

## **MEIL sends mega**

vessels to Mongolia Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), a global infrastructure leader, organised a flag-off ceremony on Thursday to mark the inaugural dispatch of a pressure vessel to the Mongol Refinery in Mongolia The event took place at MEIL's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Jeedimetla, Hyderabad Dr Altantsetseg Dashdavaa, CEO of

Mongol Refinery, attended the ceremony along with officials from the Mongol Refinery, Vikalp Paliwal, General Manager of MEIL and other senior company officials .. -PAGE: 3

**YSRCP** to raise key issues in Parl

The Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) is preparing to raise several critical issues during the upcoming winter session of Parliament. These include concerns over the law and order situation in Andhra Pradesh. the Polavaram project, and the proposed amendments to the Wakf Board Act. Addressing the media after a meeting with party MPs on Thursday, MP Pilli Subhashchandra Bose shared that former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had outlined the strategy for the party during the session and ..



#### Mamata to initiate 'total reshuffle' in CID

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday announced the initiation of a "total reshuffle" in the state CID. accusing a section of police personnel in the lower ranks of indulging in corrupt practices. She cted DGP Baieev Kuma to look into "complaints" received against some CID officers and take action in case those were found to be genuine. "I will initiate a total reshuffle in the CID. I am giving you (Kumar) the responsibility .... Give me proposals and crosscheck the complaints. At times, false complaints are ... -PAGE: 5

# **Rs 1,750 cr: Adani's bribe to** Jagan for solar power deal ?

# High Court bench in Kurnool soon: CM



In a significant legal development, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (USSEC) has indicted billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani for allegedly paying ₹1,750 crore to former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The payment was purportedly made to influence State electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs) to sign a deal to procure 7 GW of solar power from the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) under a

manufacturing-linked project. Court documents filed in New York referred to "Foreign Official #1" as a high-ranking figure from Andhra Pradesh who held office between May 2019 and June 2024. Although the filing did not explicitly name Jagan Mohan Reddy, it alleged that Gautam Adani met the official multiple times in 2021 to finalise power sale agreements (PSAs) between SECI and the State's DISCOMs.

The court papers further revealed that Gautam Adani, along with his nephew Sagar Adani, Vineet Jain, and others, had promised bribes totalling ₹2,029 crore (approximately \$265 million) to Indian officials. Of this amount, Jagan Mohan Reddy alleged-



Low pressure forms

Payment made to influence DISCOMs to sign a 7 GW agreement with SECI

- Court documents referred to Jagan as "Foreign Official #1" without explicitly naming him.
- Adani allegedly met Jagan multiple times in 2021 to finalise the power sale agreements.

 The total promised bribes amounted to Rs 2,029 crore,

with Rs 1,750 crore allegedly going to Jagan alone Bribes aimed to push PSAs under the

Manufacturing Linked Project, benefiting Adani Green Energy.

ly received ₹1,750 crore. The bribes were reportedly intended to secure PSAs benefiting Adani Green Energy and other connected companies. The filings also identified co-con-

 AP DISCOMs signed the largest solar power deal in India with SECI in December 2021. US prosecutors charged Gautam

Adani, Sagar Adani, and six others for bribery and corruption. Co-conspirators include

former executives of Azure Power and individuals linked to a US-based firm. • Electronic communication was used extensively to facilitate the alleged bribery

scheme.

spirators, including a UK citizen based in Hong Kong and an Indian national, both associated with a US-based company. itinued on Page (

# NPTC Green Energy ties up with NREDCAP for renewable energy projects

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NPTC Green Energy Limited (NGEL) has joined hands with the New and Renewable Energy Corporation



signed and exchanged between NREDCAP and NTPC Green in a ceremony attended by CM Chandrababu Naidu, Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar, deep Singh (Chairman

**YSRCP** defends

deal with SECI

VIJAYAWADA: The YSR Congress Party

(YSRCP) has issued a clarification

regarding allegations against the Andhra

Pradesh government over the involve-ment of industrialist Gautam Adani in

bribing top officials in connection with

The party has strongly refuted the

claims, emphasising that the agree-

ment in question was with the Solar

Energy Corporation of India (SECI),

a government-owned entity, and not

any private companies, including

those linked to Adani. In a detailed

statement, the party explained that the

Andhra Pradesh government supplies

nearly 12,500 million units (MU) of free power annually to the agriculture

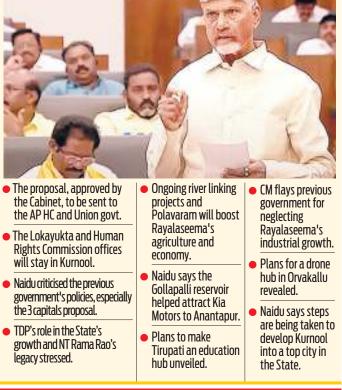
sector, with the state compensating the

distribution utilities for the cost of this

Continued on Page 2

power

a power procurement agreement.



#### Focus on development of north Andhra & Rayalaseema

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has confirmed that a High Court bench will be set up in Kurnool soon as promised during the elections. Speaking to the Legislative

Assembly on Thursday, Naidu said the Cabinet had already approved the proposal, and the resolution passed in the Assembly would be sent to the Andhra Pradesh High Court and the Union Government for further steps. He also assured that the offices of the Lokayukta and the Human Rights Commission would stay in I urnool putting to

Tirupati. Naidu expressed disappointment that the state had not seen much progress in the past five years, blaming the "faulty policies" of the previous government, especially the proposal for three capitals. He reminded the Assembly that the TDP, even when in opposition, had always supported Amaravati as the capital.

Naidu further stated that true development would only happen under the TDP, citing the party's past success in driving the state's growth. He recalled the legacy of TDP founder N.T. Rama Rao, initiated important projects like the Telugu Ganga, Handri Nagari-Galeru to bring Krishna River water to Rayalaseema. The CM pointed out that ongoing river linking projects and the Polavaram project, which will help divert Godavari water to Rayalaseema, could be game-changers for agriculture and economic development.

### Sebi abolishes 1% security deposit

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday abolished the requirement of a mandatory security deposit with the exchanges before a public issue in a bid to facilitate ease of doing business for issuer companies The move will be applicable with immediate effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular. Before this, any company that is looking to launch a public issue of equity shares has to deposit with the stock exchanges an amount equal to 1 per cent of the issue size. The deposit was returned .. -PAGE: 8 over Bay of Bengal

#### Spl CS Sisodia asks ryots to take precautions heavy rains are likely

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Special Chief Secretary of the Revenue Department (Disaster Management), RP Sisodia, has warned of heavy rains in Andhra Pradesh due to a low-pressure area forming in the Bay of Bengal. He urged farmers to take necessary precautions, particularly as the paddy harvesting season is ongoing in several districts.

Sisodia advised that officials from the agriculture department remain available to assist farmers and ensure they are prepared for any adverse weather conditions. He emphasised the importance of farmers being ready for emergencies.

According to Sisodia, a surface circulation is expected to form in the Andaman Sea, which is likely to develop into a low-pressure area in the southeast Bay of Bengal by November 23.

**Continued on Page 2** 

Andhra Pradesh (NREDCAP) to set up renewable energy projects in the state.

**UPROAR IN COUNCIL** 

Minister's remark triggers

walkout by YSRCP

ment of Rs. 1,87,000 Crore, was announced in the presence of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu at the AP Secretariat in Velagapudi on Thursday. The joint

This partnership, with an invest- venture is expected to generate employment for about 1,06,250 people and bring financial benefits of around Rs. 20,620 Crore over the next 25 years.

rats eaten, the cat went on Haj pil-

grimage." This statement triggered

an uproar, with YSRCP members

demanding an apology from the

minister and protesting in the well

of the house by raising slogans. The issue arose when PVVS Raju

questioned the minister on whether

the government had written to the

National Medical Council (NMC)

rejecting the MBBS seats offered to

The JV agreement was

Managing Director, NTPC/NGEL), R Sarangapani (Executive Director, NGEL), K Director, Vijayanand (Special Chief Secretary, Energy), KVN Chakradhar Babu (VC & MD, NREDCAP), MD of APGEN-CO, and other senior officials.

rest concerns about their possible relocation.

The Chief Minister emphasised the government's commitment to the overall development of the State, particularly focusing on the North Andhra and Rayalaseema regions. He mentioned plans for further growth in cities like Visakhapatnam, Kurnool, and

**Continued on Page 2** 

## No move to privatise VSP: TG Bharath

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

the State has clarified that there are no plans to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP). Minister for Industries and Commerce TG Bharath made this announcement during the Ouestion Hour in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, chaired by Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju, on Thursday. He reassured that the government remains committed to its election promises and ensuring that VSP stays in the public sector.

YSRCP members Varudu Kalyani, Duvvada Srinivas, and The TDP-led NDA government in others raised concerns about the potential privatization of the Steel Plant.

> AP's Industries Minister Bharath acknowledged that VSP is currently facing a financial crisis, and the management has proposed selling around 24 acres of unused land to aise additional funds. At the request of CM Chandrababu Naidu, Union nister for Heavy Industries & Stee HD Kumara Swamy, assured that the Central government has no intention of privatising the steel plant.



## International Criminal Court issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Hamas officials

#### PNS THE HAGUE

The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants on Thursday for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his former defence minister and Hamas officials, accusing them of war crimes and crimes against humanity over the war in Gaza and the October 2023 attacks that triggered Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory.

The decision turns Netanyahu and the others into internationally wanted suspects and is likely to further isolate them and complicate efforts to negotiate a cease-fire to end the 13-month conflict. But its practical implications could be limited since Israel and its major ally, the United States, are not members of the court and several of the Hamas officials have been subsequently killed in the conflict.

#### **Netanyahu** rejects arrest warrant

**PNS** JERUSALEM



Criminal Court's arrest warrant against him, saying Israel "rejects with disgust the absurd and false actions".

con-

In a statement released by his office, he said: "There is nothing more just than the war that Israel has been waging in Gaza."

## TCS to begin its Vizag operations in 3 months: Lokesh

development,

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

PNS VIJAYAWADA

A controversial remark by Minister for

Health, Medical and Family Welfare,

Y Satya Kumar, during Question Hour

in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council on Thursday sparked a heat-

ed exchange between the ruling NDA

The minister, while responding to a question from YSRCP's PVVS

Raju, quoted a proverb: "A hundred the State.

and the opposition YSRCP.

Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics Nara Lokesh announced that Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) will begin operations in Visakhapatnam within three months. Speaking in the state Legislative Assembly on Thursday, Lokesh revealed that the IT giant has agreed to set up a unit and campus in the city, providing a major boost to the region's IT sector. Lokesh also confirmed that talks are ongoing with Infosys to establish a second campus in Visakhapatnam, with land acquisi-

In response to questions about the state's IT policies, Lokesh blamed the previous government for hindering the growth of the IT sector by demanding shares from IT companies, which he said led to

state. "Due to these policies, com- noting that 20 per cent of IT secpanies like NICSI and STBI left Andhra Pradesh, resulting in the loss of thousands of employment

opportunities," Lokesh stated. He highlighted the significant growth of the IT sector between 2014 and 2019, during which over 150 IT companies were established, creating jobs for more than

50,000 youth. Lokesh also praised the contribu-

tions of Telugus to the state government aims to crethe global ate 500,000 IT jobs over the next IT industry, five years and is focused on build-

> Lokesh also praised the contributions of Telugus to the global IT industry, noting that 20 per cent of IT sector employees worldwide are of Telugu origin.

key IT hub.

ing the necessary ecosystem to suptor employees worldwide are of port these companies.

Telugu origin. He emphasized that under CM Chandrababu Naidu's Addressing concerns about data centres, Lokesh acknowledged that leadership, the state had prioritized the state had fallen behind neighboring states like Karnataka, with Visakhapatnam envisioned as a Telangana, and Mumbai due to the previous government's lack of focus Lokesh shared that discussions on setting up data centres. with multiple IT companies over the past five months had led to However, he assured that efforts are underway to attract investments in TCS's decision to set up operations this sector, with a target to secure in Visakhapatnam. He added that at least \$100 billion out of the \$300 billion global annual investment in data centres. "We are in talks with data centre owners to address issues like data security and taxation, and I am optimistic that

these discussions will yield positive results," Lokesh said. In addition to IT development, standing payments. "Our focus is Lokesh mentioned the rapid progress of the Bhogapuram airport Business' to ensure faster approvals project. He also revealed plans to and smoother operations for IT

in India in Visakhapatnam, which will further complement the city's growing IT ecosystem. He stressed the need for more hotels and infrastructure to support the growing business in the region.

Lokesh expressed confidence that ongoing discussions with the top 100 IT companies in the country would attract more investment to Visakhapatnam. He also announced plans for a new policy aimed at attracting global delivery centres from Fortune 500 companies, which is expected to be introduced next month

Regarding pending incentives for IT companies, Lokesh confirmed that Rs 500 crore had recently been released to clear outnow on the 'Speed of Doing build the largest convention centre companies in the state," he added.

tion currently underway.

several investors pulling out of the



## vijayawada 02

# Nara Lokesh calls for educational reforms

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, Nara Lokesh, has stressed the need for reforms in the education system that focus on shaping students into beneficiaries rather than subjects of experimentation. The Minister made these remarks during a meeting with World Bank representatives and senior officials from the Education Department on Thursday.

Minister Lokesh highlighted the state's ongoing efforts to implement technology-driven plans aimed at improving educational outcomes for both students and teachers. He emphasized the importance of assessing students' learning capabilities and aligning curricula and teaching methods accordingly through the SALT (Student Assessment and Learning Tools) initiative.

The Minister explained, "We are working to create a system where students' skills, abilities, and progress are tracked through a special dashboard. This helps us monitor both the

#### **YSRCP** accuses Naidu of betraying Rayalaseema

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) spokesperson Gadikota Srikanth Reddy on Thursday accused Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of betraying the people of Rayalaseema by depriving them of a full-fledged High Court and offering only a bench in the region. Speaking to the media, Srikanth Reddy criticized the CM's decision to relocate allied courts, including the Lokayukta, out of Kurnool.

The YSRCP leader referred to the Sribagh Agreement, which he claimed stipulated that the High Court should be located in Rayalaseema. "Chandrababu Naidu has gone back on this promise, opting only for a High Court bench instead of the full High Court, thus betraying the people of Rayalaseema," Srikanth Reddy said.

He also pointed out that key institutions, such as the Lokayukta, were being shifted from Kurnool, which, he argued, reflected Naidu's lack of commitment to the development of the region. "This is another sign of betrayal," he remarked.

Srikanth Reddy criticised Naidu's andling of th projects, accusing him of failing to complete vital initiatives like the Handri-Neeva and Galeru-Nagari projects. "Naidu has shown no intention of advancing these critical projects that are key to the region's water needs," he said. Srikanth Reddy also addressed allegations of online misconduct, claiming that the TDP's official social media handles were posting objectionable material about YSRCP leaders and their families. He lamented that no action had been taken by authorities to curb this behavior. Turning to the issue of the Polavaram project, Srikanth Reddy called it a "living example" of Chandrababu's negligence. He criticized the CM's decision to approve a reduction in the height of the Polavaram dam, suggesting that it showed Naidu's lack of commitment to the state's development.



ful strategies being implement-

ed in our state before the

department's advancements to bring in a transparent app to handle teacher transfers withand the facilities being providout any political influence," he ed." He further stated that the goal is to improve the quality said. Minister Lokesh expressed a of results in government schools, which, in turn, will

desire to share best educationincrease student enrollments. al practices from around the The Minister also discussed world with the state while also showcasing the effective modplans to ensure transparency in teacher transfers, stating that els implemented in Andhra Pradesh to the World Bank. the government aims to introduce an app to make the We aim to present the successprocess free from political

World Bank and share best practices from around the globe with Andhra Pradesh," e added.

Education Department Secretary Kona Shashidhar, Director of School Education Vijay Ramarao, State Project Director of Samagra Shiksha Srinivas Rao, Director of Intermediate Education Kritika Shukla, and representatives from the World Bank also attended the meeting.

#### **HC bench in** Kurnool... Continued from Page 1

He also mentioned the Gollapalli reservoir, which attracted the Kia Motors plant to Anantapur, transforming the region's industrial landscape. Naidu highlighted the potential for horticulture growth, noting the strategic locations of Anantapur near Bengaluru airport, Kurnool near Hyderabad airport, and Chittoor near Chennai airport, which offer great development opportunities. He also mentioned the growth of airports in Orvakallu, Tirupati, and the expansion of Tirupati airport under the TDP government, positioning the state for more infrastructure growth.

In terms of education, the CM announced that Tirupati would be developed as an education hub, with new institutions such as an IIT, IIIT, and a Central University in Anantapur. He also revealed plans to revive subsidies for drip irrigation to boost agricultural productivity in Rayalaseema. Naidu criticized the previous

government for not taking sufficient steps to promote the region's development and reminded the Assembly about the TDP's contributions, such as the establishment of industrial parks at Orvakallu and Kopparthy with an investment of Rs 5,000 crore.

## New Textile Policy soon, says Minister Savitha

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC, EWS, Handlooms, and Textile Development, S. Savitha, announced that a new textile policy would be introduced soon. Speaking in the Assembly on Thursday in response to a question by TDP MLA B. Jayanageswara Reddy regarding the Textile Park in Yemmiganur, the minister shared details of the government's plans for the sector.

Savitha stated that the decision to establish a Textile Park in Yemmiganur was made on August 15, 2015, during Independence Day celebrations, to support handloom weavers. The government had allocated 90 acres of land for the project. However, she claimed that under the leadership of Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the handloom sector had become inactive. The previous regime had also allocated 14 acres of land from the Yemmiganur Textile Park for housing schemes, leading to a legal battle and a stay order.

She mentioned that the Textile Park would be developed according to the decisions made during the 2014-

2019 tenure of the tion than on actual develop-Chandrababu Naidu govern-

ment. The park is expected to employ 5,000 people. In addition to Yemmiganur, the minister said similar Textile Parks would be established in Rayadurg, Mylavaram, and Pamidi. She also announced plans to set up a Handloom Park alongside the Textile Park in Yemmiganur. The new textile policy, she added, would focus on uplifting the handloom sector and creating a sustainable ecosystem for weavers. The minister criticized the

Jagan government for failing to develop the existing textile parks and accused it of dismantling systems that had been established previously. She further alleged that the government was more focused on land-grabbing and corrup-

ment.

Regarding support for weavers, Savitha stated that the government was planning to set up Weaver Centers across the state, following the model initiated by Minister Nara Lokesh in Mangalagiri. Several Members of Parliament had already committed funds from their MPLADS to establish these centres, and the government was also seeking support from corporate groups like Aditya Birla to set up weaving and dyeing facilities.

The government plans to provide handloom workers with tools at a 90% subsidy and has secured Rs. 30 crore from the central government for the establishment of a Mega Textile Park in Dharmavaram, she added.

his regret over YSRCP leader Jagan Mohan Reddy defending

ments about his own family,

including his sister and mother. He

also condemned the obscene com-

ments made against the family members of Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan. Naidu further crit-

icized the character assassination

of Dalit woman and Home

Chandrababu Naidu alleged

that the previous government's

leaders engaged in organized

crimes on social media, aided by

Paytm batches. To counter this

trend, he announced plans to

establish a National Forensic

The Chief Minister also con-

demned the Land Titling Act

introduced by the previous government, calling it a tool to

encourage land mafia. He referred

to the Act as a conspiracy that violated constitutional provisions

and allowed cheating and manip-

ulation.

Science campus in the state.

Minister, Vangalapudi Anitha.

#### Students, activists demand justice for gang-rape victim PNS VISAKHAPATNAM speakers, including PDSO cases, including one in Rambilli

## Hundreds of students and

interference. "We are working

activists took to the streets of Visakhapatnam on Thursday, condemning the gang rape of a law student from NVP Law College in Madhurawada. The protests, organized by the Progressive Democratic Students' Organization (PDSO) and other activist groups, began at the iconic Gandhi statue in GVMC and extended to the Telugu Talli flyover and Rama Talkies.

L. Bhanu, treasurer of PDSO, expressed anguish while addressing the demonstrators. "This is a heinous and appalling act," he said. Explaining the case, Bhanu added, "The victim was deceived by someone she trusted, only to be subjected to this unimaginable brutality. The increasing number of such crimes-from infants to elderly victims—is deeply distressing. The government must act decisively to address this societal rot."



She highlighted the role of alcohol, drugs, and obscene content as factors aggravating the crisis. V Lakshmi, PDSO's district secretary, brought a sobering perspective with data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). "Eighty-six women

are raped every day in India, and these are just reported cases. The true scale is even more harrowing. Passing stricter laws is not enough-substance abuse and pornography, key drivers of such crimes, must be addressed at the root," she said. Other

District President P. Vishwanath and State Committee Member S Rudri echoed the call for urgent reforms and stronger governmental action. They emphasized that preventive measures, alongside accountability for past failures, are the need of the hour. Parallel protests were also organised by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), DYFSI, and SFSI.

During a dharna, AIDWA Secretary Ramadevi criticized the government's inaction. "The administration must act decisively, starting with a firm response to this case. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others must ensure justice, not just rhetoric," she said.

The demonstrators demanded a white paper detailing measures undertaken to combat crimes against women.

The protests also brought attention to recent unaddressed

YSRCP defends deal...

mandal. "Why are women failing again and again?" Ramadevi asked, pointing to the systemic failures and the government's perceived apathy. DYFSI District General Secretary B. Prabhavathi accused the coalition government of failing to address the rise in harassment and rape cases during its tenure, calling its actions "hollow announcements."

SFSI leaders and former corporator Botta, joined by female students, demanded an inquiry committee, effective measures to protect women, and justice for the Madhurawada victims. As the protests concluded, the resounding chants of "Justice for all women!" echoed through the city. Protestors demanded not just retribution but a comprehensive approach to dismantling the systemic issues that enable such atrocities. Their message was clear: no more delays, no more excuses.

## CM promises to strengthen police setup

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

those posting objectionable com-Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised that the development of any State or country is possible only if there is effective law and order, allowing people to live peacefully. He stated, "There will be no development if people live in fear. For industries to be established and employment to be generated, investments must be made. This can only happen in a peaceful atmosphere, which

requires strong measures and stringent laws. While addressing the Assembly on Thursday, the Chief Minister asserted that investments in the state are only possible if law and order are effectively maintained. He added that the youth will get employment opportunities only when investments come into the state. He also announced that the police setup will be strengthened, and the 6,100 vacant posts in the police department will soon be filled to

He added that the previous ensure strong law and order. Chandrababu Naidu criticised government even stripped licial officers of th previous government for t ers in this regard. Upon assuming to conduct even a single review meeting on the issue of ing office, Chandrababu Naidu ganja abuse. immediately revoked the law. He pointed out that, during the Naidu made it clear that previous regime, when ganja anyone involved in land irregwas seized anywhere in the counularities or illegal land occupa try, its roots were traced back to tion would be sent to jail. He Andhra Pradesh. He recalled also informed the Assembly that when the TDP staged that a public prosecutor would procurement protests against this, the party be appointed, and the Preventive Detention (PD) Act office was attacked. The Chief Minister expressed would be further strengthened.

The government plans to provide handloom workers with tools at a 90% subsidy and has secured Rs. 30 crore from the central government for the establishment of a Mega Textile Park in Dharmavaram

#### **Continued from Page 1**

**R**s 1,750 cr...

The documents detailed extensive electronic communication among the accused to facilitate the alleged bribery scheme, which led to PPAs being signed between July 2021 and February 2022.

In December 2021, Andhra Pradesh's DISCOMs signed a PPA with SECI for the purchase of 7 GW of solar power-the largest such agreement by any Indian state, according to the court documents. On Wednesday, US prosecutors in New York formally charged

Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and six others, including Vineet Jain, CEO of Adani Green Energy, and former Azure Power executives, for offering bribes to Indian officials to secure lucrative solar energy contracts.

#### Continued from Page 1

Due to previous governments' policies, Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) were signed at high tariffs, pushing up the cost of power procurement to nearly Rs. 5.10 per kWh, which was a significant burden on the states finances. To mitigate this financial strain, the YSRCP govern-

ment proposed the installation of 10,000 MW of solar capacity in the state by 2020. In November of that year, a tender was floated by the Andhra Pradesh Green Energy Corporation Ltd (APGÉCL) to develop 6,400 MW of solar power. However, the tender faced

legal and regulatory hurdles, delaying the project.

In response to this, the State Government received an offer from SECI to supply 7,000 MW of solar power at a much lower tariff of Rs. 2.49 per kWh, which included a waiver of transmission charges. SECI, under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), is a Government of India enterprise. The government then agreed to

approved by the Andhra Electricity

Regulatory Commission financial burden on the (APERC) on November 11, state. The party emphasised

2021, and the Power Sale that the SECI agreement is Agreement (PSA) was signed with SECI on highly beneficial for the December 1, 2021, followstate, with savings of Rs. ing the approval of the 3,700 crores per annum, Electricity totalling significant long-Central Regulatory Commission term financial relief. The (CĔRC). power The YSRCP clarified that arrangement is set for a

there is no direct agreement period of 25 years, ensuring between AP DISCOMs and substantial benefits to the any private entities, includstate in terms of cost saving those affiliated with the ings. The YSRCP con-Adani Group, as alleged. demned the allegations as The party also noted that unfounded and clarified the SECI tender expressly that the agreement with waived ISTS (Inter-State SECI is transparent, aligned Transmission System) with the state's best intercharges for the duration of ests, and does not involve any wrongdoing by the state the project, ensuring there would be no additional government.

#### Low pressure forms... **Continued from Page 1**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted that this low-pressure system could intensify into a cyclonic storm in the next two days. As a result, the state is expected to experience moderate to heavy rains from

November 24, particularly in South Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, with widespread rainfall also affecting Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This weather system is expected to disrupt farming activities, and farmers have been advised to stay updated on weather forecasts and take necessary mea-

sures to protect their crops.

## No move to privatise....

#### **Continued from Page 1**

In response, Minister Bharath explained the ongoing efforts to merge VSP with Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) as part of a strategy to revitalise the plant. He also mentioned that the state government is collaborating with the Central Government to secure adequate funding and support to help VSP return to profitability.

However, the Minister acknowledged that VSP is currently facing a financial crisis, and the management has proposed selling around 24 acres of unused land to raise additional funds. At the request of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Union Minister of Steel, H.D. Kumara Swamy, assured that the central government has no intention of privatizing the steel plant. Kumara Swamy also visited the VSP and met with the plant management and trade union leaders to discuss its functioning and other issues. Meanwhile, Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) MLCs K.S. Lakshmana and I. Venkateswara Rao expressed concerns about possible privatization, claiming they had information that the central government was attempting to privatize or sell the plant. They urged the state government to pass a resolution in both the Assembly and the Council to oppose privatization and send it to the central government.

Minister for Agriculture K. Atchannaidu recalled the efforts made by the previous TDP government in 1998 to prevent privatization.

## Minister's...

#### **Continued from Page 1**

The minister clarified that no such letter had been sent. He explained that upon receiving a letter from the NMC regarding admissions to the Government Medical College in Pulivendula, the government had communicated the deficiencies in infrastructure and faculty that prevented classes from starting in the 2024-25 academic year. The minister cited delays in civil works and equipment procurement, as well as a shortage of teaching staff.

In his response, the minister also made strong allegations against the previous YSRCP government, claiming that out of the sanctioned Rs. 8,540 crore for medical colleges, only Rs. 1,400 crore had been spent.

## NPTC Green Energy...

#### Continued from Page 1

Thanks to the recently launched Andhra Pradesh Integrated Clean Energy Policy-2024, the state is witnessing growing investments in the clean energy sector. These developments are expected to position Andhra Pradesh as a leader in clean energy in India. The state, with the support of the Government of India, is committed to combating climate change and pollution by promoting projects related to solar, wind, pumped storage, green hydrogen, and green ammonia. Over the next five years, Andhra Pradesh aims to achieve 78.50 GW of solar energy, 35 GW of wind energy, 22 GW of pumped storage, and 1.50 MMTPA of green hydrogen capacity, significantly boosting its energy infrastructure.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu reaffirmed his commitment to renewable energy, describing this joint venture as an important step in securing the state's energy future and supporting India's renewable energy targets. He emphasized the role of green energy in tackling climate change and pollution. Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar praised the NREDCAP-

NGEL joint venture as an essential move for Andhra Pradesh's energy future, highlighting its contribution to both the state's and the country's renewable energy goals. He also noted the impor-tance of such initiatives in building a cleaner and more sustainable future. K Vijayanand, Energy Secretary, said that the part-nership between NREDCAP and NGEL would set an example for other states to follow, helping meet both local and national energy needs sustainably.

#### GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No. 11/2024-25. NIT No. 41 to 42 Date: 18-11-2024 Panchayat Raj Department, Guntur Circle, has invited tenders for 2 works a an estimated value of Rs 2250.00 Lakh under P.M.G.V.K. Khelo India scheme Tender Schedule Date: From 23-11-2024. Invite tender through e-platform Sd/- Superintending Engineer www.apeprocurement.gov.in Panchayat Raj Circle, Guntur R.O.Me: 14826/CL/ADVT/11/2021-22, DI. 21.11.3084 Chhattisgarh Rajya Sahakari



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procure this power in phases, starting in FY 2024-25, with the first tranche of 3,000 MW set to begin in the next financial year. The agreement was

Pradesh

## TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Saptami:	Nov 21 05:03 PM
	to Nov 22 06:08 PM
Ashtami:	Nov 22 06:08 PM
	to Nov 23 07:57 PM
Nakshatram:	
Ashlesha:	Nov 21 03:35 PM
	to Nov 22 05:10 PM
Magha:	Nov 22 05:10 PM
	to Nov 23 07:27 PM
Rahukalam:	10:38 AM to 12:02 PM
Yamagandam:	2:49 PM to 4:12 PM
Varjyam:	06:18 AM to 08:03 AM
Gulika:	7:52 AM to 9:15 AM
Amritakalam:	03:27 PM to 05:10 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	: 11:40 AM to 12:24 PM

#### **VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Mostly Sunny Temp: 32°° Humidity: 59% Sunrise: 6:15 AM Sunset: 5:32 PM

Updated: November 21, 2024 5:00 PM



## ne pioneer VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024



## **TTD** Chairman meets **TS CM Revanth** TTD Board Chairman pre-

sented a 'Pattu Vastram' to the

Telangana CM. In return, the

TS CM felicitated BR Naidu

with a shawl, presented him

with a memento, and extend-

ed his best wishes on his

appointment as the Chairman

Gokulam Rest House in

onwards, 800 tickets will be

issued at Tirumala, while

200 tickets will be made

available at Renigunta

Airport in Tirupati on a first-come, first-served

basis. Devotees are request-ed to take note of these

changes.

Speed up Narsipatnam tank

bund project: Ayyanna

of the TTD Trust Board.

#### PNS TIRUMALA

TTD Chairman BR Naidu paid a courtesy visit to Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at his residence in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, on Thursday. During the meeting, the

#### 'SRIVANI' TICKET QUOTA INCREASED PNS TIRUMALA the counters behind

TTD has increased the Tirumala. From Friday quota of 'Srivani' tickets issued at Renigunta Airport from 100 to 200 by reducing the offline quota issued at Tirumala. This change will take effect from

November 22. Currently, TTD issues 900 Srivani tickets daily at

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Assembly Speaker Chintakayala

Ayyanna Patrudu once again

appealed to the officials to

expedite the completion of the

Narsipatnam tank bund project

which aims to develop the area

into a major tourist attraction.

journey, Ayyanna Patrudu,

emphasised the need for swift

action on the project. "We've worked hard over the past sev-

eral years to bring this vision

to life. It's not just about the

tank bund but about creating

a lasting destination that can

boost tourism and benefit the

local community. This project

must be completed without

Reflecting on his eight-year

## **MEIL exports mega vessels** for Mongol refinery

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), a global infrastructure leader, organised a flag-off ceremony on Thursday to mark the inaugural dispatch of mark the inaugural dispatch of a pressure vessel to the Mongol Refinery in Mongolia. The event took place at MEIL's state-of-the-art manufactur-ing facility in Jeedimetla, Hyderabad Hyderabad.

Dr. Altantsetseg Dashdavaa, CEO of Mongol Refinery, attended the ceremony along with officials from the Mongol Refinery, Vikalp Paliwal, General Manager of MEIL, and other conjor company offi and other senior company officials. This inaugural dispatch marks the beginning of a significant phase in the Mongol Refinery project, symbolising the strong partnership between India and Mongolia. The project, supported by the Government of India, is a government-to-government initiative that highlights both nations' shared commitment to enhancing economic development and strengthening energy security in Mongolia.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Altantsetseg said, "The Governments of India and Mongolia are working together to strengthen our bilateral ties. I am very pleased with the tremendous work done by Megha Engineering. It is an honour to participate in the flag-off ceremony for the inaugural dispatch of a pressure vessel to the Mongol Refinery. This refinery is Mongolia's first-ever

oil refinery, and MEIL is executing three of the four key packages for this project, demonstrating their deep expertise, commitment, and the use of advanced technologies. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of India, Engineers India Limited (EIL), and MEIL for their efforts in making this landmark project a reality for Mongolia." MEIL Director P Doraiah

GVMC pioneers drone tech for urban governance and public health

#### PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is leveraging drone technology to tackle pressing urban challenges, from managing mosquito-borne diseases to curbing unauthorized constructions. This innovative approach, spear-headed by GVMC Commissioner P. Sampath Kumar, is setting a precedent for smart governance in Visakhapatnam.

We are undertaking this as a pilot project. After successfully controlling mosquitoes using drones, we are now focusing on unauthorized constructions in the city. These drones, equipped with special software, will provide precise data on violations, enabling swift action," said Commissioner Kumar.

GVMC's urban planning division has observed that 30% of buildings in the city



#### From combating mosquito-borne diseases to monitoring unauthorised constructions, GVMC's tech-driven approach sets a benchmark in smart governance

Drones will now digitally document unauthorized structures, capturing highresolution images to determine the extent of violations. A senior GVMC official ditiona emphasize "The a

on

tax due during property

assessments has often been

Simhachalam Devasthanam lands, where unauthorized structures have proliferated. By mapping these areas, drones will aid officials in taking decisive enforcement

In the fight against malar-

ia and dengue, drones have

already delivered impactful

results. GVMC identified 188

high-risk sewage storage areas

and deployed drones to spray

mosquito-control chemicals

in inaccessible locations.

## Kannababu flays State govt for 'blatant lies'

remarked, "We are proud to

begin the first dispatch of

refinery equipment to Mongolia. Our dedicated

workforce is executing this

critical project with excep-

tional skill and commitment,

overcoming various challenges

in Mongolia. This is a mile-

stone for MEIL, and we look

forward to continuing our

contribution to the success of

the Mongol Refinery."

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Kurasala Kannababu has slammed the State government for what he called "blatant lies" regarding State finances, law and order, and other issues. Addressing the media, Kannababu questioned discrepancies in government statements, including claims about finances. He noted that while Opposition leaders like Chandrababu Naidu had raised concerns over State debt at Rs 14 lakh crore, the official budget showed it to be over Rs 6 lakh crore.

He also criticised Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalvan's statement about 30,000 women being trafficked, which was contradicted by the government's official count of just 46 missing women. Kannababu furcalled out the gov ment's claim of spending Rs 3,000 crore on building renovations, contrasting it with the actual Rs 101 crore figure. He also highlighted inconsistencies about the volunteer honorarium hike, which has since been denied. Kannababu accused the government of mishandling finances, citing a recent Rs 50,000 crore loan taken under leadership of the Chandrababu. He also raised concerns over rising prices of essentials and power tariffs linked to smart meters, and criticised the government for prioritising toll collection over wealth creation.

#### **IRREGULARITIES IN GARBAGE TAX COLLECTION**

## Probe will be ordered, says MA & UD Minister Narayana

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, P Narayana, announced an investigation into the collection practices of the garbage tax and any irregularities benefiting certain individu-

als. Speaking in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on the Thursday, Minister criticised

the previous YS Jagan government for impos-ing unnecessary hardships on the people, stating that under the TDP administration, there were no increases in taxes within municipalities. The Minister moved the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Laws (Second Amendment) Bill, 2024, which was unanimously passed by the Assembly.

Minister Narayana remarked that the YS Jagan government had forcibly collected garbage taxes despite strong public opposition, accusing the previous administration of doing nothing but

creating problems for citizens in terms of waste management. He recalled that the then YSRCP government had amended the Municipal Laws Act to impose monthly charges for garbage collection, ranging from Rs 30 to Rs120 for resi-

dential properties, and Rs100 to Rs10,000 for commercial establishments, starting in November 2021. He pointed out that between November 2021 and July 2024, approximately Rs 325 crore

was billed for garbage collec-tion, but only ?249 crore was collected, highlighting the continuous objections from the public. The Minister expressed regret that some residential properties, with a nominal property tax of Rs50, were being charged up to Rs356 for garbage services.

Minister Narayana assured the Assembly that a thorough investigation would be conducted into the garbage tax collections and the outstanding debts incurred during the previous administration.

### 52 PB Siddhartha students get placements in TCS

Siddhartha College of Arts and Science, pursuing final year B.Com. and B.B.A., got select-ed by IT giant TCS in an offcampus recruitment drive

here on Thursday, Principal of the college Dr. M. Ramesh said that these students performed

# Govt to simplify pension disbursal

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

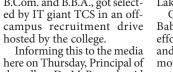
The State government has decided to simplify the distribution of pensions to beneficiaries, as announced by Minister for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Kondapalli Srinivas. Under the new policy, pensioners will be

will be classified as a permanent "migrant," and their pension will be stopped. In such cases, if the pensioner returns to their original location, they can reapply for the pension, which will be reinstated.

The Minister also clarified that if the head of a family receiving an old-

PNS VIJAYAWADA well in TCS National Quarter Test and faced HR interview to As many as 52 students of P.B. secure job offers as Business Process Services Executives

with salary package of Rs 2.4 Lakhs per annum. College Director Mr. V Babu Rao appreciated the efforts of faculty members and the Placement Cell in moulding the students into potential manpower through



# meticulous training.



further delay ne said durino a review meeting with officials from the Roads and Buildings (R&B) and Tourism departments at the Assembly premises on Thursday.

The initiative to widen the road around the Narsipatnam pond began in 2018 under Ayyanna Patrudu's leadership. The R&B department allocated Rs 2.06 crore for the road widening, followed by Rs 79 lakh from the Tourism Department for statues and a track garden. Additionally, the R&B department sanctioned another Rs 5.70 crore, bringing the total allocated funds to approximately Rs 6.49 crore. However, only a portion of unused, despite the project's importance. But we are determined to complete what we started," Ayyanna Patrudu added. He even contributed Rs 1 lakh of his own funds for an elephant statue.

these funds has been utilized,

with the previous govern-

ment's negligence leaving a sig-

nificant amount untouched.

"It's disheartening to see that

so much money was left

To expedite the process, Ayyanna Patrudu convened another review meeting with R&B Principal Secretary Kranti Lal Dande, Tourism Secretary Vinay Chand, and other officials. İt was estimated that Rs 4.10 crore from R&B and Rs 6.40 crore from Tourism would be required to finish the project. A deadline of December 15 has been set for both departments to prepare the necessary documents for budget approval.

deviate from approved construction plans, particularly

on plots larger than 250 overlooked due to negligence square yards. Despite issuing by field staff. Using drones over 12,500 building permits ensures transparency and annually, enforcement gaps accountability." This technology will also address have resulted in significant revenue losses. encroachments

## Man, his son electrocuted

PNS ANANTAPUR Yellanur mandal on Thursday. Police said that the deceased In a tragic incident, a man and Ramanyaneyulu and his son Ravi were going on a bike to Dantalapalli village from his son were electrocuted when a high-tension wire got snapped and fell on their bike Ankevaripalali village after attendat Dantalapalli village in ing a family function. A high-ten-

sion electric wire snapped and fell on the bike in they died instantaneously. The deceased belonged to Madugupalli village in Putluru mandal. A pall of gloom descended on Madugupalli village with the death of the father and son duo. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the

ceive their pen sions even if they miss out unexpectedly, the widow will be granted a widow's on payments for up to two consecutive months. The Minister explained

collect their pension in the

first month, the total

amount for both the first

and second months will be

disbursed in the second

month. If the pension

remains uncollected for

two consecutive months,

the combined pension for

both months will be pro-

vided in the third month.

However, if a pensioner

misses payments for three

consecutive months, they

pension from the following month. Necessary instructhat if a pensioner fails to tions have been issued to the relevant officials to implement this process.

Furthermore, the Minister informed that the state government has directed district-level Rural Develo pment Project Directors, MPDOs (Mandal Parishad Development Officers), and municipal commissioners to take the required action at the grassroots level to ensure smooth implementation of the policy.

## Congress demands arrest of Adani

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) vice-president Kolanukonda Sivaji has demanded the arrest of industrialist and Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani, who is facing indictment by a US court in a solar power bribery scam.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Shivaji alleged that Gautam Adani was involved in insider trading and claimed that the Congress party had provided evidence of this to the investigating agencies.

The Congress leader ques-



tioned why the Modi-led

order a probe by the CBI, ED, and a Joint Parliamentary Committee into the alleged frauds committed by Gautam Adani. An FIR should be registered against him, and summons should be issued," the APCC Vice-President stated.

Central Government was hesitating to initiate an investiga-He also called for a thorough tion into SEBI Chairperson inquiry into the agreements Madhabi Puri Buch. Shivaji signed by Andhra Pradesh further alleged that Gautam Discom officials with electric-Adani had previously been ity companies linked to charged by the US Securities Gautam Adani.

Act of 2011 was implemented

until 2019. However, the previ-

## Vizag Police reunite families by cracking multiple missing person cases



#### PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

## New law for tenant farmers on the anvil

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Cooperative, Dairy Develo pment, Animal Husbandry, and Fisheries, K Atchannaidu, announced that the State government would introduce a new law titled the "Andhra Pradesh Land Cultivators Rights Act-2024" to support tenant farmers without negatively affecting landowners. He explained that the government

has drafted the bill and is conducting regional meetings to gather input from farmers, tenant farm-

ous YSRCP government had amended the act, which, he said, ers, and farmers' associations. The Act is expected to come into effect has become problematic for ten-ant farmers. Under the new by February next year. During the Question Hour in rules, tenant farmers require the AP Legislative Council, PDF approval from landowners to Members KS Lakshmana Rao secure crop loans from banks.

and I Venkateswara Rao raised This has led to a situation where issues concerning tenant farmers. landowners are unwilling to give Minister response, such approvals, resulting in In Atchannaidu explained that the banks denying loans to tenant Andhra Pradesh Tenant Farmers farmers.

The City Police have demonstrated their efficiency and dedication by swiftly resolving three missing person cases across various police stations. The timely actions of the police force have reunited these individuals with their families, providing much-needed relief.

One of the cases, registered at the Steel Plant police station, involved a married woman who had left her home due to a family dispute. Within 48 hours, the police tracked her down and brought her back to

#### Swift action and coordination across police stations lead to safe return of individuals, providing much-needed relief to their families

her family. A police official teams were key to this successful resolution.

old boy who had gone missing was located by the city police within 24 hours. The boy was immediately returned to his family. A spokesperson for the One Town police station com-mented, "The swift recovery of the minor highlights the commitment of our police personnel to act promptly in such

child is back with his family." Meanwhile, a woman with mental health issues, who had left her home under the jurisdiction of the Arilova police station, was traced to Vijayawada and safely returned to her family. A senior officer said, "We are relieved to bring the woman home. Our officers worked tirelessly to ensure her safe return, and we appreciate the support from all units involved."

In a separate incident, a minor girl found wandering alone in the MahaRaniPeta police station area cases. We are pleased that the was identified by the police and

reunited with her parents. An officer handling the case stated, This case underscores the importance of vigilance and a quick response from the police. We are pleased that the child is safe and back with her family.'

City Police Commissioner Dr. Shankhabrata Bagchi praised the timely and efficient efforts of the police personnel involved in solving these missing person cases. He said, "The timely resolution of these cases reflects the dedication and hard work of our officers. I congratulate everyone for their outstanding efforts in bringing these individuals back home

involved in the investigation stated, "We are pleased to have resolved this case promptly and brought the woman back to her family. Timely action and coordination with various

In another case at the One Town police station, a 15-year-

GGH for postmortem.

#### and Exchange Commission for bribing officials and scamming American investors of ?2,110 crore. "We demand that the Centre







## Couple ends life after killing five-month-old child

#### PNS ANANTAPUR

In a shocking incident, a couple, along with their five-month-old daughter, committed suicide by hanging themselves in their house, located at Santa Bazaar, in Narpala village on Thursday. Sub-inspector Sagar said

that the deceased Krishna Kishore (45), and his wife Shirisha (35) were found hanging to the ceiling fans in their house. Their neighbours noticed a foul smell emanating from the house and informed the matter to the police.

The police broke open the doors and found the bodies of Krishna Kishore and his wife Shirisha hanging from the ceiling fan.

Their five-month-old daughter was also found dead and the police suspected that the couple before committing suicide, might have killed their child. The deceased Krishna Kishore used to run a medical shop and he was debt-ridden.

The police understood that financial problems forced the couple to take the extreme step. The bodies were found in a decomposing state as they might have died four days ago. RI Jyothi and ASI Nagaraju visited the scene of the crime, registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.

#### 1,800 litres of jaggery wash destroyed in raids

#### PNS ELURE

Prohibition and Excise officials, along with the police, conducted raids at Sridhar veleru village in Kukkunur mandal and destroyed 1,800 litres of jaggery wash, which was being hoarded to brew illicit liquor.

Prohibition and Excise Inspector K. Srinubabu informed the media that, acting on a tip-off about illegal liquor brewing, excise personnel, along with the police, raided a forest area in Kukkunur mandal. During the operation, they discovered an illicit liquor brewing unit. The team destroyed 1,800 litres of jaggery wash that was intended for distill-

ing illegal alcohol. The Inspector warned traders that legal action would be taken against them if they supplied black jaggery — a key ingredient for brewing illicit liquor — to illegal dis-tillers. He also urged the public to report illegal liquor activities by calling the helpline at 96185 21855.

The factory will cover 151,000 square feet and will be built using EPACK Prefab's advanced PEB technology. The company aims to complete the construction in record time without compromising on quality or durability

#### PNS NELLORE

EPACK Prefab, a leading manufacturer of pre-engineered buildings (PEB), has announced a plan to construct India's fastest factory building in just 150 hours. The project will start on November 20th in Mambattu, Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh.

The factory will cover 151,000 square feet and will be built using EPACK Prefab's advanced PEB technology. The

company aims to complete the construction in record time without compromising on quality or durability.

Sanjay Singhania, Managing Director of EPACK Prefab, said, "This project shows our

commitment to setting new standards in construction. We are confident that our team's planning and the speed of PEB technology will make this project a success. We want to demonstrate how quickly and

efficiently buildings can be made using prefab methods." The construction will happen in three phases. The first phase will involve building the main structure using prefabri-cated parts. In the second

phase, the roof will be added, and the building will be enclosed. The final phase will focus on finishing the interiors and other details, completing the entire structure within 150 hours.

#### Jagan supported campaign against mom, sister: Naidu

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday accused YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of supporting social media campaigns damaging his sister and mother.

While speaking in the Assembly, the CM gave an example of such a post and said that he couldn't go further as those posts were highly disparaging."A person who worked as a CM (Jagan) supported posts (on social media) on his mother and sister," alleged Naidu, citing the name of one Varra Ravindra Reddy who had allegedly

indulged in such activities. Alluding to Jagan Mohan Reddy's recent press conference, Naidu asserted that the YSRCP eigning ignorance about the social media goings on.



## 8 red sander logs seized; 2 arrested

the operation, the team spot-

ted smugglers transporting

red sander logs. Upon notic-

ing the Task Force personnel,

the smugglers abandoned the logs and fled into the nearby

The Task Force team chased

#### PNS TIRUPATI

The Red Sanders Anti-Smugg ling Task Force (RSASTF) personnel seized eight red sanders logs and arrested two smugglers at the SR Palem junction near Rajampet town in Annamayya

after them, apprehended two district. DSP G. Balireddy informed smugglers, and arrested them. the media on Thursday that a The arrested individuals are Task Force team led by RI M from Tamil Nadu, CI Suresh

Bhogapuram Airport to be named after Alluri

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu announced in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly that the Bhogapuram International Airport will be named after the renowned freedom fighter Alluri Seetharama Raju. The resolution for this decision was proposed by Investment and Înfrastructure Minister BC Janardhan Reddy, and it was unanimously approved by the Legislative Assembly.

Ĭn his statement, ĆM Naidu praised Alluri Seetharama Raju for his valiant struggle for the rights of tribal people and his relentless fight against British rule. He highlighted how Alluri led attacks on British police stations at Chintagondi, Krishnadevi Peta, and Rajavommangi as part of his resistance. Naidu also recalled how Prime Minister Narendra Modi had unveiled a bronze statue of Alluri Seetharama Raju on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary, recognising him as a hero and

Naidu stressed the impor-

Telangana CPM State secre-

Veerabhadram said that 'attack on the Collector by

Thammineni

PNS HYDERABAD

dom fighter.



tance of remembering and honouring such national heroes who fought for the country's independence. He also expressed frustration over the prolonged delay in the completion of the Bhogapuram Airport, which has been pending for the last five years.

that the Legislative Assembly had resolved not only to name the airport after Alluri Seetharama Raju but also to establish a memorial museum in his honour. He expressed hope that a statue of the revolutionary hero would be erected in Parliament, and if a formal resolution

would be sent to the Centre for

approval.

Police attack on Lagacharla

villagers is despicable: CPM

### YSRCP to raise key issues in Parl PNS VIJAYAWADA

**EPACK** Prefab plans to construct

India's fastest-built factory in 150 hrs

The Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) is preparing to raise several critical issues during the upcoming winter session of Parliament. These include concerns over the law and order situation in Andhra Pradesh the Polavaram project, and the proposed amendments to the Wakf Board Act.

Addressing the media after a meeting with party MPs on Thursday, MP Pilli Thursday, Subhashchandra Bose shared that former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had outlined the strategy for the party during the session and provided details of the key issues to be raised in Parliament.

One of the primary concerns highlighted by Subhash Chandra Bose was the growing harassment and illegal detention of social media activists in the state. The YSRCP intends



that the state police are violating the rule of law by unlawfully detaining political opponents and activists, thereby infringing on their human rights.

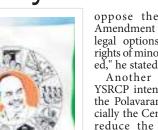
The party also reiterated its strong opposition to the pro-Wakf posed Board (Amendment) Bill, which it plans to challenge in Parliament. Bose emphasised that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has made it clear that the party will not tolerate any actions seen as discriminatory to raise these matters, alleging against minorities. "We will

oppose the Wakf Board Amendment Bill and explore legal options to ensure the rights of minorities are protected," he stated.

Another key issue the YSRCP intends to address is the Polavaram project, especially the Centre's decision to reduce the height of the Polavaram dam. The party will demand that the rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) package for displaced families be expedited, highlighting concerns about the welfare of those affected by the project.

The privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) will also be a significant issue for the party. The YSRCP has been a vocal opponent of the privatisation move, with Bose reiterating the party's stance that VSP should remain in the public sector. "We will strongly protest the privatisation of VSP and advocate for its continued operation in the public sector," he added.

The CM further mentioned



Chiranjeevulu and P. Naresh, Kumar has registered a case conducted a search operation and is currently investigating in the SR Palem area. During the matter.

forest.

## Wages of 'hamalis' hiked to Rs 28 per quintal

#### PNS GUNTUR

The wages of 'Hamali' workers have been increased from Rs 25 to Rs 28 per quintal. Following the agreement reached with the Civil Supplies Department, the Hamali coolies have called off their strike.

The agreement was finalised with the JAC leaders of the Hamali coolies on Thursday. A total of 5,791 'hamali' coolies will benefit from the wage hike, which will apply to 252 MLS points. Minister for Civil Supplies, Nadendla Manohar, assured that the coalition government will continue to work towards the welfare of civil supplies hamali workers in the future.

The wage increase of Rs 3 per quintal will benefit 5,791 hamali' workers. The Minister



held a meeting with the JAC leaders on Thursday at the Secretariat and agreed to implement the wage hike. The JAC leaders also raised

Maheshwara Rao and General other issues concerning the Secretary Uday Bhaskar Rao hamali workers, which the were among those present at Minister assured to address. the meeting.

the villagers is wrong but the attack by the police on Lagacharla villagers is despi-cable. Veerabhadram said tims till the end. that the Left parties are condemning the police atrocities in Lagacharla severely. The leaders of Left parties visited Lagacharla village on Thursday. Later speaking to the media, Veerabhadram said, "The Lagacharla vic-

tims are saying that the police touched women in an

apologies for the attack on the farmers of Lagacharla village and do justice to

them. No question of taking a single inch of land in Lagacharla village by the government. The Communist parties would stand by the Lagacharla vic-Veerabhadram said that the Collector has been stat-

ing that not to say that as an attack. However, government authorities and Ministers are describing the incident as an attack. "We are opposing the government and Ministers' efforts to politicise the Lagacharla incident against reality. That doesn't mean indecent manner. The gov- here we are not supporting ernment should tender the BRS. steps for tackling cybercrime

SP stresses security at banks.

#### PNS ELURE

Superintendent of Police K Pratap Shiva Kishore highlighted the urgent need for enhanced security measures at banks and steps to combat cyber crimes.

The SP convened a meeting with bank officials, police personnel, and security staff to review current security arrangements and discuss strategies to prevent crimes. He also briefed the bank officials on the types of crimes that commonly occur at banks and ways to mitigate them.

Kishore pointed out that cybercriminals are often able to commit fraud by obtaining information directly from some banks, a fact that had come to light during investigations. He advised bank officials to take stringent measures to ensure that depositors' personal information does not fall into the wrong hands. The SP they are often targeted by

also inquired if the banks had frozen the accounts of known cyber criminals.

Further, the SP instructed bank officials to carefully monitor and verify any large transfers of money into accounts, particularly from other states. as these could indicate fraudulent activities. He assured the banks of full support in tackling cyber crimes and urged them to assist elderly customers when they are depositing or withdrawing money, as

fraudsters. Kishore also emphasized the importance of securing ATM kiosks, suggesting that banks install CCTV cameras and appoint security guards to safeguard these areas. In the event of a cybercrime incident, he instructed victims to report fraud immediately by dialling 1930.

Additional SP Purna chandra Rao, along with DSPs D Shravan Kumar, M Venkateswara Rao, and KVVNB Prasad, also attended the meeting.



## 2 notorious thieves arrested, Rs 24L booty recovered

#### PNS RAYACHOTI

The police have arrested two notorious thieves and recovered booty worth Rs 24 lakh. Addressing the media on Thursday, DSP Krishna Mohan said that a special team, led by Rayachoti CI Vara Prasad and SI Srinivasulu, was formed to apprehend the criminals.

The arrested thieves, iden-

tified as Gummala Venkata Subbaiah and Korla Kumar, were involved in multiple thefts and burglaries in the district. The police recovered gold jewellery and silver orna-ments valued at Rs 24 lakh from their possession. The thieves are being produced before the court, the DSP added

## Make use of govt's welfare schemes, fisherfolk told

#### PNS ONGOLE

Civil Supplies Commissioner

Veerapandyan, Managing Director Veer Jilani, CITUC

Honorary President Uma

District Collector A Thameem Ansariya and MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy urged the fishermen community to take full advantage of the welfare schemes provided by both the Centre and the State government. A programme was organised here on Thursday to mark World Fishermen's Day. Speaking at the event, MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy highlighted that both the Central and State governments

are implementing various schemes aimed at improving the livelihood and financial conditions of fishermen. He reiterated that the State government is committed to safeguarding the interests of fishermen



The MP also revealed plans an estimated cost of Rs. 392.45 for the construction of a fishcrore. He mentioned that the ing harbour at Kottapatnam at completion of the harbour

would significantly benefit the fishermen's communities in the coastal areas of the district.

Magunta further emphasised that the Prakasam district leads the state in fish production, contributing 29.1 per cent of the total production. He also mentioned that he had allocated Rs. 25 lakh from the MPLAD funds for the construction of the Fishermen

Bhavan in Ongole, though work on the building had yet to commence.

Collector Thameem Ansariya acknowledged the efforts of 75 fishermen from Prakasam district, who had taken 35 boats to Vijayawada to participate in the flood relief operations, and expressed her gratitude to them.

She assured that the issue of the Sona boats had been brought to the attention of the Central government, and a

permanent solution would be provided soon. The Collector also spoke about the measures being taken to protect fishermen during cyclones and floods.

She recognized the fisheries and aquaculture sector as a key driver for the state's development, particularly for the Swarnadhra@2047 initiative. She assured that steps were being taken to improve the financial conditions and living standards of fishermen.

State Tourism Corporation Chairman Dr. Nukasani Balaji and Mayor G. Sujata also addressed the gathering. District Fisheries Officer Chandrasekhar Reddy provided an overview of the welfare programmes being implemented for the benefit of fishermen.



# Nation 05

## ACROSS THE STATES



### 47 survivors of anti-Sikh riots handed out job letters

Pelhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Thursday distributed appointment letters to 47 survivors of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. According to a statement, six additional letters will be issued to successors of beneficiaries who have exceeded the age of service. Speaking at an event in the Tilak Vihar area of west Delhi, Saxena announced that 437 pending applications for appointments are under verification. The locality primarily houses the 1984 riot victims. He also directed the Revenue department to organise special camps to expedite their resolution, the statement said. Saxena announced that the colony, commonly referred to as "Widows' Colony," would be renamed based on residents' recommendations. He also approved a proposal seeking relaxation in recruitment qualifications for the victims' kin, saying that the 1984 riots were a blot on Indian democracy. Last month the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee urged the LG to consider all eligible applicants, including those who had aged out or died, it added.



### **Malayalam actor** Meghanadhan dies at 60

enowned Malayalam film and television actor Meghanadhan, known for his iconic villainous roles passed away in a hospital in the early hours of Thursday, industry sources confirmed. He was 60. Meghanadhan succumbed to respiratory-related ailments at 2 am, while undergoing treatment, sources said. His funeral was held at his residence in Vandanamkurissi, near Shoranur, on Thursday evening. Relatives, friends, and admirers from various walks of life gathered to pay their respects. His mortal remains were kept at his home until the afternoon for the public to bid farewell. Meghanadhan is survived by his wife, Susmitha, and daughter, Parvathi. Son of acclaimed actor Balan K Nair. Meghanadhan appeared in over 50 films, including notable works like 'Chamayam', 'Chenkol', and 'Ee Puzhayum Kadannu'

## **Bid to boost India-US ties**

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024

## **RAJNATH HOLDS TALKS WITH US DEFENCE SECRETARY**

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday held talks with US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin in Laos with a focus on implementing the new initiatives rolled out to bring peace in the Indo-Pacific under the framework of the Quad.

In perhaps their last meeting before the incoming Trump administration takes charge, Singh described Austin as a great friend of India and said his contribution to boost India-US defence partnership has been exemplary. The defence ministry said

both sides agreed to continue the momentum achieved in the last two-and-a-half years through growing convergence to strategic interests and enhanced India-US defence cooperation.

'Ît is always a matter of immense joy to meet my friend, Lloyd Austin. He has been a great friend to India. "His contribution towards

strengthening India-US defence partnership has been exemplary," Singh posted on X. The meeting took place on

the sidelines of a conclave in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, of 10-nation ASEAN grouping and some of its dialogue partners.

based on increased operational It is understood that India's coordination, information-



"Both sides recognised the remarkable progress made under the US-**India Defence** Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, including ongoing collaboration to advance priority co-production arrangements for jet engines, munitions and ground mobility systems."

sharing and industrial innovaand the first-ever Quad-at-sea tion," the defence ministry said ship observer mission.

PNS NEW DELHI

Policy 2021-22.

December 20.

the trial

The defence minister also referred to the launch of a Quad Indo-Pacific logistics network pilot project to support civilian response to natural disasters more rapidly. "Both sides affirmed support

ground mobility systems," it two governments, businesses and academic institutions fostered by India-US Defense

Acceleration Ecosystem by providing them with more joint challenges, funding opportuni-ties and visibility," the ministry said in a statement



## Centre announces staggered work timings for employees

#### PNS NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday announced staggered working timings for its employees in view of the severe air pollution in Delhi, according to an order issued by the Union personnel ministry. Employees have also been asked to pool vehicles and use public transport to minimise vehicular pollution. 'These measures may be

adopted by ministries/departments/organisations as per their functional requirements ensuring that it should not have an adverse impact on efficiency and productivity in any manner," the order read.

Given the severe-plus air pollution levels in Delhi, various ministries, departments and organisations of the central government are advised to adopt staggered timing in respect of offices located in the Delhi-National Capital Region,

**EXCISE POLICY** 

Delhi HC refuses to stay

ED case against Kejriwal

it said. The order said offices

can be open from 9 am to 5.30 pm and 10 am to 6.30 pm. "The officers/staff using per-sonal vehicles should be encouraged to pool vehicles and to use public transport to minimise the vehicular pollution," it added.

After a week of 'severe' pollution levels, Delhi's air quality has improved slightly but is still in the 'very poor' zone.

At 9 am on Thursday, the national capital recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 376, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The move assumes signifi-

cance as a body representing the Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officers had on November 18 demanded work-from-home, staggered working hours and air purifiers in all office buildings to mitigate the health impact of the severe pollution levels.

'Even Ajmal Kasab was given a fair trial'

plan to procure 31 Predator

high-altitude long-endurance

drones from American defence

major General Atomics under

the foreign military sales route

at a cost of nearly USD 4 billion

figured in the talks. The deal

with South Korean Defence

Minister Kim Yong Hyun,

Australia's Pat Conroy and

Defence Minister of New

ed the progress achieved by the

India-US defence partnership,

"The two leaders commend-

Singh also held separate talks

was sealed last month.

Zealand Judith Collins.

#### SC remarks in Yasin Malik case

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Even Ajmal Kasab was given a fair trial in our country, the Supreme Court on Thursday remarked and indicated it may set up a courtroom inside Tihar Jail for the trial of J&K separatist leader Yasin Malik in

a kidnapping case. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih was hearing a CBI plea against the September 20, 2022 order of a Jammu trial court that directed Malik, serving life term in Tihar jail, to be produced before it physically to cross-examine the prosecution witnesses in the kidnapping case of Rubaiya iter of politici

PNS KATHMANDU Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Thursday held talks with his Nepalese counterpart General Åshok Sigdel here, focussing on collabora-tion between the two armies,

officials said. Dwivedi, accompanied by his spouse Sunita Dwivedi,

arrived in Nepal on Wednesday for a five-day official visit at the invitation of Sigdel. Dwivedi met Sigdel at Nepal Army Headquarters and discussed matters relating to the collaboration between the two armies, officials said.

Earlier in the day, Dwivedi laid a wreath and paid homage at Bir Smarak Memorial) at the Army Pavilion in Tundikhel, Kathmandu. He also received the Guard of Honour at the Army headquarters.

The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to stay for now the proceedings against former CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case linked to irreg-ularities in the state Excise Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri issued notice and sought the at the time of filing of the final

response of the Enforcement prosecution as he was a pub-Directorate on a plea by the former Delhi chief minister ic servant when the alleged offence was committed. challenging a trial court's order

lawyer sought an early hearing However, Solicitor General after the court posted the Tushar Mehta, appearing for hearing in January, 2025 and the ED, submitted a sanction insisted an order on his plea for was obtained to prosecute a stay on the proceedings be passed during the day owing to Kejriwal and he would be filing an affidavit. Kejriwal's urgency.

Iehta opposed the submis sion and sought to file a reply to the stay application, pointing out such an approach was unfair.

ensure that domestic prior-

ities remain central to its

mote carbon and green

credits align with global cli-

mate goals, while safeguard-

ing India's developmental

Providing updates on the

Our initiatives to pro-

report. The AAP convenor's

said. In the talks, Singh empha-sised the need for both sides to work together on the agreed deliverables including the new regional maritime initiative for training in the Indo-Pacific

Army chiefs of

India, Nepal

discuss collaboration

on Singh-Austin talks. "Both sides recognised the remarkable progress made under the US-India Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, including ongoing collaboration to advance priority co-production arrangements to the growing defence innovation collaboration between the for jet engines, munitions and



### 11-yr-old killed by mother, stepfather in Meerut

he mother and stepfather of an 11-year-old boy were arrested for allegedly killing him in Sardhana here, police said on Thursday. The accused, Nasreen (32) and Sameer (26), were sent to jail after police found their involvement in the murder following an interrogation on Wednesday, they added. The body of Nasreen's son Sahil was found hanging from the ceiling fan in a store room of their house in the Garhi Khatikan locality Monday late night, said SHO Pratap Singh of Sardhana area. The parents were taken into custody after Sahil's grandfather, Hanif, lodged an FIR in the matter. He alleged that they had strangled the boy, the SHO said. Hanif further alleged that Sameer had harboured a grudge against Sahil ever since his marriage to Nasreen. During interrogation, Nasreen told the police that she had Sahil and a daughter from her first marriage to Anees, who died three years ago. She remarried six months after his death, the official said

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The bench, however,

remarked, "How will cross-examination be done online? There is

Mehta pointed out security concerns and said Malik couldn't be taken to Jammu for the trial

hardly any connectivity in

Jammu... In our country, a fair trial

was given even to Ajmal Kasab

and legal assistance was given to

him in the high court." Kasab, the

lone Pakistani gunman caught

alive after the Mumbai terror

attack, was hanged till death at the

General Tushar Mehta, repre-

senting the CBI, to take

instructions on the total num-

Yerawada Central Prison . The bench told Solicitor

> argued that cognisance of the chargesheet was taken by the special court in the absence of the required sanction for his

taking cognisance of a chargesheet in the case.

The matter will be heard on

Kejriwal sought setting aside

ument was not supplied to them along with the supplementary chargesheet and claimed there was no sanction

nsel said the rel

## 'Rahul, Cong tried since 2002 to target Modi's image'

PM's credibility remains high: BJP

#### PNS NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday slammed Rahul Gandhi's attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the US prosecutors' indictment of Gautam Adani on alleged bribery and fraud charges as part of his long-running efforts to target its leader and noted that none of the four states named in American courts had a BJP

government. Addressing a press confer-ence, BJP spokesperson and MP Sambit Patra steered clear of the US Justice Department's allegations against the infrastructure behemoth, saying it is for the company to give an explanation and defend itself.

'Law will take its own course," he said while keeping the focus on Gandhi's allegations against the prime minister and the BJP government at the Centre. Patra also pointed out that

Saturday night. The clash took place in the

Ramakrishna Mission Ashram,

Police booked more than 25

people in four FIRs, listing assault against public servant, causing

hurt, obstruction, unlawful

Swami

located near the Vidhan Sabha.



ally were in power in Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu, four states -- Andhra Pradesh. Odisha, Chhattisgarh Tamil Nadu -- where government the YSR Congress and the BJD, functionaries were allegedly paid two regional parties unaffiliated bribes of over USD 250 million to either the ruling or the opposition alliance nationally, ruled to secure favourable deals, were ruled by non-BJP parties during Andhra Pradesh and Odisha the period mentioned in the then, respectively. indictment.

While the Congress and its investments of tens of thousands

of crores of rupees by the Adani group, the ports-to-energy conglomerate, in states ruled by the Congress and its allies to question Rahul Gandhi over his party's dealings with the behe-moth when he calls its boss Gautam Adani "corrupt".

Patra claimed that Gandhi's allegations on Thursday fitted the pattern of him, his mother Sonia Gandhi and the Congress trying to tarnish Modi's image since 2002, a reference to the communal riots in Gujarat when the BIP leader was the state's chief minister, but in vain.

Rahul Gandhi alleged corruption in the Rafale deal in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and had also gone after the Central government over the Covid vaccines issue, he said, noting the Supreme Court had dismissed the bribery charges in the procurement of the fighter jet.

### India shaping global climate action: Environment Min

approach.

#### PNS NEW DELHI

India is playing a pivotal role in shaping global climate mechanisms while ensuring its own developmental priorities are upheld, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav stated on Thursday, amidst the ongoing climate talks in Azerbaijan.

Chambers of Commerce &

Industry (FICCI) under the

theme 'Our Actions for Viksit Bharat' here, the min-

ister also highlighted India's

active role in shaping these

global climate mechanisms,

ongoing COP29 in Baku, the minister revealed that Speaking at the 97th Annual General Meeting Article 6.4 will be fully implemented at the internaand Annual Convention of tional level. In a landmark decision the Federation of Indian

objectives," he noted.

on the first day of the global climate talks in Baku, COP29 officially adopted the new operational standards for a mechanism of the Paris Agreement under Article 6, setting the stage alongside its efforts to for a global carbon market.

## Tampering with Ramakrishna Mission would cost heavily: HP Governor

#### PNS SHIMLA

Tampering with organisations like Ramakrishna Mission will have a heavy cost, Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said on Thursday, days after a clash in Shimla between the members of the sect and another group.

"The office bearers of Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Shimla, have submitted a letter to me and I have asked the officials to seek a report," Shukla said.

"No official has the right to tamper with such organisations and if someone does this, it is not



assembly, offence at place of worship, criminal intimidation and breach of public peace as crimes. On Monday, RK Ashram right," he said, adding, "We will not tolerate any disrespect to such a reputed organisation." Seven secretary Tanmahimanand termed the people, including three police personnel, were injured in a other group as "land mafia" clash between members of which trespassed into the ashram Ramakrishna Mission Ashram as devotees to take over the and the Brahmo Samaj late property.

### **Union minister** stresses foster care for children

#### PNS LUCKNOW

Union Minister of State for and Women Development Savitri Thakur on Thursday emphasised that the foster care system offers an alternative to children aged six years and above who often face challenges in finding adoptive families.

The minister was speaking at an event in Lucknow as part of the 'Adoption Awareness Month 2024', which focused on rehabilitating older children and giving them a new direction in life

Child

## **MIFFED WITH BRIBERY COMPLAINTS** Mamata to initiate 'total reshuffle' in CID

PNS KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday announced the initiation of a "total reshuffle" in the state CID, accusing a sec-tion of police personnel in the lower ranks of indulging in corrupt practices.

The BJP spokesperson cited

She also directed DGP Rajeev Kumar to look into "complaints" received against some CID officers and take action in case those were found to be genuine.

'I will initiate a total reshuffle in the CID. I am giving you (Kumar) the responsibility... Give me proposals



and cross-check the com-Banerjee said during a meetplaints. At times, false coming at state secretariat plaints are also lodged. If 'Nabanna'. Banerjee, who is also the those are found to be genuine, take strong action. Do not state's home minister, also spare me even if need be,"

strengthen the Special Task Force (STF) and the anti-cor-

ruption bureau. "I will not tolerate that a section of the police and the CISF will accept bribes, be involved in the theft of coal, cement and sand, and then people will blame the Trinamool Congress.

"If there is involvement of any political leader, nab him too and put him behind bars. Till today, I have not taken any bribe from anybody. Law should be equal for all," the CM asserted.

Brokers and middlemen are destroying the society, asked Kumar to take steps to she added.

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024

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## **Mending fences with China**

Faced with a slowing economy and increasing geopolitical challenges, Beijing seems eager to seek a thaw with India

n a notable shift, the Chinese government has signalled its intent to recalibrate its ties with India following a series of disengagement measures along their disputed border. The thaw reflects both strategic considerations and economic imperatives as Beijing grapples with slowing economic growth and rising geopolitical challenges. After years of strained relations exacerbated by the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, which resulted in casualties on both sides, the disengagement at friction points offers a moment to 'look into the future.' Chinese officials and business leaders have expressed optimism about a potential reset in ties, framing peace and stability as prerequisites for deeper bilateral engagement. China's economy has been under pressure from multiple fronts: sluggish growth, weakening consumer demand and the looming threat of escalating tariffs from the United States under Donald Trump's proposed policies. Beijing has already announced two rounds of monetary and fiscal stimulus packages, with a third expect-



ed soon, aiming to rejuvenate its domestic economy and strengthen trade ties with key partners like India. India, with its vast middle-class market and growing manufacturing sector, represents an attractive prospect for Chinese businesses.

Despite a persistent trade imbalance—India's imports from China stood at \$99.59 billion in 2023, dwarfing its exports of \$16.23 billion-there is scope for collaboration. Chinese businesses see opportunities in India's pharmaceuticals, services and burgeoning electric vehicle market. China's business leaders and scholars have called for a pragmatic approach that separates border issues from economic and cultural ties.

Influential figures in China's economic hubs-Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen-have emphasised the benefits of collaboration. Companies like Shanghai Pharmaceuticals and carmaker BYD have expressed interest in leveraging the Indian market, highlighting areas like healthcare and electric vehicles as promising fields for cooperation. While Beijing appears eager to reset relations, New Delhi's emphasis on resolving border disputes as a precondition for normalisation remains a sticking point. India is likely to continue leveraging its trade policies to address the trade deficit and ensure balanced economic ties. Additionally, mutual trust needs rebuilding after years of diplomatic and military standoffs. Indeed, the disengagement along the border is a significant step toward restoring confidence between the two nations. If both sides prioritise dialogue and economic cooperation, the thaw could lead to a more stable and mutually beneficial relationship. China's acknowledgment of India's potential as a key trade and investment partner, coupled with India's focus on reducing its trade deficit and securing fair access to Chinese markets, could lay the foundation for a new era in Sino-Indian relations. Whatever the reasons behind China's willingness to engage in dialogue, this is an opportunity that must be fully seized.



# Congress party's political opportunism



The glaring contradiction between Congress party's diatribes against Adani and its actions underscores a deeper issue of political expediency eroding its trust

he relationship between the Congress Party and the Adani Group is a masterclass in political hypocrisy. For all its vocal criticisms of the Adani-BJP nexus, Congress's historical and current actions tell a different story-one of close collaboration and mutual benefit. While Rahul Gandhi and his party present themselves as crusaders against crony capitalism, the truth is that Congress has been instrumental in the growth of the Adani empire. If anything, Congress's attacks on Adani only serve to highlight its duplicity.

Adani's early growth can be traced back to the 1990s when the Congress Party was in power. In 1993, under the Chimanbhai Patel-led Congress government in Gujarat, Adani vas granted land at just 10 paise per square meter for his Mundra Port project. Further land allocations were made by Shanker Singh Vaghela, who was supported by the Congress Party. Interestingly, only about a third of Adani's total land acquisitions in Gujarat occurred during Modi's tenure as Chief Minister.

Despite Rahul Gandhi's relentless attacks on Adani, Congress-ruled states continue to roll out the red carpet for the conglomerate. In Rajasthan, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's government has signed agreements with Adani for a massive 10,000 MW solar power project and handed over operational control of Jaipur International Airport.

In Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel's administration has approved Adani's role as a Mine Developer and Operator for coal blocks, while Himachal Pradesh's Congress Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu brokered a deal to reopen Adani-owned cement plants. These are not isolated India's economic system, cidents but part of a broader trend where Congress governments actively court the same group their leaders lambast at the national level. This two-faced approach isn't just political theatre—it's deeply cynical. The group's ability to

deliver large-scale infrastructure projects, attract investments, and create jobs makes it indispensable to state governments, including those led by Congress. Yet, instead of owning this reality, Congress chooses to vilify Adani on the national stage, using him as a convenient punching bag to score political points against the

BIP.

It's a strategy designed to mask its complicity while hoping voters don't notice the glaring contradictions. Rahul Gandhi, in particular, has made Adani the centerpiece of his attacks on Modi, framing the group as a beneficiary of crony capitalism. But his rhetoric collapses under scrutiny. Congress's historical and ongoing engagement with Adani exposes its attacks as hollow. If Congress truly believes Adani is emblematic of everything wrong with why does it continue to



THIS DUPLICITY ISN'T JUST BAD POLITICS; IT'S BAD FOR INDIA. CONGRESS'S SELECTIVE OUTRAGE OVER ADANI DISTRACTS FROM THE REAL ISSUES OF

falls his group enjoyed dur-ing UPA rule?

The answer lies in political expediency. Adani Group's growth and expansion have not been limited to any single political party or government. The conglomerate has secured projects, investments, and approvals from governments led by Congress, regional parties, and other opposition parties across various states. But at the state level, where governance realities take precedence over rhetoric, the result is a schizophrenic approach that undermines whatever credibility Congress hopes to claim in its critique of crony capital-

This duplicity isn't just bad politics; it's bad for India. Congress's selective outrage over Adani distracts from the real issues of economic concentration and regulatory capture. While concerns about corporate influence tinue to focus on our agenon politics are valid and

tending to stand against it. For Congress, the cost of this hypocrisy is more than just bad optics-it's a loss of trust. Voters are not blind to the contradictions between what Congress says and what it does. Rahul Gandhi's crusade against Adani might make for compelling headlines, but it rings hollow when Congress-ruled states continue to partner with the group. This gap between rhetoric and reality exposes Congress as a party more interested in political opportunism than principled opposition.

The people of India are wise enough to see through the opposition's double standards and political opportunism. They understand that the BJP government has always prioritised the nation's interests and has worked tirelessly to promote inclusive growth and development. We will conda of good governan nomic reforms, and social welfare, regardless of the fact-based perspective on opposition's baseless attacks and allegations. (The writer is BJP national spokesperson; views are personal)



worker spreads 'Finger Fryums,' for drying under the sun at a factory on the outskirts of Agartala

facilitate his projects in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh? Why does it refuse to acknowledge its role in Adani's rise, from land allocations in the 1990s to the financial wind-

#### CONCENTRATION AND REGULATORY CAPTURE

ECONOMIC must be addressed, it is crucial to have a balanced and the issue. Worse, it perpetuates the very system it claims to oppose, enabling Adani's expansion while pre-

## Are taxpayers getting their money's worth?



From understaffed schools and ill-equipped hospitals to failing sanitation systems, taxpayers are left wondering: where is their money really going?

ach month, countless Lindividuals contribute a significant portion of their earnings to the government, with the expectation that it will deliver essential services and build a nation worthy of our pride. Despite decades of commitments and the collection of hundreds of billions in taxes, numerous regions still suffer from shockingly inadequate basic infrastructure. Educational institutions lack adequate teaching personnel, public healthcare facilities consistently face shortages in supplies, and the sanitation system remains in its early developmental phase. What is the reason for this recurring issue? Is the hard-earned money of taxpayers truly being utilised efficiently, or is it time for citizens to demand more accountability?

The irony lies in the fact that the middle-class sector shoulders the weight of taxes, yet they find themselves unable to reap the rewards of the services those taxes are intended to provide. Government schools are supposed to deliver affordable and quality education; however, many lack essential facilities like toilets,



adequate classrooms and dedicated teachers. Instead, middle-class families find public trust. themselves having to extend their budgets to enrol their children in private schools. Government hospitals, which are meant to provide free health care, are often overcrowded, dirty and severely lacking in staff. The middle class has ultimately turned away from these facilities, leading them to seek costly private care-where once more, their taxes and the expected refunds were meant to support them. Each year, governments

amass billions in tax revenue, yet a significant portion frequently gets redirected to non-essential projects, bureaucratic inefficiencies, or, even more troubling, cor- highlighting areas that

ruption. Extravagant gov-ernment offices, regular overrequire urgent focus. The key takeaway is the seas travel for officials and importance of civic engageinadequately planned infra- ment. People must insist on structure initiatives consume greater accountability from those they elect. Advocacy, resources that ought to be allocated to enhancing pubcommunity assessments, and lic services. Systemic leakages exerting influence can indeed in public sector spending compel a government to result in a significant portion establish fundamental infraof the allocated budget failing structure for the public. If the to reach those it was meant government disregards the to benefit. It is not merely a opinions of the taxpayer, the matter of inefficiency; it repcollective voting strength and resents a profound betrayal of lobbying activities can convey a different kind of message. Taxpayers deserve clarity and Public funds should serve as

results. Therefore, it is essenmeans for advancing the tial for governments to create nation, rather than being detailed spending breaksquandered on wasteful downs that enable citizens to expenditures or corrupt pracfollow the flow of their funds. tices. The true measure of a It is essential for governnation's greatness lies not in ments to reassess their spendits towering skyscrapers or ing priorities. Rather than grand monuments, but in the focussing on grand symbolcare and support it provides ic infrastructure projects, to its people. Quality educaefforts will be directed tion, hygienic healthcare towards grassroots enhancefacilities, and essential saniments-cleaning hospitals, recruiting skilled teachers, tation are not privilegesthey are basic entitlements. and ensuring proper sanita-Now is the moment to hold tion in every school. the influential responsible Technology can play a crucial for fulfilling their commitrole in monitoring advancements. ments on extensive spread-

(The author is a motivator sheets and digital platforms, and a freelance writer; views *are personal)* 

#### LETTE RS

#### **GANGA UNSAFE FOR BATHING**

Madam — The National Green Tribunal has ordered Varanasi DM to put up a board as the Ganga is not fit for bathing. It is unfortunate. Ganga is a lifeline to tens of millions of people who live in its basin and depend on it for their daily life. But in the recent years, the Ganga has become not suitable for drinking purposes and more pathetically for bathing too since it is severely polluted with human waste and industrial contaminants. Three quarters of sewage from the northern plains is discharged into the Ganga without treatment. The Central Pollution Control Board states that BOD levels should be less than 3 mg per litre for bathing, but in the Ganges, BOD levels can be up to 6.4 mg per litre.

Therefore, swimming in the river, which has high levels of harmful bacteria and toxic chemicals, can increase the chance of developing diseases like viral fever, nausea, typhoid, hepatitis, gastroenteritis and so on. The Ganga Action Plan was launched in 1985 with the aim of improving water quality through interception, diversion and treatment of domestic sewage and to prevent toxic and industrial chemical wastes from identified polluting units from entering the Ganga should be strictly implemented. The Namami Ganga project was launched in 2014 with the objective of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga should be given life.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

#### **BENGAL'S MISSED OPPORTUNITIES**

Madam — The article 'West Bengal's lost opportunity' (November 20), rehashes the genesis of Bengal's apathy for industry for decades and its doomed economy. The militancy of trade unionism under CPI(M) and TMC regimes has left Bengal de-industrialised for over five decades. CPI(M) and TMC are synonyms as the leftist cadre of CPI(M) has shifted enmasse to TMC. Besides Tata Nano and Haringhata Dairy, the successive govern-



recurrent worsening of air quality in North India, particularly New Delhi, in the winter season is the cause for concern, which needs a comprehensive and long-lasting solution. This year the air quality index there reached 500 points, a severe plus range. Despite

Haripur through violent agitations. In fact, the state governments and leadership of CPI(M) and TMC have been confrontational with Union Governments on setting up industries. The leftist agenda aims to weaken India and is subservient to the interests of China. The vote bank politics of CPI(M) and TMC have failed the state. Lakhs of youth have migrated to the other states for jobs.

The infrastructure of the state is in the worst condition and the political ecosystem thrives on violence. Therefore, alternative leadership outside CPI(M) and TMC has not emerged. Mamata Banerjee's leadership is more leftist than the Communist leadership of CPI(M) and CPI. Bengal is badly bruised on economy and GST and income tax collections are some of the poorest in the country with the size and population of the state. The successive governments of CPI and TMC have been oppressive, as evident from the recurrent violence in all Lok Sabha, Assembly, and Panchayat elections. A poor state with potential to be the most ments had opposed the Nuclear plant in developed is very unfortunate for the

#### frightening for one and all. The stubble burning in the fields of adjacent states has been considered a major contributing factor for the worsening of air quality there. Apart from discouraging stubble burning, other

measures like restricting the number of constructions, putting a cap on industrial emissions, and encouraging public transport should be implemented. Instead of passing the buck to the next, the centre and states should work in tandem to chalk out a comprehensive plan and implement it effectively. The authorities should involve the scientific community and include the people for better results. The public health, schools, transport, work and livelihood getting a halt with regularity every winter for decades in the capital region of India augurs no good at

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

country. Bengali people deserve a better life and opportunity to grow. Vinod Johri | Delhi

#### **CASH CONTROVERSY**

Madam — As Maharashtra hurtles toward a critical election, a political firestorm has engulfed the state, with BJP veteran Vinod Tawde and Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (BVA) leader Hitendra Thakur locked in a battle of accusations and counterclaims. Tawde, long embroiled in controversies and estranged from BJP heavy weight Devendra Fadnavis, has found himself at the epicentre of fresh allegations of voter bribery. In Virar, BVA workers alleged that Tawde was caught red-handed with Rs 9.93 lakh in cash, sparking chaos. Thakur, claiming Tawde also possessed Rs 5 crore in cash and incriminating diaries listing names for monetary distribution, led the charge, insisting the BJP was attempting to buy its way to victory. Dorai Ramani Suresh | Mumbai

> Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024

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## **FIRSTCOLUMN**

## **THE FRAGILE MIND AND OVERCOMING FEAR**

understanding the causes of mental fragility and embracing methods of healing can help us fight fear



#### RAVI VALLURI

he cell rang and dropped from her hands. There was an agonising silence across continents. Her only son in the US, a brilliant student, committed suicide. Bill Maher writes, "Suicide is man's way of telling God: You can't fire me, I quit." But do brave men commit suicide? It appears to be a permanent solution to a transitory problem. Marcus Trescothick and Chetan Sharma come to mind. The former suffered from xenophobia in the subcontinent and Chetan Sharma after being hit for that last ball six at Sharjah by Javed Miandad lost his mojo and rhythm.

Fear, anxiety, emotional upheavals, unpleasant feelings, panic attacks and phobias are all symptomatic of a fragile and delicate mind. A fragmented mind is invariably a victim of irrational fear. Such an individual is unable to distinguish between what is logical and what is not. People harbouring fear suffer from panic attacks, sweaty palms, disturbed sleep, palpitation, shortness of breath, inability to remain calm, dry mouth and numbness of the feet and hands. A contributor to the magnification of fear is our pent-up emotions. These emotions are not based on a rational or scientific thinking pattern. We end up violently or irrationally reacting rather than responding in a coherent and clear-sighted manner. Humans should be prudent to ponder, that if left untreated this situation can become mourning regalia. A person can suffer from psychosomatic illnesses, loss of appetite, self-deprecatory behaviour or even schizophrenia. An element of fear is perhaps required, because then we can patrol our fences. Perhaps the only fearless people are sages and mentally deranged personalities! They are insulated from fear! The



brain is an organ and the mind is our intellect. It makes us aware and enhances the quality of consciousness. The mind is a movie theatre where the soap opera of our life is enacted. We play, rewind, and rerun an enormous number of movies. Thoughts are impacted by the kind of food we partake in (Tamasik, Rajasik, Sattvik), the company we keep and the amount of rest we take. The quality (guna) of food has a bear-

## Dedicated bank for MSMEs to boost credit access



analysis 07

This new initiative seeks to bridge that gap and stimulate job creation and economic activity by providing MSMEs with the financial support they desperately need

he government plans to estab-lish a dedicated bank to lend directly to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to enhance credit availability in this crucial sector. The industry has called for increased financial support, as current institutions like the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) primarily focus on refinancing loans rather than providing direct funding. In contrast, state financial and industrial development corporations do lend

directly to MSMEs. However, many, such as the Punjab State Industrial Development Corporation (PSIDC) and Punjab Finance Corporation (PFC), are experiencing funds crunch and have stopped credit flow. PSIDC gath-ered liabilities worth Rs 4700 crore, therefore, has not given any fresh loans to any company for the last 16 years. According to an Ernst&Young(EY) report, MSME credit penetration in India is only 14 per cent, significantly lower than in larger economies like the US and China, where the figures are 50 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively. Indian MSMEs face a critical credit shortage of? 25 trillion, indicating a substantial untapped credit market. Increasing lending to MSMEs can stimulate economic activity and create jobs. The proposed establishment of a separate bank dedicat-ed to the MSME sector would help address these direct credit shortages. However, the government needs to finalise various details, such as the bank's ownership structure, which may adopt a hybrid public-private partnership model. Although large banks operate in the sector, they often struggle to meet the unique needs of MSMEs.

Countries in Europe provide valuable lessons by grouping MSMEs with home loan customers, both considered small borrowers. If the government does not establish a new bank, SIDBI could be transformed into a full-fledged bank focused on direct lending to MSMEs instead of merely refinancing. SIDBI plays a vital role in financing India's MSMEs and is owned by a consortium that includes the government and major financial institutions. In 2023-24, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) supported the agricultural sector with a loan portfolio of Rs 6.68 lakh crore, with the agriculture CREATE JOBS.THE tribute significantly to exports and sector contributing 18 per cent to the country's GDP. On the other hand, SIDBI had a refinancing loan portfolio of? 84,000 crore in FY 2023-24, with the MSME sector contributing 30 per cent to the GDP.For micro and small enterprises to grow, obtaining capital remains one of their most significant challenges. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has designated MSMEs as a priority sector and directed banks to allocate 40 per cent of the Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to priority sectors, including MSMEs. However, a study by the RBI has found that most banks do not exceed 25 per cent for MSME credit. SIDBI's future growth depends on how effectively commercial banks fulfil their priority sector lending targets. A report by ICRA warns that if banks successfully meet their quotas, there could be a reduced need for SIDBI's refinancing services.Challenges: Despite the vital role MSMEs play in the country's economy, access to adequate, timely, and low-cost finance poses a significant hurdle to the sector's growth prospects. Limited credit history, insuf-

ficient collateral, lack of knowledge about government support, and high borrowing costs compli-cate access to funding for MSMEs. Unlike large corporations, MSMEs often lack an established track record, making it challenging to secure loans from banks and other financial institutions. There are 64 million MSMEs in India, with 99 per cent classified as micro-enterprises. Despite global adversities, the sector has helped cushion the economy from shocks. In a nation marked by significant disparities between urban and rural areas, MSMEs contribute to the upliftment of less developed regions, thereby reduc-ing regional imbalances and inequality. The sector provides over 110 million jobs, accounting

INCREASING LENDING TO for 23 per cent of the country's labour force, making it the sec-ond-largest employer in India MSMES CAN STIMULATE after agriculture. The importance of MSMEs to the

ECONOMIC Indian economy cannot be over-ACTIVITY AND stated. They drive innovation, Business Administration (SBA) generate employment, and con-

y weaker sections, and stimulat-

ng socio-economic development.

Mudra Yojana (PMMY), and Stand-Up India. While these efforts are commendable, the government must ensure awareness of and effective disbursement for these schemes so that more enterprises can benefit. Additionally, the private sector needs to step up and promote MSME financing.

Without public-private partnerships, alliances, and collaborations, MSME financing will continue to face challenges. One pressing issue is the introduction of interest subvention to address high borrowing costs, which range from 10 to 12 per cent. This creates an uneven playing field when compared to countries like China, where the borrowing rate is 3.1 per cent, the US at 4.37 per cent, and the European Union, which averages 5.1 per cent for MSMEs.

guarantees and encouraging

banks and other financial institu-

tions to lend to small businesses.

The Microloan Programmes pro-

vide capital for various business

needs, including working capital,

equipment purchases, and real

estate acquisitions. Furthermore,

address the issues within the In the US, MSMEs can access MSME sector that hinder finanfunding through various federal cial accessibility. As recommendand state programmes. The Small ed by the Parliamentary Committee on Finance, the complays a vital role by offering loan

MSME funding through programs focused on the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, which emphasise innovation and competitiveness.In China, the government has implemented several measures to enhance MSMEs' access to finance through dedicated banks, such as the China Development Bank, which offers targeted lending. Local governments have established credit guarantee funds as well. Moreover, China's financial technology sector has significantly grown, with online lending platforms and digital financial ser-vices providing alternative funding sources for MSMEs. Way Forward: The inherent challenges faced by MSMEs cannot be

financing. The EU also promotes

ing on our disposition and approach to life.

Tamasik food makes us sluggish, Rajasik food makes us feverish or anxious in disposition and Sattvik food makes us feel calm. The first two lead us to fearful situations. If we are closeted with individuals who have a negative thought process, we imbibe such attributes and evince such a behavioural pattern. "Man is known by the company he keeps" is a very old adage and so is "man is born free but always is in chains". It is cardinal to have adequate physical and mental rest. If we are rested, then we are at peace and do not complain or quibble.

Then we are physically and mentally alert and high-yielding. In our minds, we need to keep space to just dump the garbage which disappears into the recycle bin, NEVER to APPEAR again. We need to pursue passions, and hobbies, indulge in sports, participate in extracurricular activities, avoid negative company, take up initiatives, practice meditation, keep the mind occupied, footslog on the treadmill, go for long walks, go for treks and read autobiographies of entrepreneurs and achievers. There are others who adopt the spiritual path by practising pranayama, learning yoga, undertaking the Art of Living course, or observing the breath through the Vipassana technique. To conquer fear, we need to log out of our comfort zone so that the virus of fear does not enter our operating system. And if nothing works out, the magic is to surrender to the Divine and feel grateful.

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

GDP. By fostering entrepreneur-PROPOSED ship and supporting large-scale industrialisation, MSMEs play a ESTABLISHMENT pivotal role in reducing regional OF A SEPARATE imbalances, uplifting economical-BANK DEDICATED TO THE MSME

SECTOR WOULD face of economic adversities, ensuring the continuous dynamism of the Indian economy. HELP ADDRESS With a contribution of 27 per cent THESE DIRECT to India's GDP, 38.4 per cent of CREDIT

total manufacturing output, and 45 per cent of the country's total SHORTAGE exports, the MSME sector serves as the backbone of the economy. Global Models to Emulate: However, the government has launched several initiatives to promote financing for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro

Their adaptability and resilience the US government supports make them indispensable in the MSMEs through grants, venture capital initiatives, and state-specific funding programs tailored to local business environments. This diverse range of financial products ensures that MSMEs can find suitable funding options for their specific requirements. In European Union countries, MSMEs benefit from robust financial support frameworks

facilitated by institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF). These entities provide funding through intermediaries like banks and and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE), Pradhan Mantri microfinance institutions, offering loans, guarantees, and equity

prehensive approaches in EU, and China serve as valuable models for India to enhance its financing landscape for MSMEs, improve credit access, and make these enterprises globally competitive.

overlooked. It is essential to

The government also proposed establishing a Merchant Credit Card (MCC) Scheme for traders and a Vyapar Credit Card (VCC) for micro-units, similar to the Kisan Credit Card (KCC). Under the Credit Guarantee Fund, a scheme to provide short-term loans with interest subvention is still awaited. There is still much work to be done to ensure that all MSMEs can access affordable and timely financing.

(The Author is vice-chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic

Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and president of Tractor and Mechanisation Association; Views expressed are personal)

## India's gender gap in labour force participation: A missed opportunity

India must act swiftly to secure its digital future in an era where technological prowess is now essential for national security

recent International Labour Organisation A and Niti Aayog report shows that less than 50 per cent of women are in the labour force in India, compared to 80 per cent of men, and this proportion has not increased since 1990.

India is presently realising a demographic dividend, with the largest number of the young working population in the age group of 15-34. The above trend in women's labour market participation has serious implications for the economy, indicating a need for transition.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), presents a slightly optimistic Russia between 2011-2021



KAJLEEN KAUR

picture, where women's participation in the labour force has notably increased to 37 per cent from 23.3 per cent in 2017-18.

Although growing, these fig-ures are disgracefully low compared to 69 per cent in China and 57 per cent in Bangladesh. A similar comparison of female literacy rate in India with Sri Lanka, China, South Africa and

shows a remarkable growth from 59.28 per cent to 69 per cent for India, but it is way below all other countries where the figure is greater than 90 per cent, due to their dedicated efforts to female literacy. The female labour supply

economic growth in many developed countries implying an initial fall in the supply with an increase in the GDP of the country, but later showing a positive trend. However, in India, this upward trend is not realised implying that economic growth has not generated adequate jobs for

> women. According to the OECD report (2019), women in

minutes a day on unpaid work as against 52 minutes by men. The division emphasises that a woman's "appropriate" role may be dominated by patriarchal structures, societal expectations, and traditional bias, and are restricted to caretraces a U-shaped curve to givers and homemakers.

There is also a considerable gender-based wage gap of about INR 4,014. On average, men earn INR 12,048 per month while women earn INR 8,034, or about 33 per cent less than men.

This illustrates the stereotypes and gender biases that affect employment decisions, promotions, and wage negotiations. Recently, Indian policymakers and government have undertaken sev-India spend on average 352 eral initiatives and schemes



Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti

Bachao-Beti Padhao, and

the National Programme for

Education of Girls at

to raise the status of women with better access, eliminating barriers, and gender parity in the educational system.

Elementary Level (NPEGEL) countries in terms of gender aim to combat gender bias, guarantee inclusive education, and improve access to education for all.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) also introduced the "Udaan Scheme" in 2022 to encourage and facilitate female students to pursue higher education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields

This is relevant as the Indian global compatibility centres (GCCs) show only 6.7 per cent of women in executive roles and 5.1 per cent in deep tech organisations. According to the World Economic Forum's annual Gender Gap Report 2023, India ranks 127 out of 146

parity, an improvement of eight places from 2022. The underutilised talents and unrealised potential and skills of women are crucial for redeeming the benefits of demographic dividend. A comprehensive strategy including education beyond secondary schooling with a focus on skill development can design a long-term employment-oriented development strategy, acting as a catalyst in achieving goals as set under United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals

(Kajleen is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi University; Views are personal)



# Money 08

## IN BRIEF



### Gold jumps Rs 1,400 to Rs 79,300 per 10 gm

old prices jumped Rs 1,400 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to fresh buying by biewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 77,900 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver traded flat at Rs 93,000 per kg on Thursday. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity zoomed Rs 1,400 to Rs 78,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 77,500 per 10 grams on Wednesday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for December delivery bounced Rs 568, or 0.75 per cent, to trade at Rs 76,602 per 10 grams. "Gold prices surged higher as geopolitical tensions reignited safe-haven demand, with renewed concerns over nuclear risks in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "Reports of escalating tensions and global unease drove gold prices on comex," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities said.



#### **Ministry of Labour directs EPFO** to ensure UAN is active

he Ministry of Labour & Employment has directed the EPFO to ensure the Universal Account Number (UAN) of employees is active to avail the benefits of Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme. EPFO will involve their zonal and regional offices for effective outreach, the ministry said in a statement. "To ensure that maximum number of employers and employees benefit from the ELI Scheme, it has directed EPFO to work in a campaign mode with employers and ensure activation of UAN of employees," the Ministry said. UAN activation provides employees with seamless access to EPFO's comprehensive online services, enabling them to efficiently manage their Provident Fund (PF) accounts, view and download PF passbooks, submit online claims for withdrawals, advances, or transfers, update personal details, and track claims in real time. This allows employees 24/7 access to EPFO services from the comfort of their homes, eliminating the need for physical visits to EPFO offices

## **Price stability bedrock for** sustained growth: RBI Guv

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024

#### PNS MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said price stability acts as a bedrock for sustained growth, and the central bank's endeavour is to bring down retail inflation to 4 per cent on a durable basis.

Speaking on 'Balancing Inflation and Growth: The Cardinal Principle of Monetary Policy', he said resilient growth has given the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) the space to focus on inflation to ensure its durable descent

to the 4 per cent target. "A stable inflation or price stability is in the best interest of people and the economy. It

It was, therefore, emphaacts as a bedrock for sustained sised that it was a pause and growth, enhances the purnot a pivot. This was to ensure chasing power of people and that past rate actions were provides a stable environment transmitted fully to the broadfor investment," he said. er economy, he said. The focus was on anchoring

He was addressing a highlevel policy conference of ceninflation expectations by tral banks from the Global emphasising our firm commitment to re-align inflation South here. The Governor said when

with the target, he said. "We also categorically said the RBI took a pause on the policy rate in April 2023 after that it is not enough to be



within the tolerance band and raising it by 250 basis points, it was important to anchor that our job is not finished market expectations from until we reach the target of 4 per cent on a durable basis," running ahead or front running the central bank. the Governor added.

He further said, while the global economy has managed to hold its ground in the highly stormy weather of the last few years, clouds of uncertainties still loom on the horizon.

Policymaking in this environment of heightened uncertainty is akin to driving a car through a foggy path ridden with speed bumps. These are conditions which will test the

A stable inflation or price stability is in the best interest of people and the economy. It acts as a bedrock for sustained growth, enhances the purchasing power of people and provides a stable environment for investment

driver's patience and skill. Historical regularities are looking improbable, and policymakers are being put to test. When the history of our times is written, the experiences and learnings of the last few years will, in all probability, be a turning point in the evolution of central banking, Das said

For the countries of the Global South, maintaining overall stability which includes sustained growth, price stability and financial stability continues to be a daunting challenge, he emphasised.

## **CEA** asks India Inc not to seek protective cover of weak currency

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Thursday advised India Inc not to seek protective cover of weak currency as it is not a substitute for productivity and investment in research and development. A weak currency

can be good for exporters, making their products relatively less expensive for buyers abroad. Nageswaran

further said the reliance on weak currency should not be instrumental to boosting exports, "if anything, it should

be part of the policy arsenal to be deployed contextually, but not as a substitute for productivity, investment in R&D and quality, but as a complement at best'

"We should not be thinking about in terms of the transformation of competitiveness, which is to continuously expect the weak currency to bail us,"

Sensex, Nifty tumble amid

broad-based selloff

Adani group stocks nosedive

he said at an event organised by the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID). Noting that China relied on weaker currency but it was guided by domestic productivity leaps in the first decade and also in the last decade of the new millennium. "In many other developing

countries, including India, weak exchange rate actually has become a protective cover for lack of productivity. "It was used to hide our inefficiencies. That should not be the case," Nages

waran said.

He pointed out that China's exchange rate policy accentuated the competitiveness that its domestic productivity gains were already conferring on its exports.

"But, we usually in the past has tended to shield, take cover behind the weaker exchange rate," the CEA said, adding that it should not continue.

## Sebi abolishes 1% security deposit in public issues

SEA

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday abolished the requirement of a mandatory security deposit with the exchanges before a public issue in a bid to facilitate ease of doing business for issuer companies.

The move will be applicable with immediate effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular. Before this,

any company that is looking to launch a public issue of equity

shares has to deposit with the stock exchanges an amount equal to 1 per cent of the issue size. The deposit was returned to the company after the pub-lic issue. "In order to facilitate ease of doing business to issuer company, the requirement to deposit 1 per cent of the issue or su scription to

Requirements) Regulations, 2018 (ICDR Regulations) has been dispensed with," Sebi said.

ment of 1 per cent

security deposit

for public/rights

In February, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) floated a consultation

paper proposing that the requirement of 1 per cent security deposit for public or rights issues should be done away with. Explaining the rationale behind the move, the regulator had stated that the require-

was put in place issues so that an issuer resolves investor complaints relating to lion, Tata Power said.

#### Tata Power, ADB ink pact for key energy projects

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Tata Power on Thursday said it has signed an initial pact with Asian Development Bank (ADB) to evaluate financing worth USD 4.25 billion for its several strategic projects. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with ADB at Baku, Azerbaijan, Tata Power said in a statement.

"The MoU has been signed evaluate financing for its several strategic projects aimed at enhancing India's power infrastructure and promoting renewable and clean energy," it said. The total estimated project cost is about USD 4.25 bil-

The MoU outlines the evaluation of financing for several key ongoing projects such as the 966-MW solar wind hybrid project and pumped hydro storage project and other projects in the pipeline around n decarboni rgy tran sation, and battery storage as well as ongoing financing for capex towards strengthening the distribution networks.

PNS MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled on Thursday amid a sharp fall in Adani group stocks after billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani was charged in the US for alleged bribery and fraud. Besides, relentless foreign fund outflows and weak trends

in Asian and European peers also dragged benchmark indices lower. The BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 422.59 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 77,155.79. During the day, it lost 775.65 points or 0.99 per cent to 76,802.73.

As many as 2,736 stocks declined, while 1,237 advanced and 92 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSF



the Russia-Ukraine conflict and heightened nuclear concerns. Additionally, the fresh Adani case with the US DoJ added to the market's woes.

"Although there were signs of a slowdown in FII selling, it surged again, adversely affecting market sentiment, particularly financials sector. We expect an improvement in the

Adani was charged by US prosecutors over his role in an alleged years-long scheme to pay USD 265 million bribes to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts. All other Adani group stocks, including Ădani

pack, Adani Ports tumbled

over 13 per cent after Gautam

## PRESS CONFERENCE TION WORKING GROU

**7TH MARCH** RITSAR, F



#### Sanjay Murthy takes over as **Comptroller and Auditor General**

Sanjay Murthy, former higher education secretary, on Thursday took charge as the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). He belongs to Indian Administrative Service of Himachal Pradesh cadre (1989 batch). Murthy succeeds Girish Chandra Murmu, who demitted office on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, Murthy was sworn in as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India by President Droupadi Murmu at a function in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Prior to this, Murthy was Secretary, Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education. He has also served as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and CEO. National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Murthy was named the new CAG by the Centre on Monday. Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, among others, were present at the oath-taking ceremony.

the public with the designated stock exchange by the issuer company under... Sebi (Issue of Capital and Disclosure

PNS NEW DELHI

Thursday.

The initial public offer of NTPC

Green Energy Ltd, the renew-

able energy arm of NTPC, got subscribed 93 per cent on the

second day of bidding on

for 54,96,35,370 shares against

59,31,67,575 shares on offer, as

per NSE data. The category for

Retail Individual Investors

(RIIs) attracted 2.38 times sub-

scription while the Oualified

Institutional Buyers (QIBs) part

got subscribed 75 per cent. The

portion for non-institutional

investors received 34 per cent subscription. NTPC Green Energy has mobilised Rs 3,960

crore from anchor investors.

The Rs 10,000-crore initial

share sale is entirely a fresh

issuance of equity shares with

no offer-for-sale (OFS) compo-

The share sale received bids

egarding refund of application money, non-dispatch of physical certificates does not arise, it had added

or con

the transaction such as for

refund of application money, allotment of securities and dis-

patch of certificates. However,

considering various reforms

and present framework for

public or rights issues, the con-

cerns relating to post-issue

168.60 points or 0.72 per cent to 23,349.90. "The domestic market faced renewed pressure due to escalating tensions in

trend when g lobal & domestic political issues stabilise," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. From the 30-share Sensex cent

Entern Energy Solutions, Adani Ports and Adani Green Energy, fell sharply by up to nearly 23 per

is they are trying to (figure out) state-wise demand allo-

cation, considering the den-

sity of the vehicles in differ-

ent localities in states and

#### RBI, Maldives Authority sign pact NTPC Green IPO gets subscribed to promote use of local currencies 93 pc on Day 2

#### PNS MUMBAI

The RBI and the Maldives Monetary Authority on Thursday signed an agreement here for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies -- the Indian Rupee and the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) for cross-border transactions.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Governor of Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das and Governor of Maldives Monetary Authority Ahmed Munawar

"The MoU encourages the use of INR and MVR in current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions and any other economic and financial transactions as agreed upon by both countries," the RBI said in a statement.



This framework would enable exporters and said.

market. Use of local currencies

would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions, the RBI added.

key milestone in strengthening bilateral cooperation between RBI and MMA," it

Use of local currencies in bilateral transactions will eventually contribute to promoting trade between India and Maldives as well as deepen financial integration and strengthen the economic relations between India and Maldives, India's central bank said.

## India needs up to USD 30 bn investment in EV charging infra: IESA

#### PNS 📕 NEW DELHI

Dash said.

Industry body IESA said on Thursday that India needs to invest USD 20-30 billion in EV charging infrastructure to double the segment's growth rate

Sharing his estimates, Dash said the EV charging infra-

structure segment is growing

at a rate of 25-30 per cent

To double this growth, investments worth USD 20-

30 billion would be required,

he said at the 'IESA India EV

Fast Charging Summit' in

the national capital. On PM

E-Drive Scheme, Dash said

"We (industry) all are waiting

for the scheme to be floated.

A few of the things the gov-

ernment is considering

currently in India.

It will give a boost to the EV Charging space and adoption of EVs in the coun-It is a very niche segment which has just started picktry, Dash said. ing up in the country, İndia Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) President Debi Prasad In September, the Union

cities.

Cabinet approved the PM Electric Drive Revolution In Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme with an outlay of Rs 10,900 crore for two years to boost adoption of electric vehicles in India, replacing the flagship FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) programme that ran for nine years till March. The scheme will support 24.79 lakh electric twowheelers, 3.16 lakh e-three wheelers, and 14,028 e-buses. The PM E-DRIVE scheme will also support 88,500 charging sites.



#### PNS KOLKATA

Amid ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Israel is hoping that the number of Indian tourists will reach 10,000 in 2024 and is planning to launch an e-visa programme for the Indian market early next year to encourage travel to the West Asian country, an official said on Thursday.

According to the Israel Ministry of Tourism (IMOT) India Director of Marketing,

#### Amruta Bangera, around 8,500 Indian tourists visited the West

Asian country till October this year.

"In 2018, the country hosted 70,800 Indian visitors, marking a record, Although the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global travel, Indian arrivals began recovering in 2022, reaching 30,900 despite minimal promotional cam-

paigns. The momentum continued in 2023 with 41,800 Indian visitors. In 2024, 8,500 od,



**PLANS E-VISA FACILITY** 

Indians travelled to Israel dur-"We hope that by the end of this year, the number of Indian ing the January-October perishe told PTI. tourists travelling to Israel will

Speaking about the impact of the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, which has kept West Asia on edge, Bangera claimed, Israel is safe for tourists, and the conflict is confined to the bordering areas, where tourists

are not allowed to venture." 'Yes, the conflict and the news emanating from the region have impacted tourist

inflow. But we hope the situation will improve next year," she said

The IMOT is optimistic about the Indian market's potential and is actively engaging with Indian travel agencies to promote Israel as a preferred tourist destination, she said.

"We are planning to launch an e-visa programme early next year to attract more tourists from India," she said.

Bangera stated that despite ongoing geopolitical challenges in the Middle East, Israel has witnessed a steady recovery in global tourism.

before outing the full scheme



"This collaboration marks a

importers to invoice and settle in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of trading in the INR-MVR pair in foreign exchange



# what's brewing?

## **AAMIR KHAN'S WISDOM GUIDES SOHUM SHAH'S CAREER**



Sohum Shah, an actor, entrepreneur and founder of Sohum Shah Filme her clear and period comes to filmmaking. "Make one film, but do it with all your heart," he says, reflecting on a lesson he learned from none other than Aamir Khan. For Sohum, passion and dedication are far more important than focusing solely on commercial success. This belief has guided him in his journey both as an actor and a producer.

As a producer, Sohum's work on Tumbbad, a fantasy folklore film, stands as a prime example of his commitment to heartfelt cinema. Released in 2018, *Tumbbad* quickly earned a cult following due to its unique narrative and haunting visuals. However, the film's success didn't end iourney there. In 2024, it was re-released to remarkable success, earning three times its original box office earnings and crossing Rs 50 crores. This made *Tumbbad* the highest-grossing re-release in Indian cinema, a testament to its lasting impact. Sohum's approach to filmmaking is all about creating stories that resonate with audiences and stir emotions. "I don't have any special topics in mind that I want to focus on.

with that person," he shares, underlining that it's the story, not the trends, that matters most.

By focusing on creating films with passion and purpose, Sohum Shah is proving that success is about more than just numbersit's about making films that leave a lasting impact on the audience. much like the lessons he's learned from Aamir Khan. Sohum's next big projects are Tumbbad 2, which promises to continue the beloved saga, and Crazxy, a film from Sohum Shah Films slated for release on March 7, 2025. The motion poster for *Crazxy* has already created excitement and fans are eagerly anticipating the next chapter in Sohum's filmmaking

## Baby John: Diljit Dosanjh & Dhee collab's Nain Matakka out on November 25

he buzz surrounding Baby John has been electrifying ever since the first announcement and teaser, and now the excitement intensifies as the makers are all set to unveil the first song - Nain Matakka - releasing on November 25, 2024 Produced by Murad Khetani, Priya Atlee and Jyoti Deshpande, Nain Matakka promises to be the ultimate

dance anthem. It's the first time these two global

sensations

Diliit

## **MILEY CYRUS ANNOUNCES 'CAPTIVATING AND CHIC' VISUAL ALBUM**

ans of Miley Cyrus can look forward to both new music and accompanying visual art from her. Miley talked to Harper's Bazaar for their December 24/January 25 Art Issue spotlight and, in the main feature, she disclosed that she is creating a "visual album" to be released next year. She described her project to the magazine as "captivating and chic." The vocalist of Flowers also mentioned that the album is designed to convey some elements of twisted culture through music. The project is inspired by Pink Floyd's The Wall, a psychedelic film from 1982 that combines live-action and animation, adapted from the iconic album with the same title. Miley informed Bazaar that she wanted to create a version of The Wall with a more stylish wardrobe and increased glamour in order to fully represent the pop culture aspect. Panos Cosmatos, who directed one of her all-time favorite movies, 2018's Mandy featuring Nicolas Cage, is assisting Miley with the project. Cosmatos also took part in Bazaar's Cyrus edition, where he talked about her newest musical project being more experimental than any of her previous work as a Grammy winner. In her discussion with the media, Cyrus pointed out that the visual elements of her forthcoming album are influencing the music - whether the tracks are themed around ruin, heartache, or mortality. She assured her fans that the stunning and surreal visuals will be showcased in a lovely manner, as she thinks that even the darkest moments in one's life hold an element of beauty.

### **Nushrratt Bharuccha teases** emotional new project

N ushrratt Bharuccha continues to win hearts with her acting prowess, charm and elegance. This year, the actress achieved a personal milestone by purchasing a car and seeking blessings at Siddhivinayak Temple. Not long ago, her visit to the T-Series office sparked curiosity among fans, leaving them speculating about an exciting new project. In a delightful surprise, Nushrratt shared a series of intriguing pictures on social media, hinting at a project she holds close to her heart. While the details remain tightly under wraps, her heartfelt caption suggests an emotional connection to this endeavor. The pictures offered fans a sneak peek into her world-a vanity van bearing her name, glimpses of a regal set and a candid shot from her makeup room, building anticipation for what's to come. Meanwhile, on the work front, Nushrratt Bharuccha is gearing up to captivate audiences with her performance in the much-awaited Chhori 2.

FUN



Dosanjh and Dheekshitha Venkadeshan, aka Dhee have collaborated for the song in the film which is penned by Irshad Kamil and the music is by S. Thaman. Nain Matakka track is a foot-tapping, peppy number that showcases the sizzling on-screen chemistry between Varun Dhawan and Keerthy Suresh. The magic of Diljit's voice combined with an electrifying beat, is sure to elevate this song to instant hit status! Dhee too adds her magic like no another. She is one of the most streamed Australian singer and composer.

The film's teaser has already given us a glimpse of the gripping action and high-octane entertainment awaiting audiences and the music will only add to the excitement. Starring Varun Dhawan, Jackie Shroff, Wamiqa Gabbi and marking the highly anticipated Hindi debut of Keerthy Suresh, Baby John is a true blockbuster in the making. Presented by Jio Studios in association with Atlee and Cine1 Studios, Baby John is a production of A for Apple Studios and Cine1 Studios and releases on December 25, 2024

## Rahul Dholakia's Agni celebrates firefighters' valour & sacrifice

he trailer of a never-before-told story about firefighters in Hindi cinema, Agni is now out, which offers cinematic salute to the fearless spirit, honour and sacrifices of firefighters. Directed and written by National Awardwinning filmmaker Rahul Dholakia the Excel Entertainment production features Pratik Gandhi and Divyenndu in lead roles with

Saiyami Kher, Sai Tamhankar, Jitendra Joshi, Udit Arora and Kabir Shah in pivotal roles. The much-anticipated film is set to premiere exclusively on Prime Video on December 6. With Agni, director Rahul Dholakia is thrilled to bring a story to life that not only

celebrates the bravery of our firefighters but also delves into their emotional journeys. He further said, "Firefighters are real-life heroes who go beyond battling fires-they rescue lives, respond to disasters and take on countless high-risk challenges with unwavering dedication. Their courage often puts them in challenging and dangerous situations, sometimes intensified by our own actions. This story is a tribute to their sacrifice, loyalty and resilience. and I hope it inspires



audiences to recognise and appreciate these selfless protectors in our society." Meanwhile, Agni holds a special place in actor Pratik Gandhi's heart because he feels, "Agni is not just a film; it's a tribute to the courage of firefighters-the unsung heroes of our society. Delving into the emotional and physical challenges these brave souls face has been a transformative experience for me as an actor in a once-in-a-lifetime role. It's an honour to portray a character that reflects such resilience and dedication and I can't wait to share this gripping journey with audiences who are seeking impactful stories that celebrate human fortitude." After Divyenndu's incredible journey, he has had with *Mirzapur; Agni,* releasing on the streaming platform feels like a homecoming. The project shows him portraying a cop, diving into the intense world of firefighters and the real-life heroes who protect us in this unique film. "This fictional film represents more than just an engaging story, but is something meaningful for me to be a part of. I consider this as a significant shift in my career as I take on a character to showcase a hero's personal sacrifices. beyond just their uniforms. It has enabled me to explore new depths of my craft that are raw and emotional, and I believe Agni will deeply resonate with audiences worldwide as it did with me.

## Selena Gomez on her 'safest' relationship yet with **Benny Blanco**

Selena Gomez is hopeful about what lies ahead in her relationship with Benny Blanco. The actress featured on the upcoming The Hollywood Reporter cover discussed her relationship in her interview with the magazine. "This is the safest I've ever felt in one and I see a future with this person," she says about Blanco who was also featured in PEOPLE's 2024 Sexiest Man Alive issue. The Only Murders in the Building actress discussed how she's been coordinating with the paparazzi to provide privacy to her personal life. "When you put a little bit out there, people are not as hungry to hunt you down," she said. However, she clarified that most of her relationships don't have a peephole in them. The Fetish singer and the record producer officially acknowledged their relationship in December 2023. Gomez approved of various fan posts about Blanco and wrote. "He is everything to me in my heart." in a comment on one of them

#### **ARCHIE**







#### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**



#### GARFIELD







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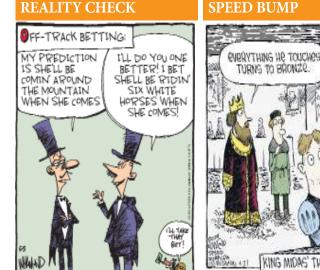


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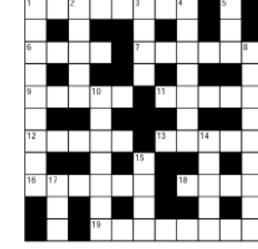
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DIFFICULTY RATING: \*\*\*

## 71 avawala 👩 facebook.com/ dailypioneer Friday November 22, 2024 **ANKITA CHHETRI'S CAPRI ADVENTURE IN A NUTSHELL!**

**AARTI SREENATH** aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

icture this: You're on a sun-drenched sland surrounded by cliffs that seem to kiss the sky and waters so turquoise they practically sparkle. This was Capri, a destination so enchanting it could make even the most seasoned traveler pause and take a deep, content-ed breath. Ankita Chhetri recalls, "Capri was pure magic! The cliffs, turquoise waters and the Blue Grotto were incredible, but what I loved most was soaking up the island's unique vibe. Every view was mesmerising."

But Capri isn't just about postcard-perfect landscapes. It's the heartbeat of its culture that capti-vates every visitor. she shares, "The Italian charm was absolutely captivating! From artisans handcrafting leather sandals to colourful ceramics on every corner and traditional music spilling out into the streets, there's a calm, beautiful rhythm of life here that makes you want to slow down and savour it all."

And speaking of savoring, let's talk food! Capri's culinary delights aren't just meals; they're experiences. "The food was divine! I fell in love with fresh seafood pasta and, of course, their famous Limoncello. Every meal felt like a celebration of flavours," she beams.

Of course, no trip to Capri is complete without connecting with the locals and Aditi was welcomed with open arms. "The locals were incredibly warm. Our boat tour

**Ankita Chhetri recounts** her whirlwind romance with the enchanting island of Capri, where crystalclear waters, picturesque landscapes and la dolce vita left her spellbound, in an exclusive chat with The Pioneer.

Sunkissed and smitten,

guide was especially sweet. He went beyond just showing us around, con-stantly checking to ensure everyone was safe and having fun," she recalls, remembering the genuine hospitality that turned a simple boat ride into an unforgettable experience.

Speaking of boat rides, let's dive into the highlight of the trip: sail-ing around the island. She vividly recalls the moment: "Sailing recalls the moment: 'Sailing around Capri was like a dream! Drifting through the crystal-clear waters with cliffs towering above—honestly, it's an absolute must-do!" Beyond Capri, though, lies her hometown, Hamiltonganj in West Bengal. "It's so underrated and unique. Nestled near the India-Bhutan border, it's got perfect weather, amazing food, mountains and pristine rivers. It's my personal slice of paradise.

When it comes to lodging, her stay in Praiano, just 15 minutes from Positano, was nothing short of magical. "We stayed in an Airbnb with stunning coastal views—a perfect base for exploring the Amalfi Coast," she describes, the charm of the place still fresh in their mind. But when the pressures of work start to mount, she has a favorite retreat to recharge: "Lonavala! It's close to Mumbai and offers the perfect mix of windy weather, nature, and relax-ation. It's my quick getaway to

find peace." However, not all travels are without their hiccups. She remembers a particularly nerve-wracking moment in Capri: "My sister and I almost missed the last boat from



Capri to Positano! We panicked, shouted, and waved at the departing boat. Miraculously, it came back for us. Those 15 minutes of panic were nerve-wracking, but oh-so-memorable!"

But Capri wasn't just about the sights and adventures—it was also about slowing down and embracing the present. "The beauty of Capri made me slow down and appreciate the Capit made me slow down and appreciate the small moments—the waves, the breeze. Watching the sunset from Anacapri felt like time stood still." Islands, it seems, have a special way of disconnecting you from the world and reconnecting you with yourself. Capri had that serene timeless quality that left her had that serene, timeless quality that left her feeling grounded and free.

As for capturing the experience, Ankita

keeps a detailed journal, taking photos and videos to relive the journey. "Capri and Amalfi felt like stepping into a painting. I'll treasure those memories forever," they reflect, a nostalgic smile crossing their face.

Generation Follow us on @TheDailyPioneer

And when it comes to dream travel compan-ions, she has the perfect pick. "I'd love to travel with Anam! Her energy is contagious and we've known each other for years. It would be a fun, crazy adventure!"

Whether it's sailing the crystal waters, tasting the freshest pasta, or simply watching a sunset from an idyllic island, Capri left an indelible mark on her. And who knows? Maybe they'll take Anam along next time, and Capri will get even more adventurous.



Building healthy boundaries by protecting

## **NDING MELOMANIA** WITH HIS 'MADHUR-IC' MUSIC

## your emotional space

B uilding healthy boundaries is essential for protecting your emotional space and ensuring that you maintain well-being in your that you maintain well-being in your relationships and daily life. Boundaries serve as the invisible lines that define where one person ends and another begins, allowing for personal space and autonomy. Establishing and maintaining these boundaries is crucial for emotional health, as they help prevent feelings of overwhelm, resentment and burnout. Here's a guide on how to effectively build healthy boundaries:

#### **UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES**

Boundaries can be physical, emotional, mental, or time-based. Physical boundaries pertain to personal space and physical touch. Emotional



boundaries involve separating your feelings from those of others, while mental boundaries relate to thoughts and beliefs. Time boundaries help manage how much time you devote to others versus yourself. Understanding these categories is essential for recognising where you need to establish limits.

Self-awareness: The first step in building healthy boundaries is self-awareness. Reflect on your needs, feelings and limits. What situations or interactions drain you emotionally? Identifying these triggers can help you understand where to set boundaries. Journaling your thoughts or discussing them with a trusted friend or therapist can provide clarity on your emotional space and help articulate vour needs

#### **IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH** • Gives you clarity:

When you set boundaries in your professional, personal and love life, it helps you give you clarity; you don't let other people disturb your mental peace for their sake or behaviour. It gives you clarity, keeps you focused and protects your mental health.

#### • Promotes self-growth:

When you set boundaries in your life, you don't allow others to cross the boundary; it helps you to make choices that support your goals and give you a sense of independence. It can also provide you with the freedom to grow on your terms; you don't let others interfere with your personal development.

#### • Maintains healthy relationships:

Evervone has a habit of oversharing and allowing other people to pass comments and judgments on their lives, but when we set healthy boundaries, it helps to strengthen our relationship. Long-lasting relationships are built on mutual respect; when you set boundaries, it presents misunderstandings, burnout and resentments. Boundaries help us connect with others without losing sight of our own needs, which leads to healthier relationships.

#### Be clear and assertive:

Once you have identified your boundaries, communicate them clearly and assertively. Use "I" statements to express your feelings and needs without sounding accusatory. For example,

saying "I feel overwhelmed when I have to respond to messages immediately; I need some time to process before replying" conveys your needs while minimising defensiveness from others.

#### **CONSISTENCY IS KEY**

After establishing your boundaries, it's essential to remain consistent. People may test your limits, especially if they are used to a more permissive dynamic. Stay firm in your decisions and gently remind others of your boundaries when necessary. Consistency reinforces the importance of your emotional space and shows that you value your well-being.

(The author, Archana Singhal, is a counsellor, family therapist and founder of Mindwell Counsel in Delhi.)

With a voice that has captured the hearts of millions, Madhur Sharma has been making waves in the Indian music scene with his unique blend of classical and contemporary styles. In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, rising music sensation Madhur Sharma opens up about his musical journey, his inspirations, his latest EP **Reversion and more** 

#### **TEJAL SINHA** tejal.sinha30@gmail.com



captured the hearts of

music lovers with his

the Indian music scene, known for his soulful and melodious voice. This talented singer has

adhur Sharma is a rising star in

unique blend of classical and contemporary styles. With a strong foundation in Indian classical music, Madhur has released several popular singles and albums that showcase his vocal range and emotional depth. His notable releases include singles like *Kali* Kali Zulfon Ke, Ek Dafa Tum Milo, Mere Baad Kisko Sataoge (Lo-Fi), Kehna Galat Galat (Lo-Fi), Tere Jeya Hor Disda and Woh Mulaqat, among many more.

Madhur's music often explores themes of love, longing and self-discovery, resonating with listeners across genres. His dedication to his craft and passion for music have

earned him a growing fan base and critical acclaim, marking him

as an exciting emerging talent in the Indian music industry. As we sat down to chat, Madhur shared with us the story of how his musical journey began. "My dad has been a huge influence on me. Since I was a kid, he would play all kinds of inductive of the since I was a kid, he would play all kinds of music for me and encouraged me to try new things." His time in a boarding school also played a significant role in shaping his passion for music. "We didn't have much to do in terms of entertainment, so I would spend most of my free time in the music room," he reminisced.

Sharma's latest EP, *Reversion*, is a proof to his innovative spirit. "I wanted to create something that would push the boundaries of traditional music," he explained. The EP is a beautiful blend of different genres, with each track offering something unique. Madhur's goal was to create music that would resonate with people across genres and he's thrilled with the response so far. When it comes to songwriting, he is humble about his abilities. "I'm actually very weak when it comes to writing songs," he laughed. However, he's fortunate to have collaborated with talented writers and composers who share his vision. Madhur's love for the Punjabi language is evident in his music and he's particu-larly fond of the song *Ranjhana Mera* from his latest EP.

As we wrapped up our conversation, he spoke about his experience performing live. "There's something special about connecting with your audience in per-son," he said. His Indian tour, which began in Hyderabad, has been a huge success, with audiences loving his unique blend of Bollywood and Sufi music. Madhur's love for Hyderabad is evident and he's grateful to have had the opportunity to perform there. "The city has a unique energy that's hard to find anywhere else," he said.

As Madhur Sharma looks to the future, he's excited to announce a new chapter in his musical journey. "After two back-to-back albums, I'm planning to release individual tracks," he shares. The first song, titled *Har Subah*, is a motivational track that's very close to his heart. "I've always wanted to create a song that motivates people to start their day on a positive note," he explains. Drawing from his own personal experiences, Madhur wrote *Har Subah* during a difficult time when he lost his parents. "Some songs really helped me get through that phase and now I want to pay it forward with my own music," he says. The title of his upcoming song encapsulates the song's message: to wake up each morning with a fresh perspective, leaving the past behind

## sports 11



#### PTI PFRTH

ustralian captain Pat A Cummins expects the B or d er - G a v a s k a r Trophy against arch-foes India to be more "attritional" as the two heavyweights of world cricket spar over five Test matches instead of the

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024

traditional four games. And given the enormity of the series, Cummins believes players would not have the time to be distracted by the IPL auction that would take place in Jeddah on Sunday, the third day of the match. The blockbuster series will be

a survival of the fittest as Australia look to avenge successive losses on home soil when they go head-to-head from Friday. Border-Gavaskar

'The Trophy has always been very tight every series, five Testmatch series gets really attritional, it's a big one really," Cummins said at the pre-match press conference here on Thursday

Australia will be without their assistant coach Daniel Vettori, who was granted permission to leave the Perth Test and be at the two-day auction with his IPL franchise SunRisers Hvderabad.

Yeah, I think he is there in think so. Most of these guys the auction. I don't think so (it will be a distraction). Dan has auctions before. They know

TOYOTA DRERMI TEST they can't really do anything. pressure on the home team, flown over there, but he has especially after it lost the last

been here for the whole prep. Done all the meetings, done all the chats, watching it. We came to know that anyway," Cummins said. So, for the players, I don't

ne pioneer

The Australia captain admitted there will be

"You are a sitting duck and seeing whether you get selected or not. It doesn't... including the two humiliating Doesn't make a difference to how we go about the first two days. It is not a distraction as far as I can see it," he added.

when you are playing at India are a verv home. talented side and it will be a good challenge. But we are

reverses on own soil.

"There will always be pressure

not looking too far ahead," Cummins said. four Test series against India,

"It would be great to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. India are a great side but we are well prepared."

The leading pacer also said said that newcomer Nathan McSweeney should not try to imitate David Warner, the

legendary opener who retired from international cricket

"He should play his natural game. He shouldn't try to imitate David Warner. That's not his game. As long as he makes the bowlers bowl again and again, that's his game," Cummins said of the man who is going to be handed his Test debut at Optus Stadium. Asked about India's talented all-rounder Nitish Reddy, Cummins said they shared the dressing room for IPL franchise SunRisers Hyderabad and praised the

21-year-old. "He is and impressive youngster. Didn't bowl much for SRH. He can swing the ball and is a really talented kid."

Interestingly, both Australia and India will be led by fast bowling captains, a rarity in international cricket. While Cummins will lead Australia, Jasprit Bumrah will be in charge of the Indian team as regular skipper Rohit Sharma is currently on a paternity leave.

"It should happen more (pacers leading teams)," Cummins said. In the past four series between the two teams, India have won on all four occasions, including back-to-back away Test series wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21.



## We are not carrying baggage from New Zealand series, says Jasprit Bumrah

PTI 📕 PERTH

ndia's stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah on Thursday insisted that his team is not carrying any baggage from the unprecedented 0-3 defeat at home against New Zealand as it embarks on a challenging Test series against fierce rivals against rivals Australia.

The five-match Test series starts here on Friday.

Mata has been a big name in

international soccer for years.

He won club honors in

England, Spain, Turkey and

Japan, and was a key player in the golden era of the Spanish

men's national team which won the 2010 World Cup and

the 2012 UEFA European

Championship. A product of

Real Madrid's youth academy,

Mata began his professiona

"When you win you start playing XI and you will get from zero but when you lose, to know tomorrow morning before the start of the match," the skipper said. then also you also start from zero. We are not carrying any

#### Pujara backs KL Rahul at No. 3, Spanish star Juan Mata joins ownership group believes Jaiswal can do a Warner of MLS expansion franchise San Diego FC



PTI 📕 PERTH

heteshwar Pujara, who knows a thing Cor two about grinding the Australian attack in their den, on Thursday backed KL Rahul to bat at the vital number three slot in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, and said the swashbuckling Yashasvi Jaiswa

"His role would be one of the most important ones. He can play a role similar to what David Warner used to do for the Australian team. "Being an opener, he holds the key. He's mentally tough. He loves batting, hits a number of balls. He has a long way to go across the formats Pujara said the youngsters must play with self-confidence and without the fear of failure. 'I will tell them the first battle is a mental battle. Self-confidence and belief are needed to make runs in these conditions. When there is pace and bounce, there is a chance of the ball hitting the body. You have to come out of that fear," Pujara said.

and play according to the situation. Be in the present moment," he said.

Kohli needs a start

Virat Kohli may be going through a lean patch but Pujara believes his past success in Australia will help him to turn things around.

around. "There is a lot of expectation of him. The number of matches he's playing and the athlete Virat is, he doesn't get enough breaks in between. That is why sometimes, when you're not getting enough breaks, your body and confidence go down a bit. That's normal. "He has got some break. He's at a place where he likes to compete. If someone is having a go at him he would like to give having a go at him, he would like to give it back to the bowlers -- that's how he

started his journey. "He has set high standards for himself. He has that awareness. He has been a leader and is probably the best in the circuit. He's aware of what's expected of him and how many runs he has to make." Under Kohli's captaincy on the 2017-18 tour of Australia. Pujara aggregated over 500 runs and played a significant role in India's historic Test series triumph. 'I'm confident that once he gets going, he needs to spend some time in the game. He's capable of doing all things. Always leading from the front, it's about getting a 50-60-70. If he gets a hundred, then he will have a great series ahead," Pujara said of Kohli. "In every match, he is motivated, whatever the format. Definitely, he has worked on it. It's about getting that start and spending time at the crease." Pant 2.0 a lot smarter Rishabh Pant has been the architect of their epic triumph in the 2020-21 series, and the wicketkeeper-batter has returned after surviving a horrific car accident two years ago. Pujara feels the left-hander is a lot smarter now and will be one to watch out for. Australian bowlers struggle a bit to bowl to lefties. There's a different kind of enjoyment watching him. He's an attacking player who puts pressure on the bowlers. It becomes easy for me to play my natural game as they try to stop

#### AP SAN DIEGO

 $S_{\mathrm{champion}}^{\mathrm{panish}}$  star and World Cup joined the expansion San Diego FC's ownership group, making him the first active international soccer player to hold an ownership stake in Major League Soccer. Mata joins David Beckham as

only the second international player to be involved in MLS ownership. "Joining San Diego FC as a

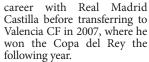
partner is an exciting opportunity to help build something truly special in a city and league that are incredible experiencing incredible growth," Mata said in a statement.

that added the commitment to the community by both the club and the Right to Dream



Academy "aligns perfectly with my own values. I look forward to contributing my experience and passion for the game and working alongside everyone here to build a club that inspires both on and off the pitch.

He has been with the Western Sydney Wanderers of the Australian A-League since September



baggage from India. Yes, we

have our learnings from New

Zealand series but those

were different conditions

and our results here have

been different," said Bumrah,

who is leading in the opening Test in the absence of Rohit Sharma, who is on

paternity leave. Bumrah also said that the

team has finalised its playing

XI although he will reveal it

We have finalised our

only at the toss.

Mata signed with Chelsea FC in 2011, where he was pivotal in helping the London club capture the UEFA Champions League, FA Cup, and UEFA Europa League titles, earning Chelsea's Player of the Year honors twice in that span.

He joined Manchester United in 2014, winning the FA Cup, Europa League and EFL Cup in nine seasons. He joined Turkish side Galatasaray in 2022, where he celebrated his first league title, before signing with Japan's Vissel Kobe in 2023, where he won the league again. Mata founded the Common Goal initiative, pledging 1 per cent of his salary to socia causes

is capable of doing what David Warner did in his prime.

The five-match Test series begins here on Friday.

"I don't know the batting order. I would prefer him (Rahul) at No. 3 because he has the experience to bat there," Pujara said in Star Sports press room.

Rahul, however, is expected to open with youngster Yashasvi Jaiswal, while Karnataka's Devdutt Padikkal is being considered for No. 3 to maintain a leftright combination.

"It seems the team is preferring Devdutt (Padikkal) at No. 3 for the left-right combination. He has batted at 5-6 and in the middle order. It will be easier to bat at No. 3 than opening. If he can bat at No. 3, it will be good."

Pujara, currently sidelined from the Test set-up, praised Jaiswal and compared his batting with that of Australian great David Warner.

"One of the most talented cricketers India has produced.... I'm very confident that going forward, he has a lot to prove. I know he will play a key role in this series if we have to win.

On tackling short-pitch deliveries in Australian conditions, Pujara said the batters will have to identify the deliveries they should leave.

"As a batter, you need to understand your strengths. We often end up playing hook shots we aren't quite capable of. On Indian pitches, most short-pitched deliveries are below shoulder level. But in Australia, they're often above shoulder height.

"As a batter, you need to identify which balls to leave and which to play. Those below the shoulders are the ones you can pull, but you need to be in control of the shot. Sometimes you leave the ball, and sometimes you pull. You can't have a set rule -- you just need to look at the ball

## Liga Deportiva Alajuelense threatens FIFA with legal action in bid for spot at Club World Cup

AP SAN JOSE

He

The winningest team in Costa Rica is asking FIFA for a spot in next summer's Club World Cup and is willing to take legal action if denied. Liga Deportiva Alajuelense, which has won 30 league titles, wants FIFA to enforce the rule that forbids clubs from the same ownership to participate in the tournament.

"The claim is based on the principles of eligibility set in the rules of the tournament," the club said in a press release. Team spokesman Marco Vazquez noted that Mexican clubs Leon and Pachuca belong to the same owner, Jesus Martinez, of Grupo Pachuca.

"Those are the rules that FIFA established - there cannot be multi-ownership,"



Vazquez said Wednesday. "There are two Mexican clubs from the same owner and the rulebook is clear. What we are asking is to review what FIFA itself established." The FIFA-run competition has been expanded from seven teams to 32 and will be staged in the United States from June to July next year. "We hired a law firm in Spain, and they have all the

details," Vazquez said of potential legal action. FIFA has not publicly reacted to the team's announcement and didn't immediately answer a request for comment.

Alajuelense is the best-ranked team in Central America for the CONCACAF but 40th overall in the region. CONCACAF has four spots in the Club World Cup. The teams that qualified are: the Seattle Sounders, Monterrey, Leon and Pachuca. Lionel Messi's Inter Miami will participate as a guest of the host. All five clubs were announced for the Dec. 5 draw in Miami. In Mexico, besides

Leon and Pachuca, there are another two companies that own two or more clubs in the first division. Grupo Caliente owns Tijuana and Queretaro, while Grupo Orlegi controls Atlas and Santos.

## Indian women's hockey team starts 2028 Los Angeles Olympics' qualification journey

#### PTI RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Anew-look and much-fitter Indian women's hockey team started its 2028 Los Ángeles Olympics' qualification journey in the most perfect manner, producing a scintillating, unbeaten performance during its title-defending Asian Champions Trophy campaign here.

It marked a resurrection of sorts for the side that had been left deflated after failing to qualify for the Paris Olympics this year. It marks a fresh beginning for the team and its seasoned coach Harendra Singh.

Since taking over in April, Harendra's vision has been crystal clear -- to qualify for the 2028 Games.

He always believed and emphasised that a successful ACT campaign will be the right start for the team's journey towards the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics.

And Harendra couldn't have asked for more from his wards.

"I truly believe this victory will inspire more young girls to take up

hockey and further elevate the sport in India. We are thrilled to be able to bring this win to our fans and our nation," said captain Salima Tete after the brilliant campaign.

His primary focus since taking charge has been to improve the team's fitness, and fortitude and the Indian players performance in the just-concluded ACT was a testament to the fact that they have worked tremendously on these core areas and lived upto their coach's expectation.

"While we celebrate this win, our focus remains on long-term goals. We are working hard every day, trusting the process, and staying dedicated to delivering our best in every tournament," Salima said.

"Our ultimate aim is to bring more laurels to India and make the country proud," she added.

The Indians were impressive in most departments of the game and remained unbeaten in seven matches, including the semifinal and final. What has been heartening for India was their ball transition from the backline to the opposition circle using both the



#### themselves.

The resolute show by the defensive line was also one of the hallmarks of India's performance as they conceded just two goals in seven games, while scoring as many as 29

flanks

Out of these 29 goals, 15 came from field efforts -- a heartening statistic --, 12 from penalty corners and two from penalty strokes.

The ACT produced many stars for India, the prominent among them was 20-year-old young striker Deepika, who was the tournament's highest scorer with 11 goals to her name, including

four from field play, six from held together by Udita, Sushila penalty corners and one penalty Chanu, Jyoti and Ishika stroke.

In fact, five Indians were there in the top-10 scorers' list. Besides Deepika, Sangita Kumari (4 goals), Preeti Dubey (3), Navneet Kaur (3) and Lalrmsiami (3) were also impressive.

Harendra worked extensively on the fitness of the players in the run up to the tournament and it was clearly visible on the turf as the side played fast-paced, one-touch hockey throughout the tournament to trouble opponents, the

including reigning Olympic silver-medallists China whom they defeated 1-0 in the final to retain the title.

If Deepika was a sensation upfront, vice-captain Navneet Kaur, Lalremsiami and Neha were the fulcrum of India's midfield.

Besides Deepika, young Sangita too was brilliant inside the circle, while Salima and 17-year-old Sunelita Toppo simply broke down the opposition defence with their dribbling skills and brilliant runs from the flanks.

The defensive line was brilliantly

Chaudhary. So good was their performance that Indian goalkeepers Savita Punia and Bichu Devi Kharibam were hardly called into action in the tournament.

But going forward, their is a vital area of concern for Harendra -conversion rate from penalty corners.

The statistics might show India scored 12 from penalty corners but the team's conversion rate was very poor.

The Indians earned penalty corners aplenty in all the matches but lacked in execution and variation despite having as many as four options in the side in the form of Deepika, Udita, Navneet and Manisha Chauhan.

But the future augurs well for the Indian team as the players look to gain much-needed exposure by rubbing shoulders with the best of the world in the first-ever fourteam women's Hockey India League, starting in Ranchi on January 12 and finishing on January 26.



# tollywood **BOYAPATI'S INFLUENCE IN ASHOK GALLA'S FILM**

Ashok Galla, nephew of superstar Mahesh Babu, second film, Devaki Nandana Vasudeva, has hit the cinemas today. In a candid conversation, he opens up about his film, his relationship with his uncle and his journey as an actor

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ahesh Babu's nephew Ashok Galla takes the centre stage once again as the lead in his second film, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*. Directed by Arjun Jandhyala, the film car-ries the unique touch of acclaimed filmmaker Prashanth Varma, who provided the story. "It was around a year and a half ago that he nar-rated the story to me and I liked it instantly," shares Ashok. Prashanth Varma, known for his film *HanuMan*, pitched the story to Ashok even before its release. "The success

of *HanuMan* is definitely a big advantage for us. It adds credibility and momentum to our film," Ashok notes, adding that director Arjun Jandhyala and his team made a few tweaks to the original story. Film maker Arjun Jandhyala, who has worked closely with

Boyapati Srinu in the past, brings that influence to this pro-ject. When asked about the Boyapati connection, Ashok explains, "This film has the essence of a Boyapati-style movie, with a lot of action and emotional scenes. You can definitely see his mark in it.

Much of the filming took place in Vizianagaram. Was the regional accent incorporated into the dialogue? Galla clarifies, 'No, we didn't stick to the accent. Since this is a commercial film, we decided against it." He also feels that shooting in live locations enhanced his performance as an actor.

Reflecting on the differences between his debut film *Hero* and this project, he says, "We wanted to showcase some variation in Arjun Jandhyala envisioned a rugged appearance for me. They also asked me to gain weight, which I initially didn't understand. But during the action sequences, I realised why it was necessary my co-actors playing villains are massive, like bouncers! It all made sense then."

While the film promises commercial appeal, Ashok empha-sises its emotional core. "The mother-son relationship is a major theme. My character does everything his mother says, which adds a strong sentimental layer to the story," he reveals.

Ashok also shared a moment with his superstar uncle on social media, answering questions from fans. On Mahesh Babu's feedback, he says, "He's supposed to watch the film on Thursday, but I prefer not to sit with him during my films. It's nerve-wracking for me! I can watch any other movie with him, just not of my own."

Addressing comparisons with his famous uncle, he admits he's eagerness to carve his own identity. "I know people still associ-ate me with being Mahesh Babu's nephew and I want to move past that. To do so, I need a big hit. I'm working hard on every project to make that happen," he says.

Did Mahesh Babu offer him advice after his debut? "He rarely comments on my acting, but he did say, 'If you want to suc-ceed, you need to use your mind and stay focused.' That advice keeps me grounded and motivated,'' Ashok shares.

Ashok's passion for acting dates back to childhood. "I first felt the urge to become an actor when I appeared in a cameo role in *Nani*. Later, during my boarding school years in Singapore, I attended advanced theatre classes. By the time I graduated from high school, I was cer-tain about my career choice," he recalls.

Though his father, Jayadev Galla, is a prominent politician and businessman, Ashok rules out any interest in politics. "That's definitely not for me. I want to focus solely on acting," he affirms. Speaking about his co-star Manasa Varanasi, who makes her debut with this film, Ashok praises her dedication. "She's a city girl but worked really hard to adapt to her role and prove herself," he says. When asked about future projects, Ashok reveals he's signed on with Sithara Entertainments for a "drama-comedy." As for exploring roles beyond the

lead, he says, "I'm open to playing strong, meaningful characters if the opportunity arises."



## Celebrating 50 glorious years of Mohan Babu in cinema

The Telugu film industry celebrates a monumen-tal milestone as the leg-endary Mohan Babu marks 50 years in cinema. Renowned for his versatility and magnet-ic screen presence, he has shaped five decades of cinematic brilliance with iconic performances and transfor-mative contributions to the industry.

From redefining villain in Swargam Narakam to leading

blockbusters like Pedarayudu,

Mohan Babu's journey is filled with groundbreaking achievements. His 1993 production Major Chandrakanth stands as a cinematic and political landmark, while his visionary efforts in education continue to empower thousands through Sree Vidyaniketan and Mohan Babu University. To honour this remarkable legacy, yearlong celebrations will kick off in December 2024, leading to a grand trib-ute in November 2025. With Kannappa on the horizon, Mohan Babu's passion for cinema remains as vibrant as ever.

## 'We used a footage of KCR garu in this story'

R ocking Rakesh, widely recognised for his comedy on the Jabardasth show, is now stepping into a lead role with the film KCR: Keshava Chandra *Ramavath*, set to release this Friday. Known for his comedic timing, Rakesh is now venturing into a serious role in this film. "Comedians have the ability to experiment with any kind of role,

the film. He doesn't know it, though-I used a footage to include him," Rakesh shared with

a laugh. Addressing rumours that he initially approached another political party but was later backed by the BRS party, Rakesh clarified, "That's not true. If I had BRS support, I would've secured more theatres in Telangana. My intention



#### MALAVIKA MOHANAN **PRABHAS SET TO SIZZLE IN** THE RAJA SAAB

Malavika Mohanan who in the pan-India cinema with her remarkable performances so far is set to mark her Telugu debut in the upcoming film, The Raja Saab. The actress will be seen romancing pan-India superstar and box

office king, Prabhas. Fans

are eagerly anticipating to

screen chemistry between

Malavika and Prabhas and

sparked immense curiosity

their pairing has already

and excitement among

witness the sizzling on-



Jabardasth fame Rocking Rakesh. who is debuting as a lead actor in the upcoming film KCR: Keshava Chandra Ramavath, opens up about the film and the reasoning behind its intriguing title.

unlike others. This has been proven by legends like Chalam, Rajababu, Brahmanandam and many others. So, I believe I can handle any role," Rakesh stated confidently

He revealed that the film's story was initially pitched to others, but they insisted he take up the lead role himself. "The original title I had in mind was Mera Naam KCR, but I couldn't proceed as I didn't get the required objection clearance from the party. Since my character's name is Keshava Chandra Ramavath, I decided to stick with KCR. A title like this adds buzz and curiosity around the film," he explained. Rakesh added that the protagonist in the film is a staunch admirer of KCR, the leader of the Telangana Movement. "There's a connection between KCR and the story. In fact, KCR sir himself appears in

was to honour KCR sir and the Telangana Movement. I've ensured his fans won't be disappointed." He also dismissed claims of political backing at the film's prerelease event, which was attended by Harish Rao. "I invited many people, including Dil Raju garu, but he didn't come. Most of the Jabardasth artists supported me, even those who campaign for Jana Sena. I've worked with Jana Sena too and I even invited the Communist party," Rakesh said. Rakesh noted an interesting observation during promotions in Andhra Pradesh. "Surprisingly, I got 26 theatres in Andhra, more than in Telangana," he explained. To make the film more accessible, Rakesh has also reduced ticket prices. "The maximum ticket price is set at Rs. 100 to ensure more people can watch the film," he concluded

## Vijay Deverakonda appreciates Priyadarshi

Priyadarshi is set to lead the upcoming film Sarangapani Jathakam, directed by Mohanakrishna Indraganti and produced by Sivalenka Krishna Prasad. On Thursday, actor Vijay Deverakonda released the film's teaser and expressed his admiration for Privadarshi. Speaking on the occasion, Vijay praised Priyadarshi's growth as an actor. "Darshi has been doing great films, taking on lead roles in intriguing stories. I just

his character believes in horoscopes. Personally, I don't know much about true horoscopes, but seeing his journey makes me proud. When we worked on *Pelli Choopulu*, we never imagined reaching where we are today. Destiny has brought us here, and I'm

thrilled for him," he said. Vijay also spoke fondly about director Indraganti Mohanakrishna. "I can't express how much I laughed

watched the teaser of watching his film Ashta Sarangapani Jathakam, where Chamma. At that time, it was such unique content, and I thoroughly enjoyed it," he shared, wishing success to the entire team, including producer Sivalenka Prasad. The film stars Roopa Koduvayur as the female lead

opposite Priyadarshi, alongside actors like Vennela Kishore and Avasarala Srinivas. The teaser hints at a hilarious entertainer, marking a potential comeback for Indraganti after a few setbacks.

audiences. According to a source, the duo will soon be shooting for a romantic song. "Malavika and Prabhas will be shooting a hot romantic song for The Raja Saab. The song's shooting will take place in Europe around January and February," revealed the source close to the production house The Raja Saab is touted to be a horror-comedy and is poised to be one of the most talked-about films of the year. The film is written and directed by acclaimed filmmaker, Maruthi. It will also star Niddhi Agerwal as another female lead Malavika began her career with notable performances across different regional film industries- from her debut in *Pattam Pole* (2013) to her nactful roles in films like Christy (2023) and Thangalaan (2024). The actress recently debuted in Bollywood, playing the lead in Yudhra alongside Siddhanth Chaturvedi Apart from The Raja Saab, Malavika also stars alongside Karthi in the spy thriller, Sardar 2



## **STANDALONE**

Prime Video hosted the world premiere of its first-ever celebrity chat show, The Rana Daggubati Show, at the prestigious 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) on Thursday. The first episode of the unscripted Telugu Original series, featuring Nani, Teja Sajja and Priyanka Arulmohan, received a remarkable reception from the audience present in the packed auditorium at the special screening, just days before its worldwide launch on the service

## RAP022 kickstarts with a bang!

staad Ram Pothineni had already announced RAPO22 on the auspicious occasion of Dasara and now we have another interesting development pertaining to the project. This film was formally launched with a pooja ceremony on Thursday in the presence of several guests.

The launch ceremony was graced by directors Hanu Raghavapudi, Venky Kudumula and Gopichand

Malineni. The principle lead of the film, Ram Pothineni and Bhagyashri Borse also partook in the launch event.

It was Hanu Raghavapudi who sounded the first clap, followed by Gopichand switching on the camera, and lastly, Venky Kudumula directing the first shot featuring Ram and Bhagyashri. The event was a starry affair and it had a super pleasant vibe. The script was handed over to



director Mahesh Babu P by Naveen Yerneni, Y Ravi Shankar, Mythri CEO Cherry, directors Hanu Raghavapudi, Gopichand Malineni, Venky Kudumula, Shiva Nirvana and Pavan Sadineni.

Director Mahesh Babu has brought together the aesthetic looking pair of Ram and Bhagyashri for the film as he promises another fun and sensible film after Miss Shetty Mr Polishetty. He is evidently cooking up something super interesting with Ram. much to the delight of fans.

The highly promising film is directed by Mahesh Babu P and produced by Mythri Movie Makers. Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar are producing the film on a lavish scale. More details about the cast and crew will be out soon.