Collector expressed dissatisfaction, noting that only 12 repair works had been started so far. He fur-

ther criticised the delay, stating that while tenders had been completed for some of the works and contracts had been awarded, the contractors had yet to begin the work.

The Collector instructed officials to issue notices to contractors who have not commenced work despite being awarded contracts. "If the contractors do not respond to the notice, their contracts should be terminated," he said.

He also questioned why contractors had not started work on the Addanki-Santhamagalluru highway project, even after tenders had been invited. R&B Deputy Executive Engineer (DE) Geetharani, DE Aruna, and other engineers and officials were present during the meeting.

## 40 kg ganja seized; 6 peddlers arrested



PNS ■ PADERU

In a major drug bust, the police seized 40 kilograms of ganja being transported illegally on three motorcycles at Mothugudem village in Chintur Mandal, ASR district, on Tuesday.

Donkari Sub-Inspector Shiva Narayana informed the media that a police team while conducting a routine vehicle check near Donkari police station, intercepted the three motorcycles carrying the cannabis. The police seized the ganja along with the motorcycles and arrested six drug peddlers involved in the illegal transportation.

The peddlers, who were transporting the ganja from Odisha, were en route to Karimnagar in Telangana. The arrested individuals were later produced before the court in Rampa chodavaram.



# Drone-aided policing launched in Prakasam

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district SP A R Damodar has launched a special training programme aimed at incorporating advanced technology into policing by training officers in the use of drone cameras.

On Tuesday, the SP himself operated a drone as part of a training session for women police constables at the district police office. He demonstrated how to fly, rotate, navigate, and direct drones while sharing key tips and techniques to help them become proficient in drone operations.

The SP explained that drone technology would be used for a variety of purposes, including maintaining law and order, crime control, crowd man-

agement during bandobasta, preventing incidents during fairs and festivals, and traffic regulation. He further highlighted its utility in preventing road accidents, curbing illegal bike races on highways, dealing with eve-teasing, managing disaster situations, conducting coastal patrolling, and monitoring anti-social activities.

Emphasising the broader benefits of drone surveillance, the SP noted that drones could also help in curbing illegal activities such as drug trafficking, the manufacturing of illicit liquor, gambling, and public drinking. He assured that surveillance would be carried out round-the-clock to control these activities effectively.

The SP stated that police personnel are being trained to

operate drones and to understand drone technology. All drones will be connected to the command control centre for continuous monitoring. So far, around 300 police personnel have been trained as drone operators, and drone-driven policing will soon be implemented across the district. He encouraged the police to embrace such advanced technologies to enhance public safety and provide better services to the community.

The training programme was attended by Additional SP (Admin) K. Nageswara Rao, SB Inspector K.V. Raghavendra, IT Core Inspector V. Surya narayana, PCR SI Prabhakar Reddy, and Ongole Taluka PS SIs Krishna Pavani, Anita, and other staff members.



## Over 700 lost/stolen mobile phones recovered

PNS ■ NELLORE

The Nellore district police have successfully recovered over 700 lost or stolen mobile phones, valued at Rs 1.50 crore.

In a press briefing on Tuesday, Superintendent of Police (SP) G. Krishnakanth informed the media that the district police had been receiving complaints through the "Mobile Hunt" initiative for lost or stolen mobile phones. Using advanced technology, the police managed to recov-

er the mobile phones and return them to their rightful owners. The SP urged people to report lost or stolen mobile phones by calling the helpline number 91543 05600. He also advised mobile phone owners to be cautious of fraudsters and refrain from sharing personal data with strangers.

During a special programme, some of the recovered phones were handed over to their owners, who expressed their gratitude to the SP and the police personnel for their efforts.

## 80 sheep run over by train

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In a tragic incident, 80 sheep were killed when an express train ran over them at Bhimasingi village in Jami Mandal on Tuesday.

According to railway police, a herd of more than 100 sheep was crossing the railway track when a group of sheep suddenly stopped in the middle of the track. At that moment, a speeding express train approached, running over the herd and killing 80 sheep on the spot. The sheep belonged to local herders Golakani Yerrinaidu, Simhacham, Varadhi Ramanamma, and Goppa Bangarunaidu.

The shepherds, who were guiding the flock for grazing, were unable to move the sheep in time. Despite their efforts, the herd remained on the track, leading to the fatal accident. The shepherds estimated the loss of the 80 sheep to



be around Rs 30 lakh and have appealed to the government for assistance to compensate for the loss.

# Police warn auto drivers against overloading schoolkids

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Traffic Circle Inspector Y Panduranga Rao has issued strict instructions to auto-rickshaw drivers, warning them not to overload their vehicles with school children. He emphasized that action will be taken against auto rickshaws found carrying more children than permitted.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday, the CI stated that auto drivers must ensure they transport only the designated number of children to school and avoid allowing students to sit on the sides of the vehicle. He



also extended the warning to school management, urging them not to overload school buses with students. Panduranga Rao further directed drivers to park their

vehicles at the side of the road while picking up or dropping off children. He stressed that all drivers of school buses and auto rickshaws must possess valid driving licenses and ensure they carry all necessary documents.

The CI also highlighted the use of drone cameras by the police to monitor and track instances of bike racing in the area. He cautioned that strict action will be taken against those indulging in such activities. Additionally, he advised parents to reconsider allowing their children to drive high-speed vehicles, stressing the importance of road safety.

# A festival of paddy in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress will not let the plant called KCR sprout again, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said. "Write it down. Let's see what KCR does. KCR is sleeping in his farmhouse and I know everything that is happening inside the farmhouse. I am saying again that KCR should come out from his farmhouse," the CM said.

Addressing the 'Praja Palana-Praja Vijayotsavam' held in Warangal city on Tuesday, Revanth said, "KCR said paddy cultivation is nothing but hanging oneself. Our farmers cultivated paddy on 66 lakh acres and raised a bumper crop of 1 crore 53 lakh tonnes. No state in the country has ever produced so much rice."

"What is your (KCR) sorrow and what is your (KCR) pain? Come to the Assembly. Let us have a debate. Come to the people and speak. The govern-



TG CM Revanth Reddy is addressing the Praja Palana-Praja Vijayotsavam public meeting at Warangal City on Tuesday

ment is ready to correct all valid issues raised by KCR. KCR won't come out but sent two cheap fellows. KCR is not coming but two 'petty guys' are making trouble," the CM said.

Appealing to KCR to stay in his farmhouse, the CM said, "I will send what KCR needs there. KCR promoted Telangana as a 'drunkard' state. Only four people have lost their jobs in the last 10 months. Nothing else

happened." The CM said that one leader commented that Telangana has realised what they lost in the last 10 months. However, women attained freedom during the last 10 months in Telangana. Today, women have reached the stage of establishing solar power plants which is being set up by the Adani and Ambani groups, the CM said.

The CM said that women have been given free bus trav-

el facility in TGSRTC buses. Women are getting cooking gas cylinders for only Rs 500. We are supplying free power up to 200 units to poor like nowhere else in the country, he said.

Revanth said that he had filled 50,000 vacancies in government service in the last 10 months. "Our government has the credit of waiving loans amounting to Rs 18,000 crore benefiting 22 lakh farmer families. We pledged to waive farm loans in the presence of Bhadrakali and Sannakka Sarakka deities and did it by August 15. We promised and we delivered it," the CM said.

He said that he is giving his word on this platform that it is his responsibility to waive the loans of everyone else. The Congress never backtracked and is committed to what it promises even if our heads are chopped off, he said.

"The opposition is cursing us. It does not have the heart to congratulate us," he said.

## School HM chops off girl students' hair; suspended

PNS ■ PADERU

A government school principal, who recently cut the hair of some girl students for allegedly arriving late to the school here, has been suspended, an official said on Tuesday.

B Srinivasa Rao, State Project Director of Samagra Shiksha, said the incident occurred recently and came to light on Monday, prompting the department to initiate an inquiry against U Sai Prasanna. According to the director, the incident took place at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), a girls' resi-

dential school in G Madugula of Alluri Sitaramaraju District.

"Yesterday (Monday), we conducted an inquiry, and late at night (Monday), the collector issued suspension orders," Rao said. The inquiry, led by the district educational officer (DEO) and the girl child development officer, resulted in disciplinary proceedings against Principal Prasanna. "The principal (Prasanna) has admitted to taking action by cutting the hair/excess hair of some students. Hence, the prima facie allegation has been proven beyond doubt," the suspension order stated.

## World Fisheries Day celebration tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The World Fisheries Day celebrations will be organised by the AP govt at the Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on November 21. At a press conference held at the Fisheries Commissioner's office

at Poranki near here on Tuesday, Fisheries Dept Commissioner Dola Sankar stated that the event would be attended by CM Chandrababu Naidu, Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Fisheries Atchan naidu, and other dignitaries.

# AP's natural farming sets a national benchmark

## Senior agriculture officials from 18 States explore various natural farming models under APCNF

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Natural farming practices implemented in Majjipeta village of Bheemunipatnam mandal are garnering national attention as a beacon of eco-friendly and sustainable agriculture. Dr. Devesh Chaturvedi, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, recently visited Majjipeta as part of a two-day regional conference held in Visakhapatnam to review major agricultural schemes. Impressed by the innovative techniques employed by local farmers, Dr. Chaturvedi commended the initiative. "This serves as a torchbearer for sustainable agricultural practices in the country," he said.

A delegation of senior agri-

culture officials from 18 States had the opportunity to explore various natural farming models under the Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) programme. They witnessed firsthand the techniques used by farmers like Adari Kishore and others, who collectively manage an 8.2-acre compact block.

The delegation witnessed live demonstrations of various natural farming techniques, including the preparation of organic inputs like Beejamrutham, Neemastram, and Brahmastram by local Self-Help Group members, innovative poly-cropping models such as banana intercropped with mango, coconut, tapioca, and okra, and pre-monsoon dry sowing (PMDS) techniques utilising banana as



the primary crop with advanced seed pelletisation.

Dr. Chaturvedi, along with Budithi Rajasekhar, Special Chief Secretary, Agriculture, and Vijay Kumar Thallam, Executive Vice Chairperson, RySS, emphasised the importance of replicating these practices across the country. The delegation expressed their appreciation for the visit, highlighting the valuable insights gained from the experience.



ACROSS THE STATES



Four killed as truck hits auto-rickshaw in MP

Four persons, including a four-month-old girl, were killed after a truck hit an auto-rickshaw in Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday afternoon, police said. Four others were injured in the incident that occurred at Baniyadoli village under Churhat police station limits around 1 pm, an official said. "A speeding truck hit an auto-rickshaw, in which three persons died on the spot while a four-month-old girl died in a hospital," Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Neelash Sharma said. The deceased were identified as Premwati Tiwari (55), her daughter Sita Mishra (32), her nephew Bhole Tiwari (22) and infant Mandvi Singh, the police said. Of the four injured persons, one was seriously wounded and was referred to a medical college-cum-hospital in Rewa. Three others are undergoing treatment in the district hospital in Sidhi, he said.



Thousands click selfies outside public toilets

Thousands of people clicked selfies with their mobile phones outside public toilets in Indore, the cleanest city in the country, as part of a unique campaign launched on World Toilet Day on Tuesday. Named 'toilet super spots', the campaign was launched by the Indore Municipal Corporation to encourage cleanliness and maintenance in over 700 public toilets and urinals in the city, officials said. "Indore is the only city in the country guaranteeing cleanliness in public toilets, appealing to people to use them and clicking selfies outside if they are satisfied with the facilities," Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava said at the event organised under the campaign. Around 78,000 people had clicked selfies outside public toilets by 5 pm under the 'Toilet Super Spots' campaign that began at 7 am on Tuesday, officials said.



Fire at vehicle showroom in K'taka; employee killed

A 20-year-old woman was killed in a fire that broke out at an electric vehicle showroom in Rajajinagar on Tuesday, police said. The incident occurred at around 5.30 pm at My EV Store, an electric bike showroom near Navrang Junction. Four fire tenders were dispatched to the scene, and the fire has since been fully extinguished. According to police, five to six people were inside the showroom when the fire broke out. All of them managed to escape, except for Priya, the cashier, who became trapped. The woman died of asphyxiation and severe burn injuries, a fire official said. Over 45 electric scooters were destroyed in the fire. "The charred body of the woman has been recovered. After the post-mortem, the body will be handed over to her family," a senior police official said. Preliminary investigations suggest that a short-circuit may have caused the fire, and further inquiries are ongoing.

India, China to focus on stabilising relations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI /RIO DE JANEIRO

India and China decided to soon convene a meeting of their Special Representatives on the boundary question after a gap of nearly five years and inched closer to the resumption of direct flights as well as Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage, weeks after pulling back their troops from two face-off points in eastern Ladakh.

The next steps in India-China ties with a broader objective to stabilise the relationship figured prominently in talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that took place on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro late Monday.

The two ministers felt that it was imperative that the focus should be on stabilising ties, managing differences and taking the next steps, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

It was the first high-level engagement between the two sides after the completion of the disengagement process in Depsang and Demchok along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.



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The MEA said the two ministers recognised that the disengagement in the border areas had contributed to the maintenance of peace and tranquility.

"The discussions focused on the next steps in India-

China relations. It was agreed that a meeting of the Special Representatives and of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism will take place soon," it said.

"Among the steps discussed were the resumption of the

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage, data sharing on trans-border rivers, direct flights between India and China and media exchanges," the MEA said.

The 22nd round of Special Representatives (SR) talks were held in New Delhi on December 21, 2019. India's SR for the dialogue is NSA Ajit Doval while the Chinese side is headed by Foreign Minister Wang.

The direct flights between India and China and the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage were suspended in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.



'Haryana too has a right over Chandigarh'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana also has a right over Chandigarh, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said on Tuesday, justifying the state's move to have an additional Vidhan Sabha building in the Union Territory, much to Punjab's chagrin.

Saini said the construction of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha complex in Chandigarh is a serious issue and all political parties in the state should rise above politics and present their views unanimously.

On Tuesday, during the Haryana Assembly session, the opposition extended its support to the government over the issue, saying Saini should convene an all-party meeting to present a united front. "We also have a right over Chandigarh," Saini later told reporters here when asked to comment on Punjab's ruling Aam Aadmi Party and other political outfits protesting

over the Centre's reported move to clear the allotment of 10 acres of land in Chandigarh to Haryana for the construction of its additional Assembly building.

Saini said Punjab can also extend its Vidhan Sabha building if needed. Reacting to Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda's remark that Haryana should not give its land in exchange to Chandigarh and instead extend the existing Vidhan Sabha building, Saini said the area where the present structure lies, enjoys a 'heritage status' because of which "we cannot extend the present building".

When the matter pertaining to the objection being raised by Punjab came up in the state Assembly on Tuesday, Saini pointed out that the Haryana Vidhan Sabha will need more space to accommodate an increase in the number of sitting legislators after the next delimitation exercise.

It's technical problem, says LIC as TN accuses it of thrusting Hindi

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India blamed the "technical problem for not shuffling the language page" on its website after the corporation was strongly criticised on Tuesday by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and other leaders for its alleged attempt to impose Hindi.

The national insurer informed that its "corporate website was not shuffling the language page due to some technical problem."

"The issue is resolved now, and the website is available in EnglishHindi language. Inconvenience caused is deeply regretted. - Team LIC," the LIC India Forever said on its social media platform X.

Earlier in the day, the insurance major came under fire for rolling out its home page only in Hindi, making it difficult for customers to navigate through the pages on account of not knowing that language.

Chief Minister M K Stalin took strong exception to the use of Hindi language on the web-



site of LIC of India, and said that the website has been reduced to a propaganda tool for imposing Hindi.

Posting a screenshot of the LIC of India webpage containing Hindi, the chief minister said in a post on social media platform X: "The LIC website has been reduced to a propaganda tool for Hindi imposition. Even the option to select English is displayed in Hindi!"

This, he claimed, was nothing but cultural and language imposition by force, trampling on India's diversity.

"LIC grew with the patronage of all Indians. How dare it betray the majority of its contributors? We demand an immediate rollback of this linguistic tyranny. #StopHindiImposition," the CM said in the post.

Terming the move as a "blatant imposition" of Hindi on other language-speaking people, BJP's ally and PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss, said this attempt by LIC is "highly condemnable" as it was trying to "push" a language among the non-Hindi speaking people.

UP bypolls: Over 30 pc candidates have criminal cases, 48 pc are crorepatris

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Over 30 per cent of the candidates contesting the bypolls in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday have criminal cases against them while 48 per cent are crorepati, according to a report.

The bypolls will be held at Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Karhal (Mainpuri), Meerapur in Muzaffarnagar, Ghaziabad, Majhawan in Mirzapur, Sisamau in Kanpur city, Khair in Aligarh, Phulpur in Prayagraj, and Kundarki in Moradabad on November 20.

The findings have been shared in a report by NGOs UP Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) after analysis of criminal background, financial, education, gender and other details of all 90 candidates in the fray.

According to the report,



out of 90 candidates analyzed, 29 (32 per cent) have declared "criminal cases" while 24 (27 per cent) have declared "serious criminal cases" against themselves. The report includes the 25 Independent candidates as well as those backed by regional and national parties.

In terms of financial background, out of the 90 candidates, 43 (48 per cent) are crorepatris and the average of assets per candidate contesting in the UP Assembly bye elections is Rs 3.76 crore, the report showed.

Not afraid of anything, I fight my own battles'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two days after he quit the AAP and subsequently joined the BJP, former Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot on Tuesday said leaving Delhi's ruling party was a very difficult decision for him but it had become a necessity.

In an interview on Tuesday, Gahlot, who has represented the Jat-dominated Najafgarh constituency since 2015, described his move to leave the AAP as "deeply emotional".

"I gave 10 years to the AAP. This decision (to quit) was not easy for me. It was deeply emotional. It was one of the most difficult decisions I have made, but I believe it was for the best," he said.

Gahlot also rejected AAP leaders' allegations that he switched sides under pressure from central agencies.

"People don't think before speaking. At least they should check which IT orders are pending against me and what was found during the search at my home: nothing. I believe in

Kailash Gahlot after joining BJP



fighting my own battles. It angers me when issues are created out of nothing," he said.

"I gave 10 years to AAP, and this decision was very emotional one for me, and whatever happened, happened for the best, and now I will work to strengthen the BJP," he added.

Gahlot also dismissed speculation of a fallout with AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal over Independence Day flag hoisting duties.

"I had absolutely no resentment. When I got to know that

ularly given his influence confronting the rural Jat community. Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar welcomed him into the party, calling him a "game-changer".

Gahlot pledged to work for strengthening the BJP's prospects in Delhi in the assembly polls, expressing confidence it will form the next government. "I will give my best here as I have always done in the past."

He also spoke about issues confronting the national capital, calling for a bipartisan approach to tackling pollution.

"Even as a minister, I always said pollution is an issue where there should be no politics. These are matters where we must rise above politics, involve everyone, and work together to resolve them."

On the portfolios he held in the AAP government, including Transport and Women and Child Development, Gahlot highlighted the need for urgent action regarding bus marshals in Delhi.

MAHARASHTRA ELECTIONS TODAY

Fate of key satraps hangs in balance



The BJP is contesting 149 seats, Shiv Sena 81 seats, and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP has fielded candidates in 59 constituencies. In the opposition alliance, the Congress has fielded 101 candidates, Shiv Sena (UBT) 95, and the NCP (SP) 86.

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What has added a sharp edge to the factional fights is the fact that the two claimants of Shiv Sena's popular legacy have squared off against each other in over 50 seats, while the nominees of the two Pawars are up against each other in nearly 37 constituencies.

At the centre of poll sweepstakes involving the two Sena is the question mark over "Mumbai ka king kaun", as many of their workers said in

a reference to the sway the undivided Shiv Sena had over the country's financial capital and which is now being contested by the two parties.

The uncle-nephew battle is the sharpest in western Maharashtra, a prosperous region where the Pawar clan is rooted.

Sharad Pawar, a four-term former chief minister of the state whose wily moves have shaped the state's politics for decades, has called for the defeat of betrayers, a reference to Ajit Pawar and his nominees.

The nephew in turn has refrained from using sharp words against him, wary of stirring popular sympathy for the ageing leader who had handed him a big defeat in the Lok Sabha polls.

'The Sabarmati Report' declared tax-free in Chhattisgarh too

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Just released Hindi film "The Sabarmati Report", based on the 2002 Godhra train burning incident in Gujarat, was on Tuesday declared tax-free in Chhattisgarh by the state's BJP government.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai announced that "The Sabarmati Report", in which actor Vikrant Massey has played the role of a journalist, will be tax-free in the state, meaning the Bollywood film has been given exemption from entertainment levy.

Chhattisgarh has become the second BJP-ruled state, after Madhya Pradesh, to give tax-free status to the film, helmed by Dheeraj Sarna, which hit theatres on November 15.

On February 27, 2002, 59 people, mostly karsevaks, were

killed when the S-6 coach of Sabarmati Express was set afire near Godhra station, triggering widespread riots in Gujarat.

"In this film, an attempt has been made to show the truth of the story of the train incident that happened in Godhra, Gujarat 22 years ago," a statement issued by the state's public relations department said.

The film should also be watched because the study of the past can give us better guidance about the present and the future, Sai said in the statement.

The Hindi movie is a highly commendable and effective effort to expose the horrific truth of history which vested interests tried to hide. It exposes the truth of the then existing system, which made a reprehensible attempt to suppress the truth by spreading false narratives, he noted.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Time for reckoning

Today Maharashtra will vote to decide its future leadership and political trajectory

MAhharashtra, one of India's most politically significant states, votes for all 288 Assembly seats today. This election comes at a time of heightened political fragmentation and social unrest, making its outcome crucial for both state and national politics. A key issue in this election is the split within the Shiv Sena, a party long associated with Maharashtra's regional pride. The party is now divided into two factions: one led by Uddhav Thackeray, aligned with the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Congress, and the other by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, supported by the BJP. This division has significantly eroded the party's traditional voter base, creating uncertainty about its performance in this election. Adding to the complexity is the Maratha reservation demand. The Maratha community, constituting about 30 per cent of the state's population, is pushing for inclusion in the Other Backward



Classes (OBC) category to access job and educational quotas. Protests, led by figures like Manoj Jarange Patil, have brought this issue to the forefront, with the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena alliance attempting to address it through policy measures. However, the unresolved tensions could influence voter sentiment, especially in rural areas.

The BJP-led alliance faces further challenges from agrarian distress in regions like Vidarbha and Marathwada. Falling crop prices for key produce such as cotton and onions have caused financial strain on farmers, traditionally a significant voting bloc. The MVA has capitalised on this dissatisfaction,

highlighting the BJP's failure to protect Maharashtra's economic interests, including the recent relocation of major industrial projects to Gujarat. This election also reflects national-level dynamics. The results will test the BJP's ability to maintain its dominance amid growing opposition unity and could signal the strength of the Congress and its allies. A victory for the MVA might energise the national opposition, while a BJP win could consolidate its position. With a fragmented political landscape, Maharashtra's election promises to be closely contested. Its outcome will likely shape not only the state's future but also set the tone for national politics in the coming years. The political landscape of the state stands at a crossroads today. With a deeply fragmented Shiv Sena, intense debates over Maratha reservations, and agrarian distress weighing on rural voters, this election carries stakes far beyond the state's borders. The outcome would indeed be a pointer to the prowess of the BJP at the national level and the resilience of the INDI alliance. Besides the state is an economic powerhouse and whosoever rules the state also enjoys the support of corporate world to keep its momentum going.

### PICTALK



Folk dancers perform during the celebration of the 297th foundation day of 'Pink City', Jaipur

# West Bengal's lost opportunity

Tata Nano factory's relocation from West Bengal to Gujarat is a poignant reminder of how political myopia derailed a golden opportunity for Bengal's industrial revival



ANIRBAN GANGULY

IN a moving tribute to late Ratan Tata, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of the many dimensions of the industrial icon's personality that endeared him to the people. Pursuit of excellence and empathy were among the most dominant traits in late Ratan Tata leading him to pilot the Tata conglomerate towards greater heights of success and expansion. Under his two decades of stewardship, the Tata group witnessed a phenomenal spread of its global footprints and established itself as a vibrant brand.

Perhaps like many others from West Bengal, Ratan Tata's passing brought to my mind the Singur - Tata Nano factory episode. Those dark days of lost opportunities, signified a major recul, for the hope of an industrial regeneration in the state. A party and government which had, for over three decades patronised, militant trade unionism had suddenly decided to reverse that trend. It was ironic to see it clamber for investment in a feverish pitch after having presided over the de-industrialisation of the state.

The destruction of Bengal's once formidable industrial might is a map of the CPI(M) rise in the state. Howrah, once famed as the 'Sheffield of the east', turned into West Bengal's principal industrial graveyard under the communists. As early as the 1920s Dr Ambedkar had seen through and realised the often-duplicious approach of the communist-led trade-unionism. In the pages of his Bahishkrut Bharat he wrote how communists were 'trying to capture the labour movement in the country' and that 'the main aim behind the strike' was 'not to improve the economic conditions of workers but to train them for revolution'. He could foresee the cancer that was trying to claw into India's industrial entrails.

Let us recall how then West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu had sanctioned protests against the Metro Rail project. The communist-driven frenzied trade-unionism destroyed several iconic public undertakings such as the Haringhata Milk



Dairy, set up by Dr BC Roy had created a milk supply chain across the state while generating thousands of jobs. Much like Mamata Banerjee who has refused to enlist West Bengal in the Centre's flagship 'Aspirational District Project' and remains lukewarm to the 'Ekalavya Vidyalaya' scheme, Basu in 1986, had forbade the setting up of Navodaya Schools in the state. In 1974, three years before he came to power as Chief Minister, Basu had organised a relay protest in front of the Hongkong Bank regional office in Kolkata to stall the installation of computers. Yet ironically the same Jyoti Basu in 1994, commissioned Arthur Anderson, a multinational business consultant, to carry out a study of the chances of West Bengal's industrial revival based on foreign investment. But progress was halting, it lacked a roadmap.

Thus, when Ratan Tata decided to invest in the state it was a whiff of more than fresh air, it was a long-needed gush of wind for breathing fresh life into a dying industrial ethos. A hopeful Tata had then said that he had 'scanned the country and looked at various locations before deciding to locate this rather revolution-



MUCH LIKE MAMATA BANERJEE WHO HAS REFUSED TO ENLIST WEST BENGAL IN THE CENTRE'S FLAGSHIP 'ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROJECT' AND REMAINS LUKEWARM TO THE 'EKALAVYA VIDYALAYA' SCHEME, BASU IN 1986, HAD FORBADE THE SETTING UP OF NAVODAYA SCHOOLS IN THE STATE

ary project which will give India's truly people's car here in Bengal. It announced a new chapter, a historic opportunity for Bengal's industrial rejuvenation. But that did not happen. Political selfishness, and one-upmanship between the ruling CPI(M) and the opposition Trinamool Congress, leading a blind political opposition to the proposal led to its grounding. In trying to bolster her flagging political prospects, Mamata Banerjee, desperately and deliberately jettisoned the project. Her political arrogance and self-centeredness led to its sinking. In her last fifteen years at the helm, the state has failed to recover from that mindless assault and pushback. An epic opportunity was lost, with a beleaguered Tata announcing his exit from the state due to political reasons. The people of West Bengal lost out. Their hopes of a possibilities-filled future receded in a mist of uncertainty. Both the ruling dispensation then and the opposition were responsible for pushing the state into a dark alley. The alley remains dark even to this day. Ratan Tata announced that he was shifting the car plant to Gujarat's Sanand. It was a plant that would eventually

grow into a mega 1100-acre unit. Narendra Modi was then Chief Minister of Gujarat. As Tata was announcing his exit from West Bengal, Modi texted him 'Welcome', leading to the proposed Nano factory shifting to Gujarat. Modi told Tata that the project was not only his, but ours. Later he had observed, in a lighter vein, that his one-rupee SMS had brought about a major boost to Gujarat's industrial prospects. Ratan Tata later said that he would forever remain grateful to Modi for placing faith in him and inviting him to Gujarat during those difficult days. The saga of the Singur-Tata Nano factory's shift to Gujarat is a saga of petty political squabbles, acute selfishness, arrogance and lack of true commitment to West Bengal's future and progress. That mindset and outlook among the ruling dispensation in the state still dominate. It has to be thrown overboard. Only then will West Bengal's industrial rejuvenation appear to be a possibility.

(The writer is chairman Dr Syama Prasad Moorerjee Research Foundation and member National Executive Committee, BJP; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### UKRAINE TO USE LONG-RANGE MISSILES

Madam — If this news is true that finally, US President Joe Biden has given the green signal to Ukraine to use long-range American missiles against Russia, then it is very good news for Ukraine. Because for the last one and a half years, Ukrainian President Zelensky was asking for permission to use these long-range weapons. Otherwise, this weapon will remain just a showpiece and one day Russia will capture it and then it will start using it to capture some third country.

This decision is also necessary because the Biden administration is now a guest for only two months. The president who will come after him, Trump, has already announced that he will stop giving any kind of help to Ukraine. The second big reason for Biden's change of heart seems to be that with the support of Russia, about 10 thousand combat soldiers of North Korea have taken up the front against Ukraine. In such a situation, Ukraine should have gotten this permission at all costs. The news of Biden's decision came after meetings with the leaders of South Korea, Japan and China in the last two days. The inclusion of North Korean troops was the main topic of the talks, which took place during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru. Europe was already ready to give permission. But America was not ready. It is said that American missiles will be able to hit up to 300 kilometers inside Russia at three times the speed of sound, which even Russia's anti-missile equipment will not be able to intercept.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### VIOLENCE ESCALATES IN MANIPUR

Madam — Apropos of the headlines on Manipur violence (November 18), the resurgence of violence in Manipur goes unabated. The violence and sabotage look beyond control. The MLAs and ministers of different political parties are being attacked and their houses are ransacked. The democratic fabric in Manipur has been destroyed by the extremists and irate

## India tests hypersonic missile



India's hypersonic missile technology has received a shot in the arm after a long-range hypersonic missile was tested by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). With a range exceeding 1500 km, the missile is intended to carry wide-ranging payloads for all three services of the Indian armed forces. These indigenously developed missiles are special because they travel with a speed five

times that of sound at sea level, at approximately 6200 km per hour, and at a mile per second. Hypersonic missiles are extremely difficult to detect, making enemy radars high impossible to spot them before they are too close for comfort.

Their maneuverability and ability to fly at lower altitudes separate them from the ballistic missiles that follow a set path. Hypersonic missiles can also be partially projected into orbit via a glide vehicle through the fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) unlike the ballistic missiles, though the latter can travel faster. Till now, Russia, China and the United States possess full-fledged hypersonic capabilities, while Germany, France, Japan, Australia, Iran and Israel are on course to follow suit. India has, thus, joined the elite 'hypersonic group.' Kudos to ISRO for another feather in the cap.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

mobs. Education, health, development and civic administration are in peril. The elected government has turned dysfunctional and there are threats and possibilities of destabilising the state government. It is quite apparent that the efforts of peace in the first phase of violence have failed despite the newly elected state government post-violence.

Earlier, there were reports of missionaries inciting violence in the state. The Manipur violence has affected neighbouring states of Assam, Tripura and Nagaland. In fact, the Manipur violence has a secessionist motive and the disruptive and separatist forces behind the Manipur violence are based across the borders. It is, therefore, imperative that President Rule may be imposed in the state and the assembly may be suspended till normalcy returns and the political atmosphere is congenial for restoration of the assembly and the government. The Manipur mayhem should not be taken as political mileage by the opposition parties. The India-Myanmar border should be sealed with immediate effect,

though this is practically very difficult. Vinod Johri | Delhi

### KAILASH GAHLOT QUITS AAP

Madam — Gahlot resigned from AAP, citing the party's shift from focusing on public welfare to prioritising political ambitions. In his resignation letter to AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, Gahlot stated that instead of fighting for people's rights, the party had increasingly been focused on its own agenda. He also expressed dissatisfaction with controversies like the 'Sheeshmahal' row, questioning whether AAP still upheld its core identity as the party of the common man. AAP responded by alleging that Gahlot's resignation was influenced by pressure from central agencies investigating him, a claim Gahlot dismissed. The BJP believes that Gahlot's entry strengthens its position as it prepares to challenge AAP in the upcoming elections.

Akhilesh Krishnan | Vashi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Buddhas in the boardroom: How meditation can counter burnout



ISHAN SHIVANAND

Meditation, once reserved for monks, is emerging as a transformative practice for professionals, helping them fight burnout

WITH increased screen time, back-to-back meetings and the constant scramble of the hustle culture, we need to consider - whether are we running the show, or just running. Workplace burnout is the price often paid for juggling high expectations, tight deadlines and the need to be available for work all the time - while disregarding personal health and wellbeing.



**Understanding workplace burnout:** Burnout is beyond the feeling of tiredness at the end of a busy day. It's a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, coupled with detachment, cynicism and reduced performance. The WHO officially recognised burnout as an 'occupational phenomenon,' signifying its critical impact on modern work-life. It affects mental clarity and emotional resilience and can even have physiological repercussions on heart health and sleep patterns.

**Why meditation:** Amid the workday, meditation offers an oasis - a moment to pause, reflect, and realign. The practice, often associated with

monks and mountain retreats, is now being rediscovered in the boardroom. The reason is simple: meditation fosters the ability to be present, grounded and conscious of one's thoughts and actions. Research has shown that regular meditation can alter brain activity, shifting it from the limbic system (responsible for our fight-or-flight responses) to the prefrontal cortex (the centre for rational thinking and calmness). This neurological shift translates to a greater sense of control over stress, enabling clearer decision-making and enhancing focus. Yoga emphasises how yogic, breathing and meditation techniques can lead to transformative wellbeing. Studies on Yoga have reported a positive impact on holistic wellbeing, with participants reporting reductions in anx-

iety, stress, and burnout by 72-82 per cent. This makes it an effective, research-backed solution for integrating meditation into workplace wellness.

### Transforming work culture through yogic practices

The tangible benefits of meditation go beyond stress relief. In practice, this means a more focused team, resilient in the face of challenges, and more open to collaboration. Some organisations are already creating environments where wellness isn't a perk but a pillar of their work culture. We need Buddhas in the boardroom.

### How meditation rewrites your life script:

Meditation is more than sitting in silence; it's about training the mind to be resilient. Techniques such as deep breathing, guided protocols and visualisation help individuals develop a heightened state of non-judgemental awareness, balance emotions, and build a strong mental framework to manage stress effectively. One standout programme is YOI, which has garnered attention for its multifaceted approach to wellbeing. Imagine being able to handle feedback with-

out feeling criticised or meeting a deadline without feeling panic - meditation offers a gateway to equanimity. As game-changers in the corporate world, meditative practices build the mental stamina to bounce back from setbacks, maintain composure under pressure, and approach situations with a growth mindset.

### Meditation at work

Meditation in the workplace doesn't require a meditation mat or a designated room; it just requires an integration of intention, emotion and awareness. Here are some strategies to help you get started: A few minutes of breathing or focusing on your senses can help reset your mental state. Begin your meetings with a minute of silence or guided breathing. It helps everyone clear their minds and be more present. As the world continues to spin, meditation serves as a reminder - that the power to pause and find a balance lies within.

(The writer is, mental health researcher and the founder of Yoga of Immortals; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN A DIET FOR PEACE: KINDNESS OVER CRUELTY

The food we consume shapes not just our physical health but also our thoughts, actions and the world



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It has been rightly said that we are what we eat because the kind of food that we eat has a direct impact on how we think and therefore it's crucial to what we become finally. Recent studies made by modern medical science have suggested that the human body is not naturally designed to digest and assimilate non-vegetarian food. That is why today most medical practitioners recommend a healthy vegetarian diet to their patients who are suffering from lifestyle disorders. Along with scientific studies, individual researchers made all over the world have also clearly pointed out that when an animal is killed for meat, it experiences fear, anxiety and pain. Its hormonal secretions are then passed on to its consumers.

Such a diet is therefore unhealthy both for the body and the mind. In many religions, a non-vegetarian diet is strictly forbidden not just because it causes pain and suffering to other living creatures but also because it is the source of vicious thoughts and attitudes to its consumers. In other words, non-vegetarian food is a gateway to a non-vegetarian lifestyle, a way of living where vices dwell comfortably. One must understand that human cruelty towards animals is nothing but a way of inviting cruelty onto the self. Also, the current trend of mass consumption of flesh by human beings highlights the way we look at other living beings and our desire to subjugate them.



From a broader perspective, the mass consumption of non-vegetarian food is a way of heaping sin upon the human community. No peace marches, diplomatic dialogues and conferences can bring peace to the planet when we are burdening it with the desperate cries of hapless creatures. For what we sow, so shall we reap. It is so ironic that the largely meat-eating developed countries of the world have stringent laws when it comes to treating a pet and it is ensured that if the pet is hurt, the owner can even be imprisoned. However, in these very countries, millions of animals are killed every day for food and yet no one goes to jail. Isn't it surprising that so many animal lovers continue to be non-vegetarians because they are unable to connect with the cruelty that goes behind, in the making of such food? Even more surprising was a weird recommendation to find humane methods of animal slaughter made by some so-called animal sympathisers. But the contention here is what can be more inhuman than nourishing an animal to kill it one day. It is a breach of morality by all standards. What is more cruel than subjecting generations of animals to a life of stifling captivity that only leads them to a merciless end? And what is more cruel than killing animals in front of each other? While one is bleeding to death, the other watches in horror and waits for its turn. It is a great pity that even sympathetic humans are left with such little kindness that all they can think of is designing a better way to kill. It's high time that all of us should ask ourselves a question: why does our conscience need a rational argument, sanctioned by a research institute in the West, to realise that killing other living creatures is a form of cruelty?

Why do we need facts and figures to understand that cruelty can never be a bringer of any form of health - be it mind, body or the environment & bring peace and harmony to the world? Can't we realise that a heart that heaves no sigh at the sight of violence cannot be a source of compassion for other fellow men? So how do we expect people who do not nurture the feeling of kindness for other living beings to nurture feelings of brotherhood and forgiveness for their community? Aren't we just walking on one path while seeking another's destination? Just give it a thought and then decide whether to Kill or Heal. Learn to live above self when life is precious to all. Let there be the right to live for all & not just Human Rights, then only world peace will descend.

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

# Delhi discoms in crisis: Debt and regulatory gaps



UTTAM GUPTA

A convoluted tariff regime, under-recoveries, power theft, and unpaid subsidies are threatening the sustainability of the Delhi discoms



Delhi Government is looking at various options to address twin problems facing its three power distribution companies (discoms) namely BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL), discom for South & West Delhi; BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) — discom for Central & East Delhi; and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited or TPDDL - discom for North Delhi. These are (i) "Regulatory Assets" or RAs of Rs 27,200 crore lying in the books of these discoms; (ii) an equally staggering amount of Rs 26,500 crore they owe to power generation and transmission companies viz. Indraprastha Power Generation Co. Ltd (IPGCL), Pragati Power Corporation Limited (PPCL) and Delhi Transco Limited or DTL at the end of September 2024. The discoms are expected to sell electricity to the consumers at tariffs — duly approved by the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) — that are set in a manner such that the revenue generated from sale at these tariffs fully cover the power purchase cost plus the cost of wheeling and distribution. The requirement is mandatory under the Electricity Act, of 2003. But, this is rarely complied with.

Under a highly convoluted regime, the tariff charged from households (HHs) consuming up to 200 units a month is Rs 3 per unit which is just about half of the average cost leading to an under-recovery of Rs 3 per unit. Including levies adding to 44.6 per cent, the shortfall comes to Rs 4.3 per unit (3x1.446). For HHs consuming between 201 and 400 units, the tariff is Rs 4.5 per unit implying an under-recovery of Rs 1.5 per unit. Including the levies, this comes to Rs 2.2 per unit. These under-recoveries are cross-subsidised by charging more from industries and businesses for which the tariff can go up to a high of Rs 16 per unit.

The irony is that despite charging exorbitant rates from industries and businesses, a good slice of under-recoveries from HHs consuming less than 400 units a month remains uncovered. Additionally, the Delhi government doesn't want the latter to even pay the small tariff of Rs



THE IRONY IS THAT DESPITE CHARGING EXORBITANT RATES FROM INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESSES, A GOOD SLICE OF UNDER-RECOVERIES FROM HHs CONSUMING LESS THAN 400 UNITS A MONTH REMAINS UNCOVERED

3 per unit (courtesy, of Kejriwal's freebies). Thus, discoms are told not to raise any bill on HHs consuming up to 200 units even as HHs consuming up to 400 units get a flat deduction of Rs 800 per month from the bill amount. Though the government promises to reimburse them for these subsidies from the state budget, this promise is held more in breach. This increases discoms' losses which are compounded by large-scale power theft.

Where do RAs fit in? RAs are created when state electricity regulatory commissions (in this case, DERC) accept that the tariffs don't cover discounts' purchase costs but don't raise rates. The gap between the cost and revenue generated from sales at tariffs (albeit unrevised) for supplied power, is booked by discom as receivable and classified as RA. This is contrary to the Electricity Act (2003) and the National Power Tariff Policy (NPTP) which says that "tariffs must reflect costs and regulatory assets should not be created". In December 2022, the Ministry of Power (MoP) even warned against creating a pile of RAs. But, all these regulations/warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

All losses incurred by discoms in Delhi during the last 11 years or so have been shown in their books as RAs. Regrettably, the RAs persist despite subsisting mechanisms to enable discoms to offset cost escalation by suitable increases in tariff. As per the order issued by MoP on November 9, 2021, discoms are allowed to impose a surcharge known as PPAC (Power Purchase Agreement Cost). Levied as a percentage of the 'total energy cost and fixed charge component' of the electricity bill, the surcharge is meant to compensate them for variations in the fuel and power procurement cost. Effective from July 2023, the DERC had last increased PPAC vide its order

dated June 22, 2023, by 9.42 per cent for BYPL, 6.39 per cent for BRPL and 2 per cent for TPDDL. The current PPACs for these discoms are 31.6 per cent, 27.08 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Moreover, DERC has allowed discoms to levy a surcharge of eight per cent.

This is intended to plug any shortfall in revenue vis-à-vis the cost still left unplugged after collection of PPAC. Despite these two impositions, the discoms continue to report a substantial shortfall in their revenue from the sale of electricity which is manifest in cumulative monumental RAs of Rs 27,200 crore. It is a manifestation of several glaring pitfalls: (i) the Delhi government isn't reimbursing discoms for the subsidies they give to target consumers on its behalf; (ii) large-scale power theft continues unabated; (iii) discoms have been submitting inflated bills/claims and other financial wrongs; (iv) inefficiencies get full protection. Hesitant to sanction tariff hikes against these extra/unjustified costs, DERC chooses the easy option of putting all these under RAs.

The idea of creating RAs is flawed. When a discom petitions DERC to allow any cost increase in tariff, the latter can either reject or accept. In case of acceptance, it should take the process to its logical conclusion by sanctioning the requisite tariff hike and notifying it. It can't leave things hanging in the air by accepting but not 'approving' and 'notifying' the tariff hike. Unfortunately, this is what the DERC has been doing for over a decade. This has dangerous consequences.

First, once recorded in their books as RAs, discoms will leave no stone unturned in recovering the money say by getting sanction of a steep hike in tariff to make up for the entire cumulative deficit in revenue. Indeed, the matter had gone right up to the Supreme Court

(SC) which in an order given in early 2023 had directed the DERC to let discoms recover their RAs. This could lead to a 100 per cent hike in tariff.

So, the regulator decided to contest that order. Second, until such time the requisite tariff hike is actually sanctioned by the DERC, the RAs can't be treated as an asset. Hence, there remains every possibility of the loans taken from banks and financial institutions (FIs) for funding them becoming non-performing assets (NPAs). Moreover, the banks/FIs may not give more to discoms and their suppliers namely IPGCL/PPCL/DTL more loans. Third, the discoms can leverage the ambiguous classification (neither outright rejection of a claim for tariff hike nor approval) to present claims to the DERC which the latter may not be willing to accept.

This leads to substantial claims getting bogged down in legal disputes at the appeal level or in higher courts. To conclude, providing for RAs in the books of discoms is a bad practice. Apart from discoms, it also puts the power generators and transmission companies at serious risk. It can impair the balance sheet of banks and FIs who have given loans to them.

It could mean a steep hike in tariffs on supplies to industries/businesses besides HHs consuming more than 400 units a month. To cap it all, it provides a 'cover up' for financial irregularities and corruption. The practice must be shunned. As for the RAs already piled up, a thorough enquiry should be ordered to look into irregularities followed by recovery of money from those found guilty. The discoms should be 'unshackled' from the controls of the State government. If the latter wants to subsidize or provide free power to certain consumers, the money should be given to them directly.

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

## Delhi's air quality crisis: Action taken for now, but long-term solutions are crucial The city faces an urgent need for sustainable, long-term strategies to tackle pollution at its root

The air quality in Delhi has recently deteriorated to dangerously high levels. To address this issue swiftly and effectively, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has implemented Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

This stage involves measures such as restricting bus services, pausing construction work and mining activities, and transitioning primary school classes to online learning. Although these steps are crucial in addressing the current pollution issue promptly, they alone cannot effectively address the underlying factors contributing to air pollution in the long term. It is crucial to prioritise short-term solutions for relief; however, we must not



EILIA JAFAR

overlook the factors that contribute to pollution in the long term as well. One significant factor is the dust produced during construction activities.

While the temporary suspension of construction operations following GRAP guidelines is a move in the right direction, it also underscores the urgency of implementing more environmentally friendly building

methods. Germany and Sweden serve as examples of nations that have successfully implemented construction practices.

For instance, Germany prioritises the use of low-carbon concrete, whereas Sweden focuses on promoting energy-efficient structures with improved insulation and solar innovations. India has the opportunity to implement strategies to minimise dust and emissions from construction activities and promote sustainable development.

The need for transformation in transportation is crucial to address the issue of pollution in Delhi caused by road dust and vehicle emissions. Although the metro system has advanced to some extent in Delhi, there are still areas

with connectivity that need attention.

Expanding the metro network and integrating buses can lead to a decrease in private car usage. Moreover, promoting the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) could play a role in reducing emissions. Providing benefits such as tax incentives, toll discounts, and even offering parking for EVs could potentially increase their attractiveness to commuters. Biking is becoming more popular as an eco-friendly option in Delhi; however, the city's infrastructure doesn't fully support it yet.

Although smart bikes are being introduced in some areas, which is a move forward, the absence of marked biking lanes and safety precautions deters many people from bik-



ing. Cities such as Copenhagen and Amsterdam serve as models for incorporating biking into urban environments. Delhi could take inspiration from its approach by investing in infrastructure for cyclists, such as bike lanes and bike-sharing services, to enhance the safety and convenience of cycling for its residents. Encouraging the use of sustainable building methods is crucial too!

Providing incentives for individuals who build energy-efficient houses or utilise eco-friendly materials could greatly support sustainability efforts in communities worldwide. Numerous nations offer tax advantages or financial aid to developers who embrace green building strategies. India could introduce perks like discounts on energy-saving devices, offers on solar panel setups, or financial assistance for homeowners undertaking eco-conscious improvements. These initiatives would not only lessen the burden on energy reserves but also encourage environmentally responsible construction practices.

Another helpful way to decrease the number of cars on the road is through carpooling initiatives, such as carpool

lanes and discounts for vehicles with passengers, which have proven effective in countries around the world. Introducing strategies in Delhi, such as designated carpool lanes or toll reductions for cars carrying two or more passengers, could play a role in alleviating traffic congestion and decreasing harmful emissions levels.

By implementing these measures, not only would pollution be reduced, but it would also enhance the daily commute experience for numerous residents in the area. The call for action is critical now.

The air pollution crisis in NCR intensified on November 17, 2024, as Delhi's average Air Quality Index (AQI) climbed to a hazardous 441 by 4 PM, classified as 'severe', up from

419 the previous day. The harmful pollutants are linked to health concerns, such as respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular diseases.

The Stage 4 actions outlined in the GRAP are crucial for providing relief; however, it is evident that a comprehensive long-term plan is essential to enhance the air quality in Delhi. By emphasising the enhancement of public transportation services, implementing infrastructure for cyclists, advocating for eco-friendly construction methods and encouraging carpooling, Delhi can strive to diminish pollution levels and establish a healthier and more sustainable environment for all residents.

(The writer is humanitarian and development professional; views are personal)





# RITWIK, SHREYA TALK THEIR MUSICAL SAGA BANDISH BANDITS S2

The much-anticipated second season of *Bandish Bandits* is finally on the horizon and the excitement among fans is palpable. After the soulful success of songs like *Ghar Aa Maahi*, the series is ready to return, bringing with it more music, drama and unforgettable characters. As the trailer launch approaches, lead actors Ritwik Bhowmik and Shreya Chaudhry look back on how their musical training and character development shaped their performances in this next chapter.

For Ritwik Bhowmik, who portrays the passionate musician Radhe, the journey into Season 2 was not just about revisiting his character but also about deepening his musical roots. "Even after Season 1 ended, I never stopped training," Ritwik shares. "I continued working with our music coach, Akshat, on a daily basis. We began reworking our training program about 3-4 months before filming, even though we weren't sure what the second season or the soundtrack would involve. Akshat and I started our rehearsals long before we even saw the script or stepped onto set." His determination to classical music, which he's been training in for over five years specifically for *Bandish Bandits*, has transformed his

approach not only to acting but also to life. "Classical music has been a game-changer for me. It's taught me to stay calm and approach life with more clarity, far beyond just my role."

For Shreya Chaudhry, who plays the fearless yet vulnerable Tamanna, the preparation for Season 2 was just as transformative. "I remember when Anand called to tell me about Season 2. His first words were, 'Let's start your music lessons,' and I knew then that I was in for an unforgettable experience," Shreya recalls. For her, the musical workshops and keyboard sessions were invaluable, but it was the deeper exploration of her character that truly resonated. "Reading the script and seeing how the plot unfolds, with each character getting their own unique arc, was such a special experience for me."

Shreya's portrayal of Tamanna in Season 2 is a powerful journey of growth. "Tamanna's arc this season is a metamorphosis, both for her and for me as an actor. She's become more fearless, but she also has this vulnerability. She's determined, yet starting from scratch in many ways. It's been such a fun and fulfilling process to dive into her world and live through her evolution."

The series, produced by Amritpal Singh Bindra and directed by Anand Tiwari, promises to be as captivating as ever. Along with the return of the talented original cast, including Ritwik, Shreya, Sheeba Chaddha, Atul Kulkarni, Rajesh Tailang and Kunal Roy Kapur, the second season will introduce new faces, including Divya Dutta, Rohan Gurbaxani, Yashaswini Dayama, Aaliyah Qureshi and Saurabh Nayar, who will play pivotal roles.



Ritwik's excitement for Season 2 is evident, especially when reflecting on the evolution of Radhe's character. "I was genuinely impressed with how the character was written for this season," he reveals. "Radhe, like all of us, has evolved over time. With each experience, we grow, and so does he. I can't wait for the audience to see the changes."

# 'Shikha in Season 2 takes challenges to another level'

Shweta Tripathi, known for her versatile performances across acclaimed projects like *Mirzapur*, *Masaan* and *Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhein*, is once again captivating audiences in the highly anticipated second season of *Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhein*. As she steps back into the shoes of Shikha, a character that stands in stark contrast to her own personality, Shweta opens up about her approach to acting and why she seeks out roles that challenge her as an artist.

In a conversation, Shweta explained her unique method of selecting roles. "I deliberately choose characters that are unlike me in real life. I find joy in exploring personalities that are different from my own and distinct from each other. I thrive on the intensity of high-drama roles, where the stakes are high and every character's journey has a significant impact," she shared. This approach, she believes, allows her to grow as an actor and keeps her performances fresh and diverse. Shweta's portrayal of Shikha in *Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhein* is a prime example of her commitment to bringing challenging roles to life. "Shikha is a very different person from me and I relish the opportunity to step into her world. It's always a challenge to take on a character who doesn't align with my own traits, and Shikha in Season 2 takes that challenge to another level," Shweta said.

The new season promises to delve deeper into Shikha's emotional landscape, with love and heartbreak at the center of her journey. "The question the show poses is, 'How far would you go for love?' That's exactly what Shikha grapples with this season. It's an intense journey that I think audiences will find both relatable



and haunting," Shweta explained. This season, Shikha's character evolves, showing a more vulnerable side while also revealing her strength and determination. "It's an exciting balance to bring to life. She's fierce, but she's also deeply vulnerable. Finding that equilibrium has been a rewarding experience for me."

As the story unfolds, Shikha's emotional turmoil takes center stage. "In Season 2, Shikha experiences a devastating heartbreak when the love of her life, Vikrant, marries Purva. This shatters her world and leaves her feeling lost and hopeless. Although she is naturally fearful and avoids confrontation, her love for Vikrant forces her to take action," Shweta revealed. As the season progresses, viewers will see Shikha shift from passivity to an empowered state, as she begins to fight for her love.

"This season explores the complexities of love. We often think of it as a romantic or idealised feeling, but here, we see how love can also drive a person to their limits. Shikha's journey shows how love can empower you, but it can also consume you. It's a beautiful yet terrifying emotion," Shweta reflects.

For Shweta, playing a character driven by pure passion rather than revenge or anger was a refreshing change. "I've played roles in the past that involved anger, revenge and resilience, but this character has shown me how love can transform you."

# Abhishek Bachchan on asking for help, inspired by daughter Aaradhya!

Abhishek Bachchan, known for his versatility on screen, recently opened up about a deeply personal lesson that resonates with his upcoming role in *I Want to Talk*. The actor revealed how a simple moment with his daughter, Aaradhya, gave him a profound insight into the resilience of his character, Arjun Singh, in the film.

In a candid conversation, Abhishek recalled a moment from the pandemic when Aaradhya was reading a children's book. One particular line from the story made a lasting impression on him. The book's protagonist referred to the word "help" as the most courageous in the world, explaining that asking for help shows a person's

commitment to carrying on and facing challenges head-on. This concept deeply moved Abhishek, who reflected, "Asking for help means you are not giving up. You are ready to fight through whatever comes your way. I will do whatever it takes to carry on."

Abhishek found this lesson to be at the heart of his portrayal of Arjun Singh. In the film, Arjun is a man battling significant personal struggles, yet he refuses to surrender. "Arjun is not afraid to ask for help, he's not afraid to seek treatment, and most importantly, he doesn't give up," Abhishek explained. He highlighted the strength of his character, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. "It's easy for someone to reach a point where they feel completely defeated and want to walk away, but Arjun is someone who refuses to do that. The fact that he keeps going, despite everything he's been through, makes him incredibly courageous."

*I Want to Talk*, directed by Shoojit Sircar, delves into themes of resilience and the human spirit. Abhishek's character, Arjun, finds strength not just in himself but also in his willingness to ask for help, something that Abhishek believes is central to the message of the film.

Set for release on November 22, 2024, *I Want to Talk* also stars Johnny Lever and Ahilya Bamroo and is produced by Ronnie Lahiri and Shoojit Sircar under Rising Sun Films.



# DANIEL CRAIG TEASES IDENTITY OF NEXT JAMES BOND

At the 15th annual Governors Awards held at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, Daniel Craig playfully teased the identity of his successor as the legendary James Bond. During his speech to introduce Bond producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson, Craig shared a light-hearted moment with the audience. "If you came here to find out who the next James Bond is, don't look at me, but he might be in the room," Craig said with a grin. "Maybe I'm joking, maybe I'm not," he added, sparking excitement and curiosity among fans and attendees alike.

Craig, who portrayed the British spy in *Casino Royale* (2006), *Quantum of Solace* (2008), *Skyfall* (2012), *Spectre* (2015), and *No Time to Die* (2021), had previously expressed that he had no strong opinion on who should play the next Bond. His comments at the Governors Awards were his first public remarks on the highly anticipated casting decision since his departure from the role. As speculation around the casting continues, actor Colman Domingo added a humorous twist by pitching himself for the role, saying, "I know there's a list of phenomenal, handsome, athletic, suave and debonair actors vying to be the next James Bond. Now, if you're thinking of me, I don't know what to tell you: Bond or Bond villain? You decide... I'll leave my headshots on your table."

The conversation surrounding the next James Bond continues to dominate headlines as fans eagerly await the producers' big decision on who will take on the iconic role next.



# How Randeep Hooda's support helped Lin land her dream role?

Lin Laishram, the model, actor and entrepreneur, recently tied the knot with actor Randeep Hooda on November 29, 2023, in an intimate ceremony. However, amidst the wedding festivities, Lin was also immersed in her latest professional endeavor: her role in the upcoming film *Bun Tikki*. Produced by the renowned designer-turned-producer Manish Malhotra, this film marks a significant shift in Laishram's acting career, as she steps into her first-ever negative role!

In a conversation about her experience working on *Bun Tikki*, Lin shared, "Manish would often say, 'I can't believe you're doing this while planning your wedding!' The support from him and the entire team was incredible." While the film's release date is still under wraps, Laishram is certain that this project will be a major milestone in her career. "It's definitely one I feel very proud of," she says.

Balancing her wedding and professional commitments, Laishram juggled filming *Bun Tikki* while shuttling between Mumbai and Delhi. Despite the hectic schedule, she managed to make it work, with Randeep by her side offering unwavering support. "As they say, when the universe gives you opportunities, it does so in abundance," Lin reflects. "I didn't want to let this chance slip by, especially since work has been sporadic for me in the industry. Randeep encouraged me, telling me, 'You can do anything, be anything.' That encouragement has been truly empowering." Lin made her Hindi film debut in 2007 with *Om Shanti Om* and was recently seen in the 2023 film *Jaane Jaan*, alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan. Now, with *Bun Tikki*, she's all set to take on a completely new challenge that promises to showcase her versatility as an actor.

## FUN

### ARCHIE

Panel 1: Archie: "HOT DOG'S A PRETTY AMAZING DOG! LOOK! HE WANTS TO PLAY WITH THE BALL!"  
Panel 2: Jughead: "JUGHEAD THAT'S NO BIG DEAL! ALL DOGS LIKE TO PLAY BALL!"  
Panel 3: Archie: "NOT LIKE HOT POG?"  
Panel 4: Jughead: "HUNCH! HUNCH! HUNCH! HUNCH!"

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

Panel 1: Calvin: "DO YOU THINK GROWN-UPS WILL HAVE THE WORLD FIXED UP BY THE TIME THEY HAND IT OVER TO US?"  
Panel 2: Hobbes: "NOT THE WAY THEY'RE GOING."  
Panel 3: Calvin: "THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT."  
Panel 4: Hobbes: "I GUESS THAT MEANS IT'S UP TO US THEN."  
Panel 5: Calvin: "SOMEHOW, I'M NOT REASSURED."  
Panel 6: Hobbes: "HA! WHEN I'M PRESIDENT, I'LL HAVE THINGS WHIPPED INTO SHAPE IN NO TIME."

### GARFIELD

Panel 1: Jon: "IT'S HARD TO KEEP UP WITH ALL THE TECHNOLOGY."  
Panel 2: Garfield: "LET ME HELP YOU OUT, JON."  
Panel 3: Jon: "THIS...IS A PENCIL."  
Panel 4: Garfield: "THAT'S A PENCIL."

### REALITY CHECK

Panel 1: Sharon: "I FEEL A LOT BETTER, SHARON-- THANKS FOR LETTING ME VENT!"  
Panel 2: Man: "AARAB WOULD LIKE TO KNOW YOUR CURRENT LOCATION. DON'T ALLOW FOLLOW."

### SPEED BUMP

Panel 1: A car hits a speed bump.

### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	

### NANCY

Panel 1: Nancy: "I COULD STAND TO FRESHEN UP MY LOOK."  
Panel 2: Nancy: "I WONDER WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I LET MY HAIR GO ALL-NATURAL."  
Panel 3: Nancy: "THE NEXT DAY"

### GINGER MEGGS

Panel 1: Meggs: "COME ON, JUBEARS. IF YA WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS FITNESS PLAN MORE SERIOUSLY!"  
Panel 2: Jubears: "WHY DO YOU EVEN CARE? HONESTLY?"  
Panel 3: Meggs: "THE LESS FOOD YOU NEED, THE BETTER CHANCE I HAVE AT EATING ME OWN LUNCH."

## Master flutist redefining Indian classical music

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Pandit Ronu Majumdar, often celebrated as the "Flute Wizard" or the "Flute King," has cemented his place as a legend in the world of music, enchanting audiences across continents with the soulful magic of his bansuri. From performing at prestigious global venues to setting remarkable world records, his journey is a symphony of passion, humility and an unwavering spiritual connection to his art. In a candid conversation with *The Pioneer*, the maestro shared the milestones of his life—his early influences, collaborations with music legends and the profound philosophy that has shaped his career.

His tryst with music began at the tender age of six, a time when most children are merely discovering the world around them. "Music was always my passion," he reminisces with a smile. "At first, I never thought I'd pursue it full-time. My first inspiration was my father, followed by my guru, Pandit Ravi Shankar."

It was under the guidance of these towering figures that his love for the bansuri blossomed. By the 1970s, music had become the axis around which his world revolved, eclipsing all other pursuits. "I never imagined doing anything else. Music became my entire world," he reflects.

Throughout his illustrious career, he has shared the stage with some of the greatest names in music, spanning Indian classical, Bollywood and even global icons. Among his most cherished collaborations are those with Pandit Ravi Shankar, Asha Bhosle, RD Burman and George Harrison of the Beatles!

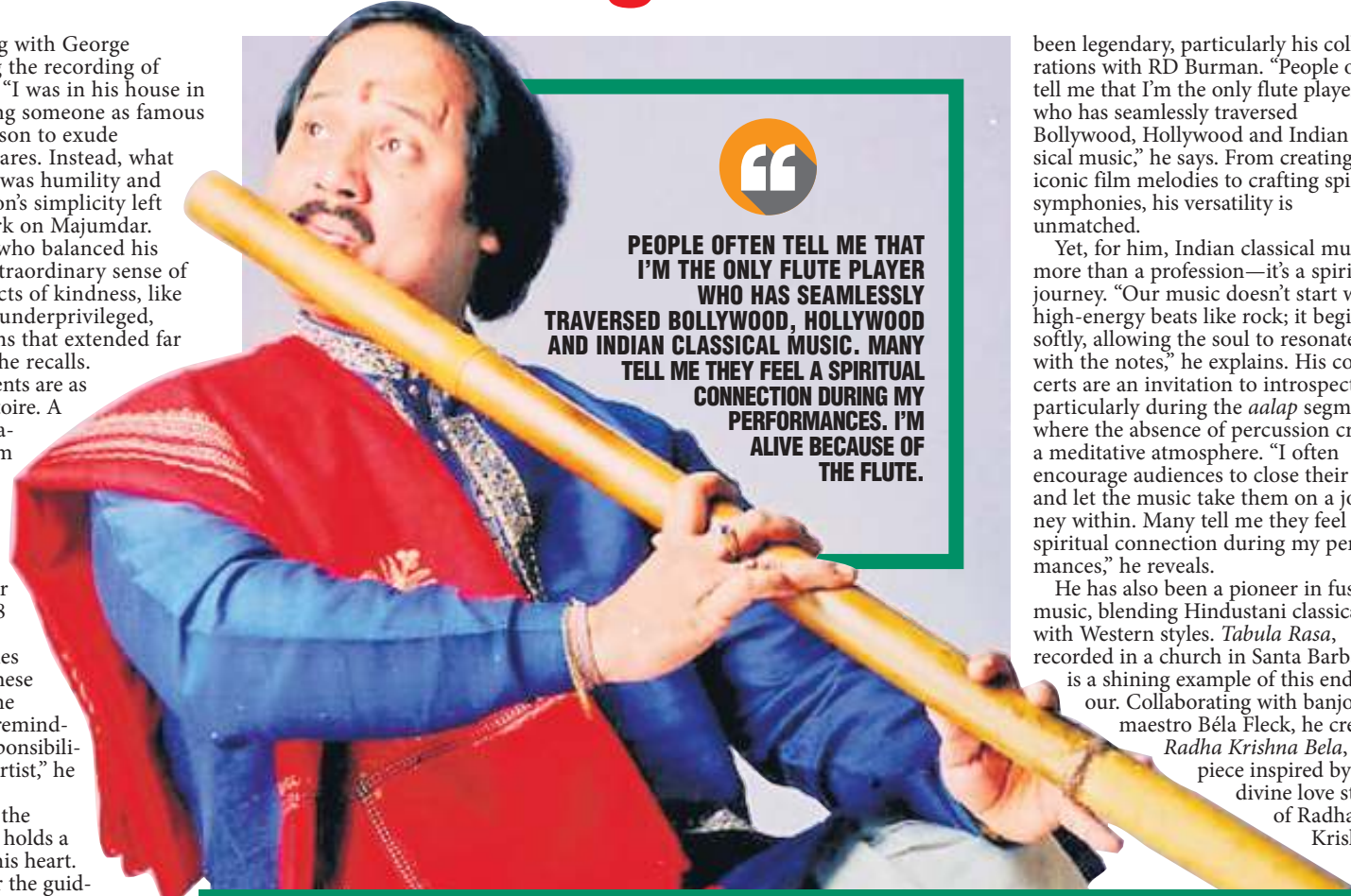
One of his fondest memories

involves working with George Harrison during the recording of *Chants of India*. "I was in his house in Britain, expecting someone as famous as George Harrison to exude grandeur," he shares. Instead, what he encountered was humility and warmth. Harrison's simplicity left an indelible mark on Majumdar.

"He was a man who balanced his fame with an extraordinary sense of humanity. His acts of kindness, like donating to the underprivileged, taught me lessons that extended far beyond music," he recalls.

His achievements are as vast as his repertoire. A Grammy nomination for his album *Tabula Rasa*, the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and a Guinness World Record for conducting 5,378 flutists stand as shining milestones in his career. "These accolades gave me confidence and reminded me of the responsibility I carry as an artist," he shares.

Among these, the Guinness record holds a special place in his heart. Organised under the guidance of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the event brought together flutists from around the globe. "We initially didn't think we'd cross 5,000 participants. But on the day of the concert, more and more musicians joined until we hit 5,378. It was a surreal moment, a true celebration of the flute," he says with pride. His work in Bollywood has also



PEOPLE OFTEN TELL ME THAT I'M THE ONLY FLUTE PLAYER WHO HAS SEAMLESSLY TRAVERSED BOLLYWOOD, HOLLYWOOD AND INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC. MANY TELL ME THEY FEEL A SPIRITUAL CONNECTION DURING MY PERFORMANCES. I'M ALIVE BECAUSE OF THE FLUTE.

With the gentle touch of his fingers on the bansuri, Pandit Ronu Majumdar weaves a sonic tapestry that transcends borders and generations. Celebrated as the 'Flute Wizard' or 'Flute King,' this master flutist has redefined Indian classical music, enchanting audiences worldwide with his soul-stirring renditions. From prestigious global stages to record-breaking feats, Majumdar's five-decade journey is a testament to passion, humility and an unwavering spiritual connection to his craft

been legendary, particularly his collaborations with RD Burman. "People often tell me that I'm the only flute player who has seamlessly traversed Bollywood, Hollywood and Indian classical music," he says. From creating iconic film melodies to crafting spiritual symphonies, his versatility is unmatched.

Yet, for him, Indian classical music is more than a profession—it's a spiritual journey. "Our music doesn't start with high-energy beats like rock; it begins softly, allowing the soul to resonate with the notes," he explains. His concerts are an invitation to introspection, particularly during the *aalap* segment, where the absence of percussion creates a meditative atmosphere. "I often encourage audiences to close their eyes and let the music take them on a journey within. Many tell me they feel a spiritual connection during my performances," he reveals.

He has also been a pioneer in fusion music, blending Hindustani classical with Western styles. *Tabula Rasa*, recorded in a church in Santa Barbara, is a shining example of this endeavour. Collaborating with banjo maestro Béla Fleck, he created *Radha Krishna Bela*, a piece inspired by the divine love story of Radha and Krishna.

"Explaining such a deeply spiritual concept to Béla and watching him interpret it through his instrument was an incredible experience," he recalls.

As Indian classical music evolves in an era of technology and global collaborations, he remains a staunch advocate of preserving its purity. "Traditional music must always be performed in its traditional form," he asserts. While he embraces fusion as a creative outlet, he ensures that it remains distinct from his classical performances. "Both genres deserve respect and understanding," he emphasizes.

To him, the key to success lies in mastery. "Focus on your craft, not on success. If you excel at what you do, success will follow naturally," he advises aspiring musicians.

For him, the flute is far more than an instrument; it is his spiritual lifeline. "I'm alive because of the flute. It gives me peace before I share that peace with the world," he says. Every note he plays carries a sense of divine purpose. "When I strike the perfect pitch, I feel the presence of the Almighty," he shares with reverence.

Even after nearly five decades in music, for him, shows no signs of slowing down. His upcoming album with Grammy-winner Ricky Kej promises to be another milestone in his career! "We've worked on two singles before, but this time, we're creating a full album with seven to eight tracks," he reveals. Their previous collaboration, a reimagining of the classic *Babul Mora*, beautifully blended tradition with modernity.

Pandit Ronu Majumdar's story resonates like the notes of a raga, unfolding with grace and depth. His flute is not just an instrument but a sacred bridge—connecting the earthly to the divine, the artist's soul to the hearts of his audience.

## 'Situationship is surefire way to end badly,' fill in first-time writer Harshita Gupta

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With every stroke of her pen, Harshita poured out the shards of her shattered heart, transforming the agony of lost love into a cathartic masterpiece! The pages became a canvas of emotions, a vibrant tapestry woven from threads of sorrow and acceptance. As words flowed onto paper, the weight of heartbreak slowly lifted, replaced by a sense of purpose and healing. And when the final sentence was penned, she smiled, knowing that her heart, though broken, had found a way to heal—and perhaps, in the process, help his heart too as she prepared to tie the knot with someone else.

While travelling, Harshita Gupta, the digital sensation who has gained popularity for her relatable storytelling and sense of humour, was with us for an exclusive interview, but there's a special purpose for it! Well, Harshita, who was recently listed among Forbes India's Top 10 Digital Stars of 2024, has made her literary debut with the release of *Unloved: The Art of Moving On*. Yes, we definitely recall seeing a book with an amazing cover in Hyderabad as well! "I experienced two distinct cultural nuances while writing this book: I discussed therapy because it is still taboo in India. I have purposefully included a page devoted to therapist therapy after each chapter. I want to use my mental health issues to educate people about the differences between anxiety and panic attacks. Second, this book will help you end relationships without having to tell your parents or cope with social taboos," Harshita sees a uniquely Indian perspective on grief and recovery.

Through a distinctively Indian vision that strikes a deep chord with her audience, *Unloved* takes readers on a journey of loss, healing and self-discovery. Anyone negotiating the intricacies of relationships should read Harshita's book since her voice offers new insights on personal development! "I was writing something really different from my typical Instagram posts. Do I only have a sense of humour on social media? I am well-known for my chatty chatter! However, I wanted to show the world that I am more than just a comedian with this book. As I was writing this book, I realised how vulnerable we all are. Three years ago, the Penguin editor who was following me was surprised to learn that she knew the real Harshita after reading what I had written! She was shocked by what she saw, particularly when I pleaded with a man to stay in my life. My reality is not social media."

More details about her new book are revealed by the versatile artiste: "The best character development occurs during heartbreaks, when we cease giving way to our feelings. We make an effort to avoid those due to the lack of acceptability. I have therefore made an effort to educate the public on how to deal with heartbreak. Let's talk about loving oneself!"

Heartbreak is followed by infidelity. Since I've experienced all of this, I could also write about confidence. I had days when I was unable to take rejection. I simply don't care about people anymore; I don't dislike them and I don't wish my ex any good or bad things because I don't want to give him any. I don't really think about him. Indifference, not hatred, is the antithesis of love!"

According to one of the stories she told us, "Because of the circumstances that are being created, people in my generation are giving up on love. Can you top the time I gave up on love? It's the most depressing thing to witness. Love is, as we say, the most exquisite emotion in the world. Rekindling love despite a broken heart is a sign of strength rather than weakness. I want people to love who they are. After a breakup, self-esteem is crucial! I dislike it when people look to their partners for approval."

We hear from the other end, which leads to some deeper discussions: "It became the national bestseller, which is a big professional success for me. Who could have imagined this? Particularly when it wasn't even available for purchase. I wanted individuals to know that they are no longer alone during this heartbreak journey by writing this book. I was getting thank-you emails in the Instagram generation. Now beat that. Haha, the *Unloved* is loved."

All about empowerment and self-love, the former radio jockey continues, "I recall writing a chapter titled 'Modern Dating,' which discussed how millennials, particularly those living in large cities, have no other option but to give in to the modern dating scene. A situationship is a surefire way to end badly! What the hell are you doing by voluntarily accepting uncertainty? Are we not talking about red and green flags a lot these days? Unloving is what we aren't being taught! My book serves as a plan for leaving your failing romantic relationship with dignity, respect and grace."

Writing about heartbreak may be extremely difficult and intimate. Did she find any particular chapters especially difficult to write? The comedy content creator shares her insights on navigating the same. "While writing the book, I was getting ready for my wedding. In the morning, I had to decide what I would wear to my wedding and by nightfall, I was back to finishing this book. I found this to be difficult! As I continued to write, I had to go over a lot of memories again, which was really hard for me (she pauses and continues the interview). Naturally, my wedding is meant to be a really joyous occasion, but I had to balance conflicting expectations. I found the book's first three chapters to be the most challenging!" Finally, we listen to her say, "I am a pretty strong individual who doesn't constantly cry about my circumstances. I always look for the good! Although it was the worst decision I made in 2009, moving to Bombay taught me self-satisfaction and value for money. During those days, I reached my lowest point as a professional! I've cited myself as referring to the "other woman" quite openly in the book. To come out of this, I required a lot of therapy."

### HIDDEN CULPRITS:

## Everyday habits that lead to kidney and bladder stones

Kidney and bladder stones are crystalline deposits that form in the urinary tract, causing significant discomfort and health complications. These stones often result from a combination of genetic predisposition, dietary factors, and lifestyle habits.

### PHYSIOLOGY OF STONE FORMATION

Kidney and bladder stones develop when urine becomes supersaturated with minerals like calcium, oxalate, or uric acid. This creates an environment where crystals can precipitate and grow. Protective factors, such as citrate, which inhibit crystal aggregation, may be deficient in individuals.

### EVERYDAY HABITS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STONE FORMATION

#### 1. INSUFFICIENT HYDRATION

Dehydration is one of the most significant risk factors for stone formation. Inadequate water intake concentrates urine, increasing the likelihood of mineral crystallization. A habit of drinking less than the recommended 2-3 liters of water daily can lead to this condition. Tea, coffee, and sugary sodas, often consumed in place of water, exacerbate the issue due to their diuretic and oxalate-rich properties.

#### 2. EXCESSIVE SALT INTAKE

High dietary sodium levels promote calcium excretion into the urine, a primary component of calcium-based stones. Common culprits include processed foods, salty snacks, and canned goods. A diet persistently high in sodium overwhelms the kidney's ability to reabsorb calcium, leaving it to combine with oxalate or phosphate to form stones.

#### 3. HIGH OXALATE FOODS

Spinach, nuts, and chocolate are rich in oxalates, compounds that bind with calcium to form stones. While these foods are nutritious, excessive consumption, especially without adequate calcium intake, raises stone risk. Calcium binds with oxalate in the gut to reduce absorption, underscoring the importance of a balanced diet.

#### 4. LOW CALCIUM DIETS

Paradoxically, avoiding calcium to prevent stones can increase risk. Dietary calcium deficiency leads to greater oxalate absorption, contributing to stone formation. The key is consuming calcium in moderation from dairy or fortified foods.

#### 5. SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

Physical inactivity contributes to calcium loss from bones, increasing urinary calcium levels. Prolonged immobility or a desk-bound lifestyle creates an ideal environment for stone formation.

#### 6. EXCESSIVE ANIMAL PROTEIN

Diets high in animal protein, such as red meat, eggs, and fish, can acidify urine, reducing citrate levels. Citrate binds with calcium, preventing stone formation. High protein intake also increases uric acid excretion, a common component of stones.

#### 7. IRREGULAR URINATION

Holding urine for extended periods can concentrate minerals in the bladder, facilitating stone formation. Regular urination flushes out potential stone-forming substances, reducing risk.

#### Preventive measures

Prevention is better than cure. Drinking adequate water, maintaining a balanced diet with moderate calcium and low sodium, and adopting an active lifestyle can significantly reduce stone risk. Regular health check-ups and dietary adjustments tailored to individual metabolic profiles are essential for those with a history of stones.

Kidney and bladder stones are often preventable. Identifying and modifying hidden habits, such as dehydration, high sodium intake, or a sedentary lifestyle, can go a long way in promoting urinary health. By making small but significant changes to daily routines, individuals can reduce the risk of this painful and recurring condition.

(The author Dr. Kinjal Banerjee, is a Consultant - Renal Transplant, Urology, Sarvodaya Hospital.)



Forbes India's Top 10 internet star and well-known sensation Harshita Gupta has turned her tragedy into a moving story of self-discovery and healing. She takes readers on a very intimate journey of love, grief and resiliency in her debut book, *Unloved: The Art of Moving On*. The book, which was written during her own life-changing time, presents a distinctively Indian viewpoint on grief and healing!



# Vishwak Sen sets record straight on *Mechanic Rocky* and *Gangs of Godavari*!

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**Y**oung actor Vishwak Sen is coming up with another film, *Mechanic Rocky* and this is his third film this year. Earlier his films *Gangs of Godavari* and *Gaami* were released. The film is releasing on November 22. "The story is based on some real incidents and we have taken a burning point that we are discussing from the last four to five years," said Vishwak Sen about the film.

The actor said he was a bit scared when he did this film. "As I said, it's a topical point and if anyone gets the same thought and makes a film on the same subject, that's why I'm scared. But luckily no one got the idea," he said. He added that he did this film simultaneously along with *Gangs of Godavari*.

"I had to grow a moustache for *Gangs of Godavari*, then I had to get rid of it for *Mechanic Rocky*. I must therefore wait a while for the first movie when I work on this one," said Vishwak Sen about doing it simultaneously. "The accent is also completely different for these two films. For this one it is the Telangana accent; for *Gangs of Godavari* it was the Godavari accent, so I had to adjust," he added.

The actor said that it is not a big thing. "The first two hours may be difficult; after that, I get into the character and can adjust," said Vishwak Sen.

Vishwak Sen earlier turned down the director

for a few other films! In response to the question, *Mechanic Rocky*, did he dawdle here and there?

"No, I didn't and moreover, director Ravi Teja didn't give me a chance as he completely took over the project," said Vishwak. The earlier film *Gangs of Godavari* didn't do well because it is reported that Vishwak Sen was involved in the direction for it. "It is not true; I didn't do anything in that direction. There are many bigwigs in that project, like China Babu (producer), Vamsi Anna (Suryadevara Naga Vamsi) and Chaitanya (director). So when these people are around, I can't be involved in the direction department," said Vishwak Sen.

The actor said that they all met and decided with a majority. "We are a group of five or six people that include the director, me, the producer, editor and the cinematographer discuss and share our ideas and then go with the majority," said Vishwak Sen. Asked about the actor sometimes talking like a warning at the public meeting of his films, he said "no." "Generally I speak loudly, because when I am on stage, I can't hear my voice," he said.

A few days back, at the pre-release function of *Mechanic Rocky*, Vishwak Sen said, "Veepulu Paguluthayi" (if anyone writes personal.) "It's not a vulgar word; those are common words used in most of the houses," said the actor. He also pointed out a person at the same function. "No, I didn't point out the regular and established organisations or people. I pointed out a few people who don't want to show their face but write something wrong," clarified the actor.

For another question, he said he didn't say anything that he wanted to be in the news.

"Now, the media has become huge and whatever I talk about goes viral. But I never wanted to be in the controversy and I know that controversies never help my film business. I was completely silent about *Gaami* and it collected nearly Rs 10 crores," he said. He added that everyone has frustration, happiness and other emotions in them.

"Sometimes the emotions come out," he said. He added that he doesn't know how to talk diplomatically. "I don't know diplomacy and from the beginning I talk about whatever comes to my mind," he said.

The actor said this film is going to have premiere shows in main cities. "I just watched the film and wanted to screen the premiere on November 21," he said. In his upcoming projects, he said there are four films hitting the screens next year. *Laila* completed 60 percent and a film with Anudeep will start soon and also another film with Sudhakar.

**VISHWAK SEN, THE TALENTED ACTOR BEHIND GANGS OF GODAVARI AND GAAMI, IS BACK WITH MECHANIC ROCKY AND THIS TIME, HE'S SPEAKING HIS MIND. IN A CANDID INTERVIEW, HE DISCUSSES MECHANIC ROCKY, DISPELS RUMOURS AND SHARES HIS VISION FOR HIS UPCOMING PROJECTS!**



## Ram Charan's gesture of loyalty; visits Kadapa Dargah amid Ayyappa Swamy Deeksha

**A**s a mark of his deep respect and commitment, global superstar Ram Charan attended the 80th National Mushaira Ghazal event at Kadapa Ameen Peer Dargah as the chief guest, fulfilling a personal request from music maestro A R Rahman. Despite being in Ayyappa Swamy Deeksha, Ram Charan offered prayers, a 'chadar', and flowers at the historic Dargah, spreading a message of unity and harmony.

Last year, A R Rahman invited the Game Changer star to attend the annual Mushaira Ghazal event at Kadapa Dargah and Ram Charan kept his promise. Ram Charan's admirers are lauding his presence

at the event as a testament to his principles and humility, transcending religious boundaries and showcasing harmony. The visit also adds to the excitement surrounding his upcoming film *Game Changer*, which marks his first collaboration with A.R. Rahman.

Meanwhile, *Game Changer*, produced by Dil Raju and Sirish under Sri Venkateswara Creations, promises a cinematic spectacle, with S Thaman's riveting music and S Shrinavukkarasu's stunning visuals. The movie is set for a grand worldwide release on January 10, 2025, in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi.

## Allu Aravind banking on Sai Pallavi!

**N**ot long ago, an event was organised by producer Allu Aravind to reveal the release date of his upcoming movie *Thandel*, which is set to hit the theatres on February 7, 2025. Chandoo Mondeti is the director of this film



starring Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi as the lead pair. The movie is being made under Allu Aravind's Geetha Arts banner with Bunny Vasu, who is associated with the banner, serving as the producer for the film. During the event, Bunny Vas confidently declared that this film is aiming to reach Rs 100 crore for Naga Chaitanya and they are working towards that goal.

According to a report, the success of this film is heavily reliant on Sai Pallavi rather than Naga Chaitanya, as per Allu Aravind's strategy. That's the reason they declared that this movie has surely joined the Rs 100 crore club. Sai Pallavi's latest film *Amaran* once again solidified her status as a major superstar in the southern film industry. The movie is produced in Tamil but it is also simultaneously released in Telugu. The collections of the Telugu dubbed version outperformed those of a usual Telugu movie and was a massive success in the Telugu industry. The film continues to perform well at the box office, with trade analysts attributing its success solely to Sai Pallavi.

After witnessing the success of the *Amaran* collections on its launch day, Allu Aravind and Bunny Vas have faith that the film *Thandel* will also achieve strong box office numbers due to Sai Pallavi. The movie was initially set to be released in December and then during Sankranti, but it is now scheduled to be released alone on February 7. "They are banking on Sai Pallavi for this film and that's why they announced it will give the first Rs 100 crore film for Naga Chaitanya," said a source.

## Pushpa 2 makers' overly confident?

**T**he sequel to the film featuring Allu Arjun and director Sukumar, *Pushpa 2*, is scheduled to release on December 5. The makers recently organised a successful promotional event in Patna, leading them to become overly confident about the success of the film, according to the source. Currently in the industry, there are rumours that the film producers have already prepared promotional materials for the first and second day earnings before the film's release. The producers have already prepared promotional boards worth Rs 300 crore to be distributed on the

movie's premiere day.

The film has not been released yet, but the producers are already predicting the first day, second day and weekday's earnings, displaying their excessive confidence, according to a producer, on the condition of anonymity. "If the film has good content, it automatically collects money; there is hype for this film; promote it carefully and you have to wait till the release of the film," said the producer.

According to a source, the creators invested a significant amount of funds in *Pushpa 2* since the production schedule lasts for an extended period and involves hundreds of working days. "For a big star like Allu Arjun, the shooting expenses for

a day are going to be Rs 1 crore and you can imagine how many days they worked for this film," said a source. To earn profits for the producers, the film must amass over Rs 500 crore in revenue. The OTT rights were already sold for almost Rs 250 crore; however, the movie needs to make significant earnings from theatrical releases.

The makers also unveiled the trailer; however, it received mixed feedback as it failed to attract the Telugu viewers much.

"It seems they focused more on the Hindi audience and according to that, they made the trailer," added the source.

## WEDDING ON CARDS! KEERTHY SURESH SET TO WED HER LONGTIME BEAU

**K**eerthy Suresh, the actress who is preparing to enter Bollywood with Varun Dhawan's *Baby John*, will tie the knot with her partner Antony Thattil in the second week of December. Reports indicate that Keerthy and Antony who resides in Dubai, has been in a committed relationship with individual for 15 years. Reports have mentioned that Keerthy and Antony are planning to have a destination wedding in Goa next month. The wedding will take place with the approval of their own families. The lavish wedding is set to occur in Goa on December 11 and 12. A formal declaration of their partnership is expected to be announced in the upcoming days.

Rumours suggest Antony Thattil and Keerthy Suresh attended school together and were high school sweethearts. Additional information regarding Antony, his occupation and his connection with Keerthy is anticipated. The Goa wedding will have family members and close friends present. The guest list has not been released yet.

In 2023, Keerthy criticised a magazine for referring to her friend as her boyfriend. Her words were, "Hahaha! I didn't need to rescue my dear friend this time! I will disclose the identity of the mysterious man whenever necessary. Relax and wait calmly in the meantime! Note: It never got it correct even once (sic)."

**'Making KCR was life-changing movement for me'**

**R**ocking Rakesh is famous for hosting the clever comedy show *Jabardasth*. The former actor has transitioned to becoming a producer and is developing a movie called *KCR: Keshava Chandra Ramavath*. The actor intentionally used the abbreviation KCR for the title, which stands for the ex-Chief Minister of Telangana and a key figure in the Telangana Movement.

"Though I put the title with a movement leader, but to make this film I faced a big movement in my



life," said Rocking Rakesh. He expressed gratitude towards a small number of individuals who assisted him in ensuring that this film would be released on November 22. Anji

holds the position of director for this movie. Several of his comrades such as Hyper Aadi, Sudigaali Sudheer, Dhanraj were present at the function to show their support to Rakesh for his hard work. Roja, who transitioned from acting to politics and

serves as one of the judges on the *Jabardasth* show, was also present.

"He used to call me 'Amma' and I hope his film is going to be a great success," said Roja.

Former Telangana Minister, Harish Rao was present as the chief guest and extended his best wishes for the team's success.

"I don't know much about films, but I heard that Rakesh came from a village to this stage and he got his own name. He made this film with the inspiration of KCR garu and I am happy for it. KCR is not just a name, it is history and ten years he took the Telangana state into development," said Harish Rao. Several industry professionals and politicians, such as Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao, Siva Balaji, N Shankar, Jaani Master, MLA Desapathi and Rasamayi Balakrishna, showed up to congratulate Rakesh and wish him success.