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Swachh Bharat campaign becoming new path to prosperity:

Modi

ANIL AMBANI'S

RELIANCE FORAYS INTO BHUTAN



Ester on finding challenging, out-of-the-box

SCRIPTS!



QUOTE OF THE DAY

Where did Rahul Gandhi die, even as people are dying due to fear of Hydras and Musi project. Musi project is being driven by Rahul Gandhi and not Revanth Reddy. This is lootification and scam by Rahul Gandhi to get money from golden duck Telangana to fund other state elections. Congress high command wants bundles of cash from Musi, not caring about the hardships of those affected

-KT Ramarao, BRS MLA

DON'T MISS...

CM launches Water Board's soak ...

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday launched a 90-day special drive undertaken by the Water Board on the prevention of sewage overflow and construction of soak pits in Hyderabad. After paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Babu Ghat, the special drive was formally launched by unveiling a poster. Before the Chief Minister launched the drive, Minister for Transport Ponnampalapati Prabhakar started the construction of soak pits at Sarojini Devi Hospital. The Minister said that every drop of rain should be converted into ...

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Yadagarigutta temple ...

Yadagirigutta Temple ranks as one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Telangana. Known as the 'Tirupati of Telangana,' it is the second most visited pilgrimage centre after Tirupati in both Telugu states. The previous BRS government significantly developed the Yadagirigutta Temple by demolishing the old structure and undertaking its reconstruction. Recently, the government has decided to give the temple a facelift. Similar to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, the temple's tower ...

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'Women bunk tech career for lack of...

Companies struggle to find right women talent with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) profiles as lack of family support and higher cost of education discourage girls from pursuing higher education in this stream, according to industry experts. The gender gap persists largely in STEM education due to societal and cultural factors including gender biases and lack of support. "While the higher cost of education can sometimes be a factor, the bigger issue is a lack of encouragement..."

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With Australia, you can't afford to...

There are no shortcuts to beating Australia and every team has to give its best if it aspires to overcome the six-time world champions, said India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup which begins here on Thursday. Australia's dominance in the global showpiece has been unrivalled with the team winning the last three editions of the tournament. With charismatic former skipper Meg Lanning calling it a day following the victory in South Africa about 18...

-SPORTS



Cong Minister stoops to new low in politics

Konda Surekha claimed that KTR had threatened actor Nagarjuna that he would 'demolish' them if he did not send his daughter-in-law and actor Samantha to him

Apologise within 24 hours: KTR

BRS Working President KTR has sent a legal notice to Konda Surekha concerning her allegedly defamatory comments about him. The notice demanded that Surekha withdraw her statements and issue a public apology within 24 hours. KTR warned that failure to comply with that would result in legal action,

including defamation suits and criminal cases. Surekha had earlier claimed that KTR, during his tenure as minister, was involved in phone tapping, and also linked his name to the divorce of actors Naga Chaitanya and Samantha. KTR stated in his notice that these allegations were made solely to damage his reputation and that the names of celebrities were used to further the malicious narrative.

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Congress loose talk shocks Tollywood

SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com HYDERABAD

Many personalities from the industry also responded and urged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to take action on the Minister and demanded the Minister to tender an unconditional apology. Surekha's comments linking former minister KT Rama Rao to the divorce between Naga Chaitanya and Samantha have

shocked the Telugu Film industry. Nagarjuna, Samantha and many other Telugu film personalities decried Surekha's comments and asked her to take back her comments and tender an apology. Nagarjuna posted on his social media handle: "I strongly condemn the comments of the Honourable Minister Mrs Konda Surekha. Don't use the lives of movie stars, who stay away from politics, to criticize your opponents."

Continued on Page 5

Links the MLA to divorce between actors Naga Chaitanya and Samantha

Alleges the former minister made heroines drug addicts and destroyed their lives

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Scripting a disgustingly new low in Telangana's cut-throat politics, Telangana Endowments Minister Konda Surekha on Wednesday threw mud at Bharat Rashtira Samithi working president and former minister KT Ramarao in a filthy manner, accusing him of "destroying the lives of several Tollywood heroines" and being

the reason why actors Naga Chaitanya and Samantha Ruth Prabhu divorced. Konda Surekha claimed that KTR had threatened actor Nagarjuna that he would 'demolish' them if he did not send his daughter-in-law and actor Samantha to him. The actor couple divorced as Samantha had refused to "go to KTR", as directed by

Continued on Page 5

My divorce was a personal matter: Samantha

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



The Akkineni family, including Nagarjuna and Amala, apart from Samantha Ruth Prabhu have collectively condemned the remarks made by Minister Konda Surekha, describing them as baseless, irresponsible and a misuse of political power. Samantha, in her response, highlighted the courage it takes to navigate a challenging industry as a woman and urged Konda Surekha to



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CM Revanth emphasises peace

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, while inaugurating the Datta Mantapam, expressed his gratitude to Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Swamiji for blessing Telangana with progress. He lauded Swamiji for his spiritual guidance and positive wishes for the state, highlighting that Swamiji's blessings for the people's peace and abundance in crops and livestock are a source of great joy. In his speech, Revanth stressed that true development occurs when the traditions of the past are honoured and passed down to future generations. "As Chief Minister, I believe that the state will progress when there is

Inaugurates Datta Mantapam in TG



a peaceful environment, and traditions are respected and passed on to future generations," he said. He also shared his belief that the

newly inaugurated Datta Mantapam will serve as a place of tranquillity and spiritual solace for the public.

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Tummala doesn't know when he will lose his post: Alleti

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Will expose Harish Rao's wrongdoings: Anil Kumar

Rx Benefits to create 300 jobs: Min Sridhar Babu



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rx Benefits, a US-based company, is setting up its first Global Capability Center (GCC) in India, located in Hyderabad, as announced by IT & Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu.

The company's representatives met with the Minister on Wednesday. Following the meeting, the Minister shared that Rx Benefits, through this centre, will create 300 job opportunities in the next two years, providing a great platform for talented individuals in the State. The company supports its pharmacy clients by helping them increase their profits.

The Hyderabad centre will oversee global product engineering operations, Sridhar Babu revealed. He emphasised that Telangana has

become a hub for multi-national companies due to the abundance of skilled human resources available in the State. The conducive business environment and the lack of infrastructure issues made Hyderabad the preferred choice for Rx Benefits.

In the context of rapidly expanding modern technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence, digital transformation has become inevitable across various industries. The meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretary to the Government Jayesh Ranjan, Rx Benefits CEO Wendy Barnes, CFO Thad Kwiatkowski, Chief Product Officer Shekar Khera, Sandeep Sharma from Summit Consultancy Services, Shakti Nagappan from Telangana Life Sciences Foundation and TGHC MD Vishnuvardhan Reddy.

Musi victims will get full support from BRS: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS working president KT Rama Rao assured Musi victims that the party would stand by them. Speaking at Telangana Bhavan with the affected residents, he emphasised that no one should fear the actions of the current government. He assured that no poor person's house would be demolished and highlighted that, despite possessing all necessary permissions, the government was troubling the victims.

KTR promised that the BRS legal team would support the victims and that, alongside the political fight against the government, BRS would also take up a legal battle on behalf



of the affected people. He mentioned that a team of lawyers would be sta-

tioned at Telangana Bhavan to provide legal aid to those facing issues

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BRS looted TG in the name of trees, liquor and irrigation: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president B Mahesh Kumar Goud alleged that the BRS leaders looted the entire State in the name of trees, liquor and irrigation.

In a chit chat with the scribes on Wednesday, Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the government has not yet removed a single house in the Musi. He said that there is no need of Rs.1.50 lakh crore and hundreds of crores of money is enough for the Musi cleansing. He made it clear that the Congress government will



give compensation to the oustees living around Musi as per the law.

Mahesh Kumar Goud alleged that the BRS leaders were running social media as they wished with the money they earned illegally.

KTR has no sense like his cousin Harish Rao. Why didn't KTR condemn the abusive trolling against Minister Konda Surekha? KTR has no social consciousness. However, Harish Rao has social consciousness, he said.

Mahesh Kumar Goud said that he will jump into Musi River from Puranapool bridge if proved that the Congress collected money in the name of

Continued on Page 5

Bhatti visits Toshiba HQ, holds talks on setting up fuel cell divisions



All future RTC buses will be electric: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka had a busy Wednesday visiting Toshiba's headquarters and factories, discussing the setting up of fuel cell divisions and holding meetings. Starting at 8 am from Tokyo, Bhatti visited the headquarters of the multinational electronics and electrical giant Toshiba, located 50 km away. He was accompanied by the Chief Secretary of Finance, Ramakrishna Rao, Energy Secretary Ronald Ross, SCCL CMD N. Balaram and officials of the Indian Embassy, Ms Bansal and Ms Devajani.

Toshiba's senior executives, including Hiroshi Kaneta from the Energy Systems and Solutions division and Vice President Shige Rizo Kawahara, welcomed the Deputy Chief Minister and officials. They explained Toshiba's products and services through a PowerPoint presentation. Although primarily an electronics production company, Toshiba is now a leader in environmentally friendly solar products. They provided details about their business of manufacturing photovoltaic modules to generate solar power, fuel cells, battery energy storage technology, powerful

Continued on Page 5

KTR questions 'secret meet' of No 2 in TG Cabinet, Adani & Cong strategist

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a provocative tweet, Bharat Rashtira Samithi working president and legislator KT Rama Rao raised questions about the 'secret meeting' that he claims took place at the presidential suite of ITC Kohenur between Adani and a key figure in the Telangana Cabinet.

KTR tweeted, "Why did Adani meet with No. 2 in Telangana Cabinet in the presidential suite of ITC Kohenur today evening? And more importantly, what was Sunil Kanugolu doing in the meeting? Has Adani become friends with Congress or is it to usurp the 84 Acres of precious Govt land in Rayadurgam? Mystery deals." (sic) The tweet by KTR immediately stirred speculations about the

purpose of the meeting, with KTR pointing towards a possible land deal involving a prime 84-acre government plot in Rayadurgam. He questioned whether the sudden alliance between Adani and Congress was aimed at this acquisition.

BRS social media convener Krishank Manne added another dimension to the 'secret meeting', stating that the Congress party was distracted by internal crises while their 'corporate strategist' was engaging in high-level talks in Hyderabad. Krishank said, "As Congress is entangled in Musi and Movie crisis, their Corporate Strategist is in Hyderabad.... Not for Social Media meeting; it's a meeting between Kanugolu, representative of

Continued on Page 5

HYDRAA ops: The crumbling of Revanth Reddy's popularity

What began as a positive and bold move to tackle illegal constructions in Hyderabad has now turned into a nightmare for the Revanth Reddy-led Congress government. The demolitions under the aegis of the HYDRA (Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Monitoring and Protection) Authority, originally launched to remove encroachments on reservoir and tank beds by influential figures, were initially welcomed as an antidote to years of unchecked illegal construction. Bigwigs who had raised lavish properties on public land were finally held accountable, and there was a palpable sense of justice being served. However, as HYDRAA's operations expanded, its initial focus on targeting the powerful soon gave way to a more indiscriminate approach, bringing into its crosshairs the homes of middle-class and poor residents. What started as a battle against the elite's illegalities

has evolved into a draconian state-led assault on Hyderabad's vulnerable population. As the demolitions spread, public sentiment quickly shifted from applause to outrage. The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) and opposition parties have been quick to seize on the growing discontent, finding an opportunity to expose the cracks in the Congress government's armour. With Chief Minister Revanth Reddy adamantly defending HYDRAA's operations, the Opposition has been relentless in attacking his administration for what they describe as "an inhumane and heavy-handed approach". The BRS, which had been struggling to regain its footing after electoral setbacks, capitalised on the situation, rallying around the affected middle-class families and positioning itself as the voice of the people. This move has helped them recover some lost political ground, presenting HYDRAA as a

The media, too, has played a pivotal role in amplifying public anger. Images of wailing women and children standing before bulldozers, futilely protesting the destruction of their homes, have flooded TV screens and social media feeds. These heartbreaking scenes have turned public sentiment bitter, and many now see the Congress government's HYDRAA operations as nothing more than a high-handed attack on ordinary citizens.



RAMESH KANDULA
Chief Editor Swatantra TV and author

symbol of Congress overreach and disconnection from the masses.

The media, too, has played a pivotal role in amplifying public anger. Images of wailing women and children standing before bulldozers, futilely protesting the destruction of their homes, have flooded TV screens and social media feeds. These heartbreaking scenes have turned public sentiment bitter, and many now see the Congress government's HYDRAA operations as nothing more than a high-handed attack on ordinary citizens.

The core question echoing among the masses is simple: how were these so-called illegal homes built in the first place? How did they receive permissions, and why did Town Planning wing officials look the other way for years while lining their pockets with bribes? The Revanth Reddy government has no clear answers, and this silence has only fueled the anger of residents who see themselves as collateral damage in a political game.

What is most striking is the government's refusal to take

responsibility for the systemic corruption that allowed these illegal constructions to proliferate. Instead of holding corrupt officials accountable, HYDRAA's operations have punished residents, many of whom had invested their lifetime savings into homes they believed were legitimate. The middle and working-class communities, who already face economic hardships, have been left defenceless as their

homes are torn down, with no compensation or alternative housing offered. This has angered not just those directly affected, but all sections of society, who view the government's actions as grossly unjust.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, however, remains defiant. He has stood firmly behind HYDRAA's demolitions, arguing that illegal constructions cannot be tolerated, regardless of who they belong to. HYDRAA chief AV Ranganath, tasked with overseeing the operations, also appears unfazed, even in the face of sharp criticism from the Telangana High Court. The High Court, which has expressed alarm at the overreach of the HYDRAA team, went so far as to sarcastically ask Ranganath whether he would demolish historic sites like Charminar or the High Court building if ordered to do so. These stinging comments highlight the growing discontent within the judiciary, yet Reddy and his administration seem determined to continue.

As the days go by, however, HYDRAA's operations are becoming increasingly unpopular, and the Congress government's standing is in free fall. The once-promising initiative has now become a political liability, eroding public trust in Revanth Reddy's leadership. The Telangana High Court's frequent rebukes have further weakened the government's position, and the future of HYDRAA's operations itself is in question.

In all this turmoil, one thing remains unclear: what is Revanth Reddy's endgame? Why has he stubbornly clung to HYDRAA, even as it causes widespread discontent? Some speculate that there is a deeper political or financial motivation at play. It is no secret that Reddy has become a crucial figure in the Congress party's national strategy, particularly as a significant source of funding ahead of key state

elections. Congress insiders claim that Revanth's ability to funnel resources into the party coffers has solidified his standing with the high command, specifically Rahul Gandhi. This financial lifeline has so far shielded him from the backlash over HYDRAA, but the question remains: how long will this honeymoon last?

With each passing day, the political costs of the HYDRAA demolitions grow steeper. If Revanth Reddy does have a plan behind his rigid stance, it's time for him to realise that the situation is no longer tenable. The anger and frustration of Hyderabad's citizens are palpable, and the Congress party's political capital is rapidly depleting. Unless Reddy course-corrects soon, the HYDRAA debacle could spell the end of his government's credibility—and perhaps his own political future.

The longer the HYDRAA's bulldozers run, the deeper the Congress party digs its own grave.

BRS leaders flay Surekha, seek her apology

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtira Samithi leaders have raised objections to the statements made by Minister Konda Surekha against BRS working president KT Rama Rao and demanded an apology from her. Harish Rao, MLA of BRS party, condemned the comments in strong terms, stating, "I condemn the derogatory statements made by Minister Konda Surekha and demand an unconditional apology." He urged the Congress leader to take responsibility for her remarks and retract them immediately.

In a press meet held at Telangana Bhavan, former ministers Satyavathi Rathod and Maloth Kavitha, along with former Zilla Parishad chairperson Thula Uma, also expressed their dismay at Surekha's statements.

Addressing the media, Satyavathi Rathod remarked, "We strongly condemn the

comments made against KTR. Such statements have no place in political discourse. Surekha has shown a lack of decency in her words."

Kavitha further criticized Surekha, highlighting that the Congress government had failed to protect women's rights and uphold promises made to the public. "During the BRS government, we distributed Bathukamma sarees to women, but what has the Congress done? Their leaders like Surekha choose to make offensive remarks instead of focusing on governance," she said.

Surekha's remarks sparked public outrage after they went viral on social media, leading to a barrage of criticism from various sections of society.

Adding to the chorus of disapproval, BRS leaders stated that Konda Surekha had crossed a line by involving KTR's family and personal life in her statements. "Has Surekha ever spoken out

against the attacks on women in Telangana during the Congress regime? She seems to have conveniently forgotten those incidents while taking cheap shots at KTR," Thula Uma commented.

The controversy surrounding the remarks has reignited a broader conversation about the tone and civility in political discussions. BRS leaders have called for an immediate apology from Konda Surekha, with some even threatening legal action if she continues with such rhetoric. "If Surekha continues to speak in this manner, we will not hesitate to take her to court," warned Maloth Kavitha.

Furthermore, Satyavathi Rathod expressed embarrassment as a woman over Surekha's words. "As a woman, I am ashamed of the way Surekha spoke. She should remember that she holds a responsible position as a minister and should conduct herself accordingly."

Tummala doesn't know when he will lose his post: Alleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya Janata Legislative Party (BJLP) leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy commented that Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao doesn't know when he will be ousted because he did not have a hold in the Delhi Congress.

While addressing the media at the State BJP office on Wednesday, Maheshwar Reddy said that the impact of not implementing assurances by the Congress government is falling on Nageshwar Rao.

Maheshwar Reddy said that the BJP has given an assurance to the farmers that it will stand by them. He said that the Centre gave Rs 20,000 crore subsidy for fertilizers across the nation.



Stating that the BJP is the party that fulfills its assurances, Maheshwar Reddy said that the BJP governments have waived loans unconditionally in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. BJP doesn't want power by giving falsehood assurances, he said. He demanded the Congress government to tell when it will waive the remaining farmers' loans.

Konda Surekha won't trouble anyone if they haven't troubled her: Jagga Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Terming Endowment Minister Konda Surekha as 'fire', Congress former MLA T. Jagga Reddy said that Surekha won't trouble anyone if they have not troubled her.

"BRS social media activists troubled her and so she reacted fiercely. Why did BRS Working President KT Rama Rao trouble Surekha," Jagga Reddy asked.

"KTR made Konda Surekha criticise him by provoking her. The BRS social media project-ed Surekha the wrong way. KTR should have controlled his social media team. Konda Surekha is in pain now. She is fire, why did the BRS provoke her? Do you think that all those who garlanded KCR, KTR and Harish Rao are the same? Is presenting garlands wrong? Congress has never done that. Do you think the same if someone garlands the wives of KTR and Harish? KTR is speaking as a leader without political perfection.



You have allowed Konda Surekha to criticise. By apologising to Konda Surekha, the BRS must end this controversy now," Jagga Reddy said.

He said that KTR's comments against Surekha were like rubbing salt into wounds and so she reacted strongly on Wednesday. Nothing wrong with Surekha's comments, Jagga said.

Taking serious exception to KTR criticising Rahul Gandhi, Jagga asked KTR not to think that Rahul Gandhi's family is like the Kalvakuntla family. The Gandhi family has a 'history' of donating their Anand

Bhavan to the nation. KCR became the CM and KTR became Minister just because Sonia Gandhi gave a separate Telangana state, Jagga pointed out. He asked KTR to reveal whether Rahul Gandhi is surviving on the money that comes from the Musi beautification project.

Jagga Reddy said that some government officials are dancing to the tunes of BRS leaders as they have not yet severed their friendship with BRS leaders. Those officials may bring a bad name to the Congress government with their over-enthusiasm.

Will expose Harish Rao's wrongdoings: Anil Kumar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rajya Sabha member Anil Kumar Yadav stated that he will expose former minister and BRS senior leader T Harish Rao's illegal activities in the last 10 years though Harish Rao sends a number of legal notices.

Anil Kumar Yadav on Wednesday tweeted in his X account alleging that Harish Rao has a luxurious farm-house besides Ranganayaka Sagar project in Ramanacha village in Chinna Koduru mandal of Siddipet district.

Anil Kumar Yadav said, "No matter how many legal

notices you (Harish Rao) send, I will expose your wrongdoings in the last 10 years. Harish Rao's luxurious farm house is located next to the Ranganayak Sagar project in Ramanacha village. Why did the then BRS government exempt the 2.36 acre area where Harish Rao's guest house is located in survey number 402 for the Ranganayaka Sagar project? He asked.

In the same survey number 402 within 2.08 acres of land belonging to common farmers was collected? Is that land exempted from land acquisition because Harish Rao was

the irrigation minister? How did Harish Rao purchase the 2.36 acres of land in survey number 402 in two installments (11.02.2019, 03.08.2022)? Anil Kumar asked. Did you compete with your uncle, brother-in-law and others in building expensive farm houses? Isn't it true that you committed irregularities in land acquisition in the Ranganayaka Sagar project? Anil Kumar asked.

Anil Kumar Yadav also posted a full video of Harish Rao's irregularities in the Ranganayaka Sagar project land acquisition in the name of a farm house.

'Ankurarpanam' today

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The traditional Ankurarpanam or Beejavapanam is one of the most important rituals of the Vaikhanasa Agama, which essentially is the Seed Swing Festival that is observed in Tirumala as a ritual of prelude for the annual Brahmotsavam on Thursday.

The essence of this ritual is to make a Sankalpa (wish) to celebrate a festival in a successful manner and get the grace of the Mula Virat. Another important thing to note is that Ankurapana should never be done in the daytime. This dictum has its basis in

astrological principles as Chandra, the Moon is often termed as the "Sasya karaka" the controller of plants. Sowing a seed in the day time is not considered wise. In fact, Chandra is considered strong in the night. Also an auspicious lagna or muhūrta is considered to sow the Nava Dhanyas.

The vessels known as palikas using gold or silver or copper or mud are usually used while performing Ankurarpanam. They were placed in the Yagashala and seeds were sown in each vessel.

The sprouting of the seeds depicts the grandeur in which the festival is being celebrated.

Gandhi's ideals more relevant in present times: Om Birla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday said the ideals and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi have become more relevant in contemporary times.

Addressing school children in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, Birla urged youngsters to follow the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Pratipada: Oct 03 12:19 AM to Oct 04 02:58 AM
Dwitiya: Oct 03 02:58 AM to Oct 05 05:31 AM
Nakshatram: Hastha: Oct 02 12:22 PM to Oct 03 03:32 PM
Chitra: Oct 03 03:32 PM to Oct 04 06:38 PM
Rahukalam: 1:33 PM to 3:02 PM
Yamagandam: 6:10 AM to 7:38 AM
Varjyam: 12:34 AM to 02:22 AM
Gulika: 9:07 AM to 10:36 AM
Amritakalam: 08:45 AM to 10:33 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:41 AM to 12:28 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms
Temp: 32°
Humidity: 71%
Sunrise: 6:07 AM
Sunset: 6:03 PM
Updated: October 2, 2024 5:00 PM

West Asia tensions: Air India closely monitoring situation; Lufthansa cancels 2 flights on Wed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid escalating tensions in West Asia, some flights from Europe to India have been impacted, while Air India is monitoring the situation closely, according to officials. German carrier Lufthansa on Wednesday cancelled its flights from Hyderabad to Frankfurt (LH753/01) and from Mumbai to Frankfurt (LH757/01) due to current situation in West Asia.

This follows the airline cancelling the services from Frankfurt to Hyderabad and Mumbai on Tuesday. "Passengers have been rerouted or accommodated," Jeffrey James, Head of Lufthansa Group Communications - Asia Pacific told PTI on

Wednesday. Lufthansa operates around 65 weekly flights from Europe to India.

Officials in the know said Air India and Vistara have stopped using the Iranian airspace sometime back.

An Air India official on Wednesday said it assesses all flights daily for any potential security or safety risks whether it is in the Middle East or any other part of its route network.

"Adjustments are made, if required, to avoid areas of risk with minimal impact on our non-stop operations. The situation is being monitored closely," the official said. Air India has already suspended flights to Tel Aviv (Israel) till further notice. The airline flies to 44 international destinations, includ-

ing various European cities, while Vistara has direct services to Paris, Frankfurt and London. Some European carriers have changed their routes to fly to India. LOT Polish Airlines' flight from Warsaw to Delhi is not using the Iranian airspace on Wednesday. The flight had flown through the Iranian airspace on September 30, as per data from flight tracking website Flightradar24.

Meanwhile, Lufthansa Group's Jeffrey James said its flights will continue to avoid Israeli airspace up to and including October 31.

Tensions between Israel and Iran have escalated and India has called for restraint by all sides and said the conflict must not take a wider regional dimension.

Fears of wider war in Middle East grow

PNS ■ JERUSALEM

The Middle East moved closer to a long-feared regional war on Wednesday, a day after Iran fired a barrage of missiles at Israel and Israel said it began limited ground incursions into Lebanon targeting the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia.

Israel said it intercepted many of the missiles, and officials in Washington said US destroyers assisted in Israel's defence. Iran said most of its missiles hit their targets. There have been no reports of casualties.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed late Tuesday to retaliate against Iran, which he said "made a big mistake tonight and it will pay for it". An Iranian

commander threatened wider strikes on infrastructure if Israel retaliates. The United Nations Security Council called an emergency meeting for Wednesday to address the spiralling conflict.

Israel and Hezbollah have traded fire across the Lebanon border almost daily since the day after Hamas' cross-border attack on October 7, 2023, which killed 1,200 Israelis and took 250 others hostage.

Israel declared war on the militant group in the Gaza Strip in response. More than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed in the territory, and just over half the dead have been women and children, according to local health officials.

'Despite Gandhi's disdain for cinema, it has loved him'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For Mahatma Gandhi, cinema was a corrupting influence on young minds, a 'sinful technology'. It is that very medium which has become the message of the Mahatma's life and philosophy. From biopics like Richard Attenborough's "Gandhi" (1982) or as the unseen force in "Lage Raho Munna Bhai", a 2006 film directed by Rajkumar Hirani, his life story and ideas have received myriad treatments.

Since India's independence and even before, the Father of the Nation influenced many films, stage shows, and now streamers. Some were based on his life, while others propagated the values he espoused during his lifetime.

Gandhi, whose 155th birth

anniversary was observed on Wednesday, had watched just one Hindi film in his life -- Vijay Bhatt's "Ram Rajya" in the 1940s. The movie was based on Hindu mythological epic Ramayana, according to the 2020 book "Mahatma Gandhi in Cinema" by Narendra Kaushik. "Gandhi had agreed to see only select reels of the movie for 40 minutes but ended up watching the film for an hour and a half. Filmmaker Vijay Bhatt, a fellow Gujarati of Gandhi, later claimed that the Mahatma looked 'cheerful' at the end of the show," Kaushik wrote in his book.

But Gandhi did not think very highly of cinema as he believed films, both Hindi and foreign as well, promoted immorality and corrupted young minds, he further said in the book.

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CITY EVENTS

Inaugural of G-SPARC 2024

Global South conference on Infection prevention, control and antimicrobial stewardship. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to be guest of honour.

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika, HYTEC City, October 3, at 5 pm.

Launch of FROOPS

An exclusive ice-cream outlet. FROOPS ice-cream is famous for its fruit flavours.

Venue

Froops, Begumpet Main Road, SP Road, Beside Chutneys. October 3, 2.30 pm

SOCIAL

Celebrate Navratri at SOCIAL with a special festive menu. At SOCIAL, we're bringing a festive touch with a special Navratri menu that blends traditional flavours with our signature twist.

Venue

Mindspace SOCIAL, Hyderabad October 3rd to 11th

SERP - SARAS Fair-2024

Venue

People's Plaza, Hyderabad Till October 7

Dubai Property Show

Property experts coming to your city

Venue

ITC Kohener, HYTEC City, Plot No. 5, Survey No. 83/1, Madhapur, Opposite Inorbit Mall October 5 and 6.

Toxic

By Abhishek Upmanyu

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika November 2

Prateek Kuhad

Silhouettes tour.

Venue

Hyderabad international convention centre November 8

Follow Gandhi's path, says Justice Sujoy Paul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana High Court Judge Justice Sujoy Paul on Wednesday urged all the people to follow Mahatma Gandhi's path and said that it is good for individuals and society. Resorting to violence is a sign of weakness and non-violence is necessary for a better society, he added. Speaking at Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary, Justice Sujoy Paul said Mahatma Gandhi played a vital role in getting independence for the country.

Meanwhile, Gandhi Jayanti celebrations were held in Chanchalguda Jail. It is customary to celebrate Prisoners' Welfare Day on October 2 every year in prisons. While speaking in the programme, Telangana Prisons DG Dr Soumya Mishra said that Telangana prisons are ideal for all State prisons in the country.

City Pioneer



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03

CM launches Water Board's soak pits drive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday launched a 90-day special drive undertaken by the Water Board on the prevention of sewage overflow and construction of soak pits in Hyderabad. After paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Babu Ghat, the special drive was formally launched by unveiling a poster.

Before the Chief Minister launched the drive, Minister for Transport Ponnampalapati Prabhakar started the construction of soak pits at Sarojini Devi Hospital. The Minister said that every drop of rain should be converted into underground water. People should construct rainwater harvesting systems (RWHS) at their residences. RWHS should be built in empty places to avoid water drought in the future.

The Minister requested the people not to throw waste in sewage and not to obstruct the flow of sewage. Everyone should work hard to make the city of



“Before the Chief Minister launched the drive, Minister for Transport Ponnampalapati Prabhakar started the construction of soak pits at Sarojini Devi Hospital.”

Hyderabad a "Sewage Overflow-Free City," he added.

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Managing

Director Ashok Reddy said that in this special drive, the Water Board mainly focused on the prevention of long-standing sewerage problems and the construction of

RWHS. To reduce the demand of water tankers, consumers are advised to construct boreholes in their houses.

MP Anil Kumar Yadav, Nampally MLA Majeed Hussain, GHMC Mayor Gadwala Vijayalakshmi, District Collector Anudeep Durishetti and other officials participated in the programme.

Families in Musi riverbed to get Rs 25,000

The State government announced Rs 25,000 to rehabilitate the residents of Musi riverbed along with a 2BHK house. Initially, the government allocated only 2BHK houses to each family for Musi River Development Programme (MRDP), but on Wednesday it announced Rs 25,000 each, along with the double-bedroom. The Collectors of Hyderabad, MedchalMalkajgiri and Rangareddy districts issued a statement on Wednesday to this effect. In the three districts, more than 220 families have been shifted to 2BHK houses from Musi riverbed. In the last few days, 174 families have moved to nearby 2BHK houses from Hyderabad district. In all, 33 families have been shifted to 2BHK houses from Musi riverbed in MedchalMalkajgiri district and 22 families moved from riverbed to 2BHKs in Rangareddy district. However on Tuesday, the authorities demolished the houses of people who left them.

TFSC FINDS MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS Cockroach infestation in Miyapur restaurants



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Food Safety Commission (TFSC) inspected restaurants in Miyapur and found live cockroach infestations and multiple violations.

The Task Force officials inspected Angara Restaurant and found a live cockroach infestation. The kitchen was highly unhygienic, with broken tiles, water stagnation and cobwebs. The FSSAI licence was not displayed in a prominent place. Pan spitting was seen near the food storage area.

Food in the refrigerator was covered but not labelled and the fridge was unhygienic. Dustbins were open without lids and there were no insect-proof screens. Medical fitness certificates, pest control

records and water analysis reports were missing. Suspected synthetic food colours were found and discarded.

Later on, the officials also inspected Athidhi Restaurant and found live cockroach infestation in the kitchen, broken tiles and uncovered food. Rose water (cosmetic) was used in lassi. The refrigerator was rusted and raw chicken was stored uncovered. Dustbins were open and required certificates were missing.

Finally, the officials inspected Kodikura Chittigare and found pest control records missing along with non-NABL water reports and flies all over the place due to open windows.

Kishan Reddy releases film on environment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy released a short film on environmental impact made 15-year-old filmmaker Spoorthi Thea Vedula for Swachh Bharat Diwas on Wednesday. The film, titled "Tomorrow will not take care of itself," raises awareness about the effects of human actions on the environment.

Spoorthi, a student at Chirec International School, uses her passion for environmental support to send a strong message about the urgent need for conservation.

Spoorthi said that she was deeply inspired by the Swachh Bharat Mission, the nationwide campaign launched by Prime Minister Narendra



Modi.

She also said that this mission's focus on cleanliness and protecting natural resources left a lasting impression on her from a young age.

Through this film, Spoorthi said that she aims to show

how small harmful actions can lead to serious consequences for the environment and people.

She hopes her work will inspire others to take responsibility and make changes to protect the planet.

DJ ban extended to Rachakonda limits

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu has issued an order banning the use of DJ sound system in religious processions under the jurisdiction of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate.

The Commissioner has also detailed that there will be a fine of Rs 1 lakh if anyone violates these prohibitory orders and will be punished with imprisonment for five years. Apart from this, the Commissioner has taken a

crucial decision banning the use of DJ sound mixers, amplifiers and firecrackers in processions from now on in Rachakonda Commissionerate on the grounds that the health of the common people, especially the elderly, will be affected.

The CP revealed that cases will be registered under BNS 252, 280, 292, 293, 324, BNSS 123 and Section 15 of the Environment Protection Act if these regulations and government permissions are violated.

SBI organises cleanliness drive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of the Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024 campaign SBI Hyderabad Circle organized cleanliness activities in and around its Local Head Office today on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti / Swachh Bharat Diwas. The event was led by Chief General Manager, Shri Rajesh Kumar along with General Managers, Deputy General Managers, and other senior officials.

The day began with a cleanliness drive conducted around the LHO premises & busy

commercial areas of Sultan bazar & Gujarati Galli reflecting their commitment towards creating a clean and hygienic community. Officers and staff actively participated in this drive.

Speaking on this occasion CGM Shri Rajesh Kumar said that SHS initiatives were taken up by the Bank across the State of Telangana by identifying 57 Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs) as mega cleanliness drives. In recognition of their contribution to the society, all the Safaimitras were felicitated.

Gandhi Jayanthi held at Nehru Zoological Park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Gandhi Jayanthi was celebrated at Nehru Zoological Park along with the 70th Wildlife Week on Wednesday. Dr Sunil S. Hiremath, Director (FAC), Zoo Parks and Curator, paid tributes to Gandhi by garlanding his photo.

All staff members attended the event, which was held at the zoo's administrative building in Hyderabad.



A two-day free health camp for zoo staff was also conducted, with Care Hospital, Banjara Hills branch, offering tests like ECG, BP, and sugar

level checks. Over 150 staff members participated, receiving checkups from general physicians, cardiologists and dental and eye specialists.

Four drug peddlers arrested; ganja, hash oil seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In two different cases, the sleuths of Commissioner's Task Force, South West Zone Team, Asif Nagar and Habeeb Nagar Police arrested four inter-Sstate drug peddlers, who were found in possession of organic ganja and hash oil.

In the first case, the sleuths of Commissioner's Task Force, along with staff of Habeeb Nagar Police arrested three inter-state drug peddlers found in the possession of organic ganja in Mallepally.

The arrested have been identified as Syed Abdullah (32), Anas Ahmed Shaikh (24) and Irfan Raju Shaikh (20) and seized 144.72 grams of organic ganja and four cell phones worth Rs 10,00,000 from them.

Police arrested these people when Anas Ahmed Shaikh and a friend of Anas by name Irfan Raju Shaikh came to Hyderabad and delivered the ganja to Syed Abdullah in Mallepally. In the second case, Asif Nagar Police seized 2kgs of weed and hash oil.

TG cadre IFS Vinay Kumar bags Ashoka Award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Forest Service cadre officer Vinay Kumar of Telangana was presented with Ashoka Award 2024 for outstanding and innovative work in policy on Wednesday.

Formerly he served as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Telangana cadre belonging to 1992 batch of Indian Forest Service and presently on deputation working as Director, International Corporation and Deputy Director General at the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Government Of India at Dehradun.

He was awarded the prestigious civil services Ashoka Award 2024 for outstanding and innovative work in policy formulation and administration at a glittering ceremony organised at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi.



The award was conferred by General Deepak Kapoor, former chief of army staff in the esteemed presence of former defence secretary and governor of Chhattisgarh Shekhar Dutta, special guest Dr RK Ranjan Singh, Minister of State, Government of India and Justice BP Singh, former Chief Justice High Court of Mumbai, on September 29.

Adult BCG vax drive to begin in 17 districts of TG

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Health, Medical and Family Welfare department will begin the Adult Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) Vaccination study in adults in the first phase and in second phase, Telangana is one among them which has given consent to conduct the drive.

Twenty-three States have consented to participate in the BCG vaccination study in adults in the first phase and in second phase, Telangana is one among them which has given consent to conduct the drive.

According to the officials in the Health Department, over

25 lakh vaccine doses of Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) will be administered in Telangana for people coming up voluntarily. The BCG vaccination is being introduced in Telangana and 17 districts have been selected among which Hyderabad district has highest number of beneficiaries of 12,97,400 lakh, followed by Rangareddy 7,95,600 lakh, Medchal Malkajgiri-7,93,000 lakh and Nizamabad with 4,39,400 lakh.

The Asha workers of the Health department who are trained are collecting the details of the individuals interested in taking the vaccine by visiting door-to-door. They are asking individuals if they have any health ailments. They



will further communicate with the individuals before two days of vaccination drive via phone and inform them of the nearby locations for the vaccination drive. Speaking to The Pioneer, Joint Director (TB) Dr A Rajesham said, "The Adult BCG Vaccination drive

will begin in Telangana by the end of October or November first week. We will have a supply of 25 lakh doses as we will be unaware of who will give consent for the drive." Dr Rajesham said, "The target group includes individuals of 18 years, above 50, those with

BMI of less than 18-underweight, smokers in past or current, or close contacts of active TB cases."

BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) vaccine was first used in 1921 and became part of the National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) in India starting in 1962.

The vaccine has an established safety profile, with minimal risk associated with revaccination. Primary Objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the BCG vaccine strategy among at-risk adults (18 years and older) over a 36-month period. The vaccination will occur in a campaign mode over three months, free of charge at government immunization sites.



Yadagirigutta temple facelift on fast track

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

Yadagirigutta Temple ranks as one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Telangana. Known as the 'Tirupati of Telangana,' it is the second most visited pilgrimage centre after Tirupati in both Telugu states. The previous BRS government significantly developed the Yadagirigutta Temple by demolishing the old structure and undertaking its reconstruction.

Recently, the government has decided to give the temple a facelift. Similar to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, the temple's tower will be gilded.

Authorities have recently finalised the design for this purpose. Under the direction of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, the Minister for Endowments, Konda Surekha, recently reviewed the plans. With the

design now approved, work is set to commence soon.

Initially, it was decided to gild the tower with 127 kilograms of gold; however, this was later reduced to 65 kilograms for various reasons. Devotees have so far contributed 11 kilograms of gold.

Additionally, temple authorities have reported that Rs 20 crore in cash has also been collected. Full details regarding the gilding will be revealed in a day or two, according to officials from the Yadadri Devasthanam.

As part of the reconstruction, the Yadadri Temple has been magnificently redesigned. The outer prakaram (outer enclosure) now features would change. The southern seven-tiered Rajagopuram, along with the three-tiered and tower structures, has been constructed.

One more new railway line sanctioned to Telangana

The new route will connect tribal areas across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A new railway line has been sanctioned to Telangana with the Central government giving the green signal for the project. This approval comes as part of the government's focus on new railway projects and the modernisation of existing railway lines. Currently, work on the Kothapalli-Manoharabad railway line is progressing rapidly, and the announcement of another new railway line has come as a boon for Telangana.

The new railway line will connect tribal areas across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh. It is proposed to construct approximately 200.60 kilometres of railway line from Malkangiri in Odisha to Pandurangaapuram in Khammama in Telangana via Bhadrachalam. The Central government has approved a budget



of Rs 4,109 crore for this new route.

This railway line is expected to benefit not only Telangana but also several regions in Andhra Pradesh. There are expectations that this project will help promote the market for agricultural products from both Telugu

states, particularly benefiting the East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh and the Bhadrachalam area in Telangana. The railway service will also provide access for pilgrims travelling to the sacred site of Bhadrachalam from various parts of the country.

Moreover, officials indicate that railway connectivity will increase between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to the eastern and northeastern States. Specifically, the transport of coal from the Mahanadi Coalfields to power plants in central and southern India will become easier, which will also significantly benefit the aluminium and iron ore mining industries.

In the meantime, the Modi government has already released Rs 137 crore for the Kothapalli-Manoharabad railway project, which aims for completion by March 2025. As part of this initiative, track construction works between Kothapalli and Vemulawada are set to commence, with the land acquisition process already underway.

This railway line will reduce the distance between Karimnagar and Hyderabad, and rail services will soon be available to Sirisilla and Siddipet as well.

State to bear all medical expenses of injured Home Guard

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

District Collector Valluru Kranti has said that the Home Guard, who was injured during the demolition of the illegal structures in Pedda Tank in Malkapur Of the district, was admitted to AIG Hospital in Hyderabad and District Superintendent of Police Rupesh visited the Home Guard in the hospital.

The SP visited the injured in hospital on Wednesday and discussed his health condition of the Home Guard with the Hospital Chairman Dr Nageshwar Reddy.

The SP urged the hospital chairman to provide better treatment to the Home Guard.

The medical officers at the hospital assured the SP of speedy recovery and discharge in two days.

The Collector said that the state government would bear the hospital expenses of the Home Guard as per the directions of the government.

Judge emphasises need to protect the right to liberty

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Judge M Nagaraju on Wednesday emphasised the need to protect everyone's rights and liberty. He asserted that Mahatma Gandhi emphasised freedom and equality in society.

He was the chief guest at the Prisoners' Welfare Day event at the Nalgonda District Jail, organised to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti and Prisoners' Welfare Day on Wednesday.

Judge Nagaraju first paid homage by offering floral tributes at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi.

The judge urged everyone to tread the path of righteousness and avoid evil. He advised prisoners to correct their mistakes and cultivate good behaviour that benefits



Nalgonda District Judge M Nagaraju speaking at a meeting in Nalgonda on Wednesday

society. He noted that prisoners should leave with a positive attitude and contribute to society.

He mentioned that prisoners with good behaviour are often released before they complete their term of imprisonment.

District Collector C. Narayanareddy stated that everyone makes mistakes, but it is essential to repent and ensure they are not repeated. He exhorted the prisoners to join the mainstream of society.

He said that the district administration, under the guidance of the district judge, is taking necessary actions for the welfare of prisoners.

District SP Sharath Chandra Pawar and District Legal Services Authority Secretary Deepti spoke.

The District Jail Superintendent Pramod presided over the event and welcomed the attendees.

Komatireddy to visit Nalgonda today

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy will visit Nalgonda on Thursday. He will depart from his residence in Hyderabad at 8 am.

Upon arrival, at 10 am, the Minister will lay the foundation stone for the Chandragiri Villas Road project in Ward 16, which is being developed at an investment of Rs 75 lakh. He will also initiate the construction of the MNR Garden Road in the same ward, budgeted at Rs 20 lakhs.

Following this, at 10.30 am, he will inaugurate the newly constructed market building, constructed at a

cost of Rs 95 lakh in Prakasham Bazaar.

The Minister will also lay the foundation for another road project in AR Nagar, which has been allocated Rs 35 lakhs for its development.

At 11.30 am, he is expected to participate in various community programs designed to engage local residents.

From 12.30 pm to 5:00 pm, the Minister will be available at his camp office located in Srinagar Colony to interact with people from the constituency.

The Minister's visit will conclude with his departure from Nalgonda at 5:00 PM, with an expected arrival back at his residence in Banjara Hills by 7:00 PM.

Gandhi Jayanti celebrated with fervour in undivided Nalgonda

PNS ■ NALGONDA/SURYAPET/YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

Nalgonda Collector C Narayanareddy urged everyone to work together to achieve Gram Swaraj as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

In commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti, he paid floral tributes to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Ramagiri, Nalgonda district, on Wednesday.

The collector remarked that Mahatma was a great champion who brought independence to the country through non-violent resistance, showcasing the importance of satyagraha globally.

As part of this initiative, the state government will implement a pilot program from Thursday, aiming to provide a family digital card to every household.



Mahatma Gandhi's portrait. Additional Collector K Gangadhar, Additional Collector of Revenue P Ben Shalom, Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Parishad Shobharani, and other officials participated.

Suryapet District Collector Tejas Nand Lal Power noted that Gandhi fought for freedom with the weapons of non-violence and satyagraha. He highlighted Gandhi's role in uniting people and attaining freedom. The Collector said Gandhi is a monumental leader who gained international acknowledgment for India through his struggle for independence.

The event also coincided with the birthday of another great leader, Lal Bahadur Shastri, known for the slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan.' This day marked the remembrance of two eminent figures who fought for freedom.

Municipal Chairman Burri Srinivas Reddy, In-Charge RDO Sridevi, Municipal Commissioner Syed Musab Ahmad, Tahsildar Srinivasulu, and others paid floral tributes at Gandhi's statue. Prior to this, the Additional Collector of Local Bodies, T Poornachandra, also paid floral tributes at the statue.

During the Gandhi Jayanti celebrations held in the Collectorate conference hall, Yadadri Bhuvangiri District Collector Hanumanth K Zengade paid floral tributes to



Shadnagar MLA V Shankar paying tributes at Gandhi statue in Shadnagar on Wednesday

MLA hails rich legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar and prominent Congress leaders paid rich tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in a series of events held at Shadnagar in Rangareddy district. The leaders hailed the legacy of both national icons, emphasising their contributions to India's freedom and development.

Shankar led several programmes to honour Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri, starting with a tribute at the government camp office. He placed floral garlands on the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, who is revered worldwide for his non-violent fight for India's independence. He praised Gandhi as a symbol of peace and non-violence, highlighting his use of satyagraha

to achieve freedom for India.

Following this, the MLA and his team paid respects at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Farooq Nagar's Gandhi Chowk and then moved on to Gunj Road in Ward 20, where they paid tribute to the statues of both Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Speaking to the media, Veerlapalli Shankar lauded Shastri as a visionary leader who changed India's outlook with his famous slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan,' and praised his commitment to the welfare of the nation.

Several Congress leaders were present at these events, including Municipal Chairman Narender, Commissioner Cheema Venkanna, and senior leaders like Mohammad Ali Khan Babar and Yadayah Yadav. Other key participants included P Raghu, Agganuru Baswam, and Srikanth Reddy.

Peace rally taken out in Godavarikhani

PNS ■ GODAVARIKHANI

A peace rally was taken out here on Wednesday under the aegis of the Civil Society Forum in connection with Gandhi Jayanti.

The participants of the rally paid floral tributes at Gandhi statue. Those participated in the rally carried placards containing famous quotations and preaching of Mahatma Gandhi in Telugu and English languages.

Several speakers who addressed at the rally said that treading the path of the non-violence, satyagraha and peace, shown by Gandhi, would be the greatest tribute to the Father of the Nation. The forum members took oath that



Civil Society Forum taking out peace rally in Godavarikhani on Wednesday

they would follow the path of peace shown by Gandhi. The Forum members, Mudutanapalli Saraiah, M u c h a k u r t i

Chandamouli, Thata V enu, Vijaya Kumar Goud, Lakkam Bikshapati and others took part in the peace rally.

Let us follow path shown by Gandhi, says Collector

PNS ■ KUMRAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

District Collector Venkatesh Dhotre has appealed to the people saying, 'Let us follow the non-violence path shown by Mahatma Gandhi.'

Along with Additional Collectors Deepak Teewari and Dasari Venu, Asifabad Revenue Divisional Officer Lokeshwar Rao and other district officials, he paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi portrait on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti at a programme held at the Integrated Offices' Complex here on Wednesday. He lighted a lamp marking the commencement of Gandhi Jayanti celebrations. He described Gandhi as a great person who followed the path of non-violence and peace to liberate the country from the foreign rule.

National "Under 25 Summit" held at Guru Nanak Educational Institutions

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The prestigious national-level "Under 25 Summit" was successfully organised by Guru Nanak Educational Institutions and University, aimed at fostering holistic development and innovation among students. The event provided a platform for students to showcase their talents and explore skills beyond their academic domains, helping them develop well-rounded personalities and innovate through technology.

The summit featured notable personalities including international basketball player and actor Arvind Krishna, and rising playback singer Kunal Kishore, who entertained the audience and shared valuable insights on building successful careers. They engaged with students, answered questions, and emphasized the importance of strategic thinking and imple-

mentation for long-term success.

Vice-Chairman and Chancellor of Guru Nanak University, G S Kohli, along with Managing Director and Vice-Chancellor H. S. Saini, congratulated the guests and encouraged students to seize opportunities for personal growth. 'Our institution is dedicated to providing top-tier training under the guidance of experienced faculty to ensure students' success in their careers. This summit is a milestone for students to enhance their personality development and innovate for the future,' said Kohli.

The event saw active participation from Director Dr. Srinath Reddy, Principal Dr K Venkata Rao, Joint Director Dr. Parthasaradhe, Corporate Relations Director Vinay Chopra, and other department heads and staff members.

Govt will end politics of murder, says Sridhar Babu

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Industries and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu has said that the State government will end the politics of murder. He expressed concern over the culture of politics of murder being pursued for 10 years under the BRS regime.

He was inaugurating Mahila Sakti canteens at Mahadevapur, Kataram and Kottapalli under the limits of Manthani Assembly constituency on Wednesday. Later, he unveiled the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Kataram.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Sridhar Babu, delivering a marathon speech, said that conspiracies were hatched to eliminate the Congress leaders in Manthani constituency, besides unleashing repression on the Congress rank and file in the constituency. He recalled several instances and quoted examples from the past during the BRS regime to drive his point home.

By virtue of the God's grace, the people showered their love and affection on the Congress. Similarly, the Congress leaders have strong faith in the law of the land, he said, adding



Arya Vysya Association representatives felicitating Minister for Information Technology D Sridhar Babu at Kataram in Peddapalli district on Wednesday

that the Congress government would work to implement the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar.

The main focus of the government would be on development, he added.

The Government has been encouraging the women to achieve economic self-reliance and hence encouraging Mahila Sakti canteens, he said.

Telangana State Trading Corporation Chairman A Prakash Reddy, Kataram Sub-Collector Mayanka Singh, Additional Collector Vijayalakshmi, DRDO Avinash, DPO Narayana Rao and others took part in the event.

ACROSS THE STATES



'Farmer's son does not get first-rate girl'

An MLA from Maharashtra's Amravati district has courted controversy by claiming that a 'farmer's son' has to settle for an inferior bride as best-looking girls prefer to marry someone who has a steady job. Devendra Bhuyar, independent MLA from Warud-Morshi and supporter of deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, was talking about farmers' woes while speaking at a gathering in Warud tehsil of the district on Tuesday. "If a girl is beautiful, she will not like a person like you and me, but she will opt for a person having a job (while choosing her husband)," he said.

My divorce was a personal..

Continued from page 1

to remember the weight her words carry as a Minister. "It takes a lot of courage and strength to be a woman in a glamorous industry where women are often treated as props. I'm proud of what this journey has turned me into," she said. She clarified that her divorce was a personal, private matter, arrived through mutual consent, and had no political implications. "My divorce is a personal matter. I request that you refrain from speculating about it. Can you please keep my name out of political battles," Samantha said firmly. The Akkineni family members, each voicing their frustration on social media, have demanded the retraction of the comments made against them. Nagarjuna, expressing his disappointment, said, "I strongly condemn the remarks made by Minister Konda Surekha. Please do not use the lives of celebrities, who stay away from politics, to criticise your rivals. Kindly respect the personal matters of fellow human beings."

He emphasised that such accusations were false and urged the Minister to withdraw her statements. "As a woman holding a responsible post, the comments you made and the accusations against my family are completely baseless and false. I request you to take back your comments immediately," he added. Amala Akkineni, in her sharp critique, condemned the Minister's remarks as scandalous and untruthful. "Madam Minister, do you believe people with no decency to feed you utterly scandalous stories about my husband without an iota of shame or truth? This is shameful," she

wrote. Amala also appealed to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi asking him to ensure that such irresponsible statements are not made by his party members.

"Mr Rahul Gandhi, if you believe in decency, please restrain your politicians and make your Minister retract her venomous statements and also apologise to my family," she said. Actor Naga Chaitanya has also condemned the comments made by Minister Konda Surekha regarding his divorce, calling them "false" and "ridiculous." In a statement released on Monday, Chaitanya addressed the gossip surrounding his personal life, stressing that the decision to part ways with his former spouse was mutual and made with dignity.

Chaitanya, who has kept a low profile after his separation, stated that the decision was taken after much thought, owing to their different life goals. "It was a decision made in peace, out of respect for each other as two mature adults," he explained. The actor criticised the baseless rumours that have emerged about his divorce and maintained that he had remained silent out of respect for his ex-partner and family. However, he broke his silence following Konda Surekha's recent remarks, which he said were not only false but also deeply offensive.

"Women deserve to be supported and respected," Chaitanya said, emphasising that exploiting celebrities' personal lives for the sake of media headlines is shameful and unacceptable.

The collective outrage of the Akkineni family has focussed attention on the issue with family members uniting in their call for Konda Surekha to withdraw her remarks.

BRS looted TG in the name..

Continued from page 1

HYDRAA. If not proved, KTR should jump into the Purnapool. He said that there was nothing wrong in the statement of Madhu Yashki. Asking KTR to tell where KCR hid, Mahesh Kumar Goud asked 'how one says about the expenditure of Musi development without preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR). He said that Musi beautification will take a lot of time. He made it clear that there is no link between

Musi and HYDRAA.

Asking KTR to tell what education he pursued, Mahesh Kumar Goud questioned KTR to tell what relation Rahul Gandhi has with HYDRAA and Musi? He said that BRS leaders are suffering due to HYDRAA as they constructed buildings by encroaching as they wished. He said that everybody is wishing for the continuation of HYDRAA.

Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the BRS MLAs are in touch with the Congress party.



Swachh Bharat campaign becoming new path to prosperity: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed the Swachh Bharat Mission as the largest and most successful people's movement of the 21st century, emphasising its impact on public health and wellbeing.

Addressing an event to mark 10 years of the mission, Modi said that mass participation has transformed the campaign into a new path to prosperity for India. "You all made the Swachh Bharat Mission a success," the prime minister said while noting that over 28 crore people took part in more than 17 lakh events organised in just 15 days during the 'Sewa Pakhwada'.

He said chief ministers, ministers, and other representatives played key roles in this national effort and underlined that "continuous efforts can only lead to a clean India."

During the event, the prime minister inaugurated projects worth around Rs 10,000 crore under the Swachh Bharat and AMRUT 2.0 missions which include water and sewage treatment plants across several states.

"When people talk about 21st-century India even after 1,000 years, they will definitely remember the Swachh Bharat Mission," Modi said, emphasising the last-

ing legacy of the cleanliness campaign.

The prime minister also criticised previous governments for neglecting basic sanitation.

"They never considered dirt and lack of toilets as national issues. It was like they made dirt a part of their lives," he said.

He said those who used Mahatma Gandhi for their political benefits and vote bank have now forgotten his subject of interest. He said that filth and lack of toilets were never considered as a national issue.

As a result, said the prime minister, there were no discussions about it in society and lack of cleanliness became a part of life. He also recalled facing criticism after raising this issue from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

"The first job of a prime minister is to make the lives of the common man easy. I talked about toilets and sanitary pads, and today, we see the results," he said.

The prime minister highlighted that more than 60 per cent of the population was forced to defecate in the open a decade ago, which he called as an insult to Dalits, backward classes and tribal communities, and a major source of inconvenience for women.

Modi noted the "sufferings of

PM turned Gandhi's call for cleanliness into mass movement: Nadda

NEW DELHI: BJP president JP Nadda on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned Mahatma Gandhi's call for cleanliness into a 'mass movement' in the last one decade. Nadda along with Delhi unit leaders, including party's state president Virendra Sachdeva and MP Bansuri Swaraj, participated in the 'Swachhata Abhiyan' at Lodhi Colony in the national capital. Nadda also bought khadi (hand spun, natural fibre textile) clothes from the Khadi India store, said a BJP statement. The BJP's 'Sewa Pakhwara' (fortnight of service) started on September 17 and concluded with the cleanliness campaign on Gandhi Jayanti, Nadda told reporters. "Modi after he became the prime

minister adopted cleanliness and it became a mass movement. We know the call for cleanliness was given by father of the country Mahatma Gandhi but Prime Minister Modi has changed it into a mass movement," he said. This mass movement to create awareness among the people to maintain personal hygiene and avoid littering as well as encourage the society towards cleanliness has been continuing for the last 10 years under PM Modi's leadership, Nadda added. Asserting the BJP is actively involved in speeding up this movement in the future, he said cleanliness is not a matter of one day and it ought to be maintained every day throughout the year.

mothers, sisters and daughters due to the lack of toilets" and also pointed out the threats to their health and safety. He said that the filth caused by open defecation had endangered the lives of children and was a major cause of child mortality.

He also cited studies and reports that underline the posi-

tive outcomes of the mission.

An international study has shown that the Swachh Bharat Mission is saving the lives of 60,000 to 70,000 children annually, while a UNICEF report indicates that over 90 per cent of women feel safer due to the construction of household toilets, he said.

Continued from page 1

Musi victims will get full..

Continued from page 1

KTR criticised the current administration for issuing all permissions, collecting taxes, and now proceeding to demolish people's homes, calling it an act of injustice. During the meeting, the victims shared their grievances with KTR, recalling how under KCR's leadership, poor citizens had faced no such hardships.

The residents expressed their disappointment, stating that they had expected relief from the Revanth Reddy government but were instead witnessing the destruction of their homes. KTR reassured them that the BRS would stand firmly with each affected individual.

Continued from page 1

He emphasised that this sacred space will foster a serene environment, crucial for the well-being of the state's people. In a special note, Revanth expressed his happiness over the decision by Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Swamiji to hold the grand Dussehra Navaratri celebrations at the Datta Mantapam,

Bhatti visits Toshiba HQ..

electronics hub, with green electric vehicles leading in 'Future City'.

He also said that in future all TGSRTC buses will be electric and Toshiba's services will be essential for this.

SCCL, as part of expanding its business, is planning to move into mining minerals like lithium. As Toshiba is a leader in lithium battery production a collaboration between SCCL and Toshiba could be useful.

Later, at around 12 noon, the delegation visited Toshiba's fuel cell manufacturing unit nearby. They inspected the production of turbines and generators used

in nuclear and thermal power generation as well as the manufacturing processes of photovoltaic modules and various kinds of batteries.

Responding to Bhatti's invitation, Toshiba officials said that they have established units in only three Indian states, with Telangana being a prominent one.

They noted that Telangana is highly conducive to business and expressed a positive outlook on expanding their operations in the state, either independently or in partnership with the state government. They also revealed plans to increase their

current EV vehicle production capacity and expand their plant.

Later in the afternoon, Bhatti and his delegation boarded a bullet train for a 700 km journey to Osaka, where they planned to visit Panasonic's headquarters and plants.

Bhatti said that Japan's public transportation system is a model for the entire world. Travelling from Tokyo to Osaka on the bullet train, the delegation covered the 700-km distance in just two hours and 20 minutes.

He commended the comfort and excellent facilities on the train, and expressed his desire to develop a similar transport system in Telangana, adding that he would be proposing this to the Indian Railways.

CM Revanth emphasises..

which were traditionally held in Mysore.

The Chief Minister called it a significant moment for Telangana, noting that such revered events being conducted in the state signal blessings for its prosperity and peace. On this occasion, Revanth

Reddy extended his warm wishes to the people of Telangana, hoping for their well-being and happiness during the Dussehra Navaratri festival, underscoring the importance of these festivals in maintaining the cultural and spiritual fabric.

KTR questions..

Continued from page 1
Adani and the next CM in race." The involvement of high-profile figures, the corporate interests of Adani, and the presence of key Congress officials hint at a potentially significant deal, though the details remain undisclosed. In view of the recent ED raids in Telangana, this meeting has gained significance.

Apologise within..

Continued from page 1

Condemning Surekha's remarks, KTR criticised her for using his name to make political gains. "It is unfortunate that a woman like Konda Surekha uses another woman's name, along with that of popular film actors, to assassinate their character," he said.

He clarified that the allegations of phone tapping and other charges against him were baseless. He pointed out that Surekha, a minister, was misusing her position by making such unfounded comments.

The notice emphasised that her statements, lacking evidence, were widely published across the media and social media platforms. KTR expressed concern that the general public might be misled into believing these lies due to Surekha's position as a minister. KTR also reminded Surekha that he had sent her a legal notice in April 2024 for making similar comments. He noted that despite warnings from the Election Commission, Surekha continued with her defamatory remarks.

Cong Minister stoops to new..

Continued from page 1

Nagarjuna, she told shocked media persons. That is not all. She amplified that KTR had destroyed the lives of several Tollywood heroines "in this manner".

Shaking up film industry as well as other circles, Konda Surekha observed, much to the outrage of netizens and the public: "KTR made several heroines to get addicted to drugs. KTR destroyed the lives of several. KTR...Don't you have a culture of condemning when BRS activists trolled a woman Minister. BRS social media is posting as it wishes without any culture. BRS party social media is being run from Dubai. KTR played games with the lives of several heroines. KTR is the reason for divorce of several couples. Women mean little to KTR. KTR is the reason for Naga Chaitanya's divorce".

Konda Surekha alleged that the cinema industry had been troubled a lot by KTR's attitude. Fed up with this, some heroines in fact had quit the cinema industry, while others got married early, she asserted.

Surekha alleged that BRS social media had trolled Minister Seethakka and Mayor Gadwala Vijayalaxmi abusively some days back and presently they were trolling her. She said she was pained by the BRS' abusive social media posts against her and others. "It appears that KTR directed the BRS party activists to post in social media insulting women," she remarked. She pointed out that she had worked with BRS party for five years and everybody knew about her personality. She said that complaints had been lodged against the persons who had posted abusively. "Political

values have gone down...The opposition parties have to raise the mistakes of the government, but should not behave in a manner as to destroy the personality of others," Konda Surekha observed.

Surekha said that the State Women's Commission had taken suo motu notice of the issue concerning trolls against her. She alleged that BRS would not allow women to rise in politics and demanded to know why BRS had not given Minister posts to her, Bodige Shobha and Rekha Naik.

It may be recalled that some time back even Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had insinuated that KTR was the reason for the divorce of Naga Chaitanya and Samantha Ruth. Revanth Reddy also hinted several times "what KTR does with cinema heroines."

Continued from page 1

Please respect other people's privacy. As a woman in a responsible position, your comments and accusations against our family are completely irrelevant and false. I request you to withdraw your comments immediately."

Nagarjuna's son Naga Chaitanya did not say anything separately, but he just reposted his father's comment on his social media handle. But Samantha condemned Surekha's comments in a strong manner and asked her to keep her name out of political battles.

"To be a woman, to come out and work, to survive in a glamorous industry where women are more often than not treated as props, to fall in love and to fall out of love, to still stand up and fight, it takes a lot of courage and strength," said Samantha on her Instagram page. The actress added and said, "Konda Surekha Garu, I am proud of what this journey turned me into-please don't trivialize it. I hope you realise that your words carry signifi-

Congress loose talk shocks..

cant weight as a minister. I implore you to be responsible and respectful of individuals' privacy." The actress said in her statement that her divorce was a mutual and personal matter. "My divorce is a personal matter, and I request that you refrain from speculating about it. Our choice to keep things private does not invite misrepresentation."

"To clarify: My divorce was mutual consent and amicable, with no political conspiracy involved. Could you please keep my name out of political battles? I have always remained non-political and will continue doing so," Samantha stated.

Writer and director BVS Ravi strongly condemned Surekha's comments and asked the present government to take swift action on her and demanded the Minister's unconditional apology. "Can there be even more lower (sic) point to stoop down to create sensationalism than what Mrs. Konda Surekha garu

did today with her statement. It's not about @iamnagarjuna garu, his family or a woman or politician but a deep scar to the very nature of conducting one's own self in politics. This event can boil up to the crumble of the present govt. swift action has to be taken along with an unconditional apology," said BVS Ravi on her social media. He tagged the Telangana CMO and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with this post.

Director Nandini Reddy reacted to the Minister's comment and said that the film industry is not a soft target. "Very sad that a Cabinet minister deems it fit to drag female actors' names into a political slugfest. The film industry is not a soft target," said Nandini Reddy and gave a hashtag of 'Stop This Nonsense'.

Nagarjuna's wife Amala Akkineni asked Rahul Gandhi to restrain his politicians and make the Minister retract venomous

statements with an apology. "Shocked to hear a woman minister turn into a demon, conjuring evil fictions allegations, preying on decent citizens as fuel for a political war," said Amala on her social media.

"Madam Minister, do you rely and believe people with no decency to feed you utterly scandalous stories about my husband without an iota of shame or truth? This is really shameful. If leaders lower themselves into the gutter and behave like criminals, what will happen to our country?" Amala gave a strong counter to Surekha's comments on her family.

"Mr Rahul Gandhi, if you believe in human decency, please restrain your politicians and make your minister retract her venomous statements with an apology to my family. Protect the citizens of this country," Amala asked Rahul Gandhi.

Actress-turned-politician Roja condemned Minister

'Court of conscience' above all courts

Says Siddaramaiah, quoting Gandhi



PNS ■ BENGALURU

Facing ED, Lokayukta probe over the Mysuru land allotment controversy, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday invoked Mahatma Gandhi and said the "court of conscience" was above all courts.

The senior Congress leader also said Gandhi's life and thoughts have given him courage, strength and hope in his "current struggle," in an apparent reference to the respective agencies' probe over the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) 'scam' pertaining to allotment of 14 sites to his wife, where the opposition is demanding for his resignation as CM.

"Mahatma Gandhi ji had said there is a highest court above all our courts and that is the court of conscience, it surpasses all the other courts... sometimes everyone may not get justice from the courts, but I can clearly say that, as Gandhi ji said -- the courts we see cannot be above this court of conscience," he said.

Addressing a Gandhi Jayanti event organised by the 'Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi', Siddaramaiah said, "so all of us should try to conduct ourselves in accordance with our conscience, irrespective whether others like it or not, whether they oppose or appreciate, but we should try to work according to our conscience."

These remarks from the Chief Minister have come at a time when the twin investiga-

tions are on against him in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, as per the direction of the courts.

The Lokayukta police on September 27 registered an FIR against Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy, Devaraju -- from whom Mallikarjuna Swamy purchased land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others, following a Special Court order on September 25.

The order of the Special Court came a day after the High Court upheld the sanction granted by Governor Thaaarchand Gehlot to conduct an investigation against the CM.

The Enforcement Directorate has also registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), equivalent to an FIR by police, against the chief minister over the alleged irregularities in allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the MUDA.

In an online post earlier today, the Chief Minister said: "In a world full of communalism, dictatorship and violence, only Mahatma Gandhi, the embodiment of truth, peace and non-violence, can lead us by the hand."

"Bapu's life and thoughts have given me courage, strength and hope even in my current struggle of facing the real test of truth. Happy Gandhi Jayanti to all the people of the country," he added without referring to the MUDA investigations.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

West Asia on edge

Iran-Israel conflict escalates amid missile strikes and global concerns. It is high time to de-escalate the tension

The fragile peace in West Asia has once again been shattered as Iran launched a missile barrage against Israel, intensifying fears of a broader conflict in the region. On Tuesday night, Iran fired 181 ballistic missiles, forcing nearly 10 million Israelis into bomb shelters as the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) scrambled to intercept the attack. While the Iron Dome and Arrow defence systems managed to neutralise most of the missiles, some projectiles penetrated Israel's defences, causing minor damage. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately condemned the assault, calling it a "big mistake" by Iran. He warned that Tehran would face severe consequences, though stopping short of declaring a full-scale war. This marked Iran's second missile strike against Israel this year, following a similar offensive in April. Iranian officials claimed that the missile salvo was in retaliation for the recent killings of senior Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, targeted in Israeli military operations.



The missile strike has drawn immediate international reactions, with the United States issuing a stern warning to Iran. US President Joe Biden has assured military support for a joint response to any further aggression from Iran. However, the involvement of the US in the conflict could further destabilise the already volatile region, raising concerns of potential Iranian retaliation not just against Israel but also against US military interests in the region. Add to this the entry of Russia and China into the conflict. Meanwhile the humanitarian crisis is escalating, with hundreds of thousands displaced across Lebanon

and Gaza. As the death toll rises, regional stability is being tested, with fears that Iraq and Jordan, both geographically close to the conflict, could be drawn into the violence. The global community is urging de-escalation, with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres leading calls for an immediate ceasefire. While diplomatic efforts continue, the possibility of a long-lasting peace seems distant, with both Israel and Iran preparing for further confrontations. The time is running out for the peace in the region and the world. As it would not be long before both Russia and China also join the war should the US and the West get involved any deeper. The path to de-escalation lies in concerted diplomatic engagement by major global powers, especially the US, Russia, and European nations. In this scenario India could play a crucial role which has a neutral stance and is friends with both Russia and the US and also Israel and Iran. Indeed, the immediate focus should be on creating humanitarian corridors for civilians caught in the conflict zones and ensuring that aid reaches those affected by the violence in Lebanon, Gaza and Israel. Establishing a no-fly zone and enforcing a temporary halt in military operations could create a conducive environment for peace talks.

PICTALK



Mahatma Gandhi's statue, decorated with flower on his birth anniversary, in New Delhi

The battle over CPI(M) leader M M Lawrence's final journey

The Kerala High Court now holds the fate of his remains as the ideological clash within his family raises larger questions about faith and political ideology

One may apologise for seeing some similarities between the 1983 movie *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron* (directed by Kundan Shah) and the demise of CPI(M) leader M M Lawrence last month. *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron* was immortalised by the black humour associated with Indian politics and a splendid show by Satish Shah who perfected his role as the dead body of D'Mello. It has been more than a fortnight since Lawrence (95) breathed his last. But his dead body has become a subject of litigation and it is waiting for a verdict from the Kerala High Court as his younger daughter Asha Lawrence challenged the decision of the late leader's son ML Sajeewan to hand over the mortal remains to Government Medical College, Ernakulam, for the MBBS students for studies. Sajeewan, a Kerala Government lawyer, claims that his late father did not believe in any religion and had left word with him to donate the body to the MCH students. But Asha released the wedding pictures of Lawrence which were held in a church and which was being



solemnised by a Catholic priest. She also argues that her elder sister Suja and her husband were evangelists working in West Asia to free the sinners from their sins. When it was time for the relatives, friends and well-wishers of Lawrence to bid 'Lal Salam', a scuffle broke out between the deceased leader's son, daughter, and son-in-law on one side and Asha on the other side. Asha and her son Milan Joseph wanted the mortal remains to be interred as per Catholic rites in a cemetery where they had buried their mother. Following a plea by Asha, the High Court asked the Medical College authorities to take possession of the body, and keep it in the mortuary till a final decision is made on the issue. When it was time for

the body to be removed to the MCH, a sobbing Asha fell on the coffin and started weeping uncontrollably saying that she would not allow her father's body to be left to the students to dissect and mutilate. The relations of Sajeewan physically assaulted Asha and her son Milan alleging them to be RSS agents. Sajeewan alleges that the RSS and other Sangh Parivar 'elements' were behind the showdown. A CPI(M) leader claimed that Communists across the world hand over their bodies to medical colleges as they do not believe in religious rites. But bodies of EMS Nambudirippadu, E K Nayanar, CPI(M) state boss Kodyeri Balakrishnan and A K Gopalan were consigned to flames as per Hindu rites. In contrast, the body of T V Thomas was interred at a special cemetery meant for comrades. Even E K Imbichi Bawa, a former Marxist minister, was buried as per Islamic rituals in a grave after the recital of Quranic verses and Janazah. The new age leaders in the CPI(M) like Elamaram Kareem (Kareemikka), A A Rahim MP and K T Jaleel, may have to take immediate

decisions regarding their last journey. Archie Brown (author of *The Rise and Fall of Communism*) has stated that the downfall of Communism began with it turning into a religion. The life sketch of Castro says that his mortal remain was consigned to flames and the ashes were interred in the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery. If the Communist parties make it mandatory that the dead bodies of all comrades be handed over to medical colleges for teaching purposes, our medical students stand to benefit. Devika, a second-year MBBS student in a famous Government Medical College in Chennai says that only postgraduate and final semester students get the chance to dissect dead bodies because of shortage of bodies. According to George Orwell, the Communist parties have a unique rule: all are equal but some are more equal. Hence the leaders and their close family members may get a reprieve from the scalpel of wannabe doctors.

(The writer is South India bureau chief with the Pioneer; views are personal)



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

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(The writer is South India bureau chief with the Pioneer; views are personal)

The cannonballs of political warfare

Tirupati 'laddu' issue has sparked nationwide outrage, raising questions about the delicate balance between religion, politics and faith



KALYANI SHANKAR

When controversy and suspicion surround an innocuous sweet like Srivari Laddu sold by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, it does not stop there. It has gone much further in the past week and become a political weapon for Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to beat his predecessor, Jagan Mohan Reddy. Other political parties like the Congress and the BJP use it to their advantage. Some see it as a religious issue. Some others see it as a food quality issue. The spiritual leaders claim that laddu is divine food and that contaminated laddus should not be offered to the deity. The political row surrounding the laddu highlights the delicate balance between politics, religion, food quality, and the public. The delicious laddus are made in pure ghee with sugar, cardamom, raisins, cashews and gram flour. Fourteen tons of cow ghee were used daily to make laddu prasadam in a modernised kitchen. They are first offered to god and distributed to the devotees as the divine 'prasad'. The laddus also bring Rs 500 crores annually by selling them to the devotees. Naidu seized the laddu controversy to attack Jagan. He accused the Reddy government of allowing contaminated laddu with beef fat in the ghee as prasad.

He raised it at a celebration of the Modi government completing 100 days in his third term. TDP is part of the Coalition government at the Centre. Laddu came into focus in the sixties and seventies also. At that time, there were concerns about adding Dalda vanaspati, a vegetable fat, to the ghee. Shipments with this added fat were rejected, and the suppliers were blocked. In another case, there was a dispute between two Vaishnavite groups about the tilak on Lord Venkateswara. The two groups apply different types of tilaks to Venkateswara's forehead. The top court ruled that both tilaks should be used, fifteen days each in a month. The TDP won the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections in June. Reddy's YSRCP was



trounced. After winning the Assembly election, TDP used the laddu issue as Naidu, claiming that the Jagan government's cost-cutting measures led to the purchase of low-quality ghee, compromising the quality of the Tirumala Laddu. Naidu accused Jagan of neglect of Hindu religious practices during his regime. Significantly, Jagan and his late father and Chief Minister, Rajashekar Reddy, are Christians. Reddy has refuted the allegations, claiming it was politically motivated. Jagan has complained to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Chandrababu was trying to settle political scores against him.

The YSRCP also criticised Naidu and performed the purification ceremony. Jagan was denied permission to enter the temple for any penance. The laddu controversy has been blown out of proportion in the past week. Jagan did not find support from the other parties. Even Jagan's sister Sharmila joined the Congress and became the Andhra Pradesh unit chief. She has taken the issue to the Andhra Pradesh governor and seeks a CBI inquiry. Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister, Naidu's



THE LADDU CONTROVERSY HAS ALSO LED TO DEMANDS THAT TEMPLES BE FREED FROM STATE CONTROL. THIS HAS COME UP NOW AND THEN. BUT NO GOVERNMENT WANTS TO LET GO OF THEIR MASSIVE TEMPLES

coalition partner, and a famous movie star, Pavan Kalyan, is taking up the issue on religious grounds.

He has gone on an 11-day penance claiming the corrupted ghee was a grave offence. While Naidu plays the political card, Kalyan plays the religious card, saying Sanathana Dharma should be protected. The laddu controversy has spread widely when the media, public figures and some Political leaders have questioned the quality of laddus. It has sparked nationwide outrage among seers and devotees. Unsurprisingly, other organisations like the VHP, a sister organisation of the BJP, the Ayodhya seers and other religious institutions have demanded a thorough enquiry. The Ayodhya and Puri Jagannath priests have sent their prasad for quality check-up. The laddu controversy has also led to demands that temples be freed from State control. This has come up now and then. But no government wants to let go of their massive temples for free. On the legal side, Surjit Singh Yadav, President of Hindu Sena Samiti, has taken the issue to the Supreme Court, demand-

ing a special Investigation team to go into the issue.

The State government has also set up a committee. The Centre has asked the State to send a report. Meanwhile, the TTD tried to contain the damage. It conducted a purification ritual and assured the devotees that laddus were not contaminated. The issue is evolving and may take longer to resolve now that it has gone to court. It suits Babu and Modi to keep the issue burning. However, such a sensitive issue could go out of control and become a law and order problem if not checked.

The longer it remains, the more the risk of religious sensitivity looms. The controversy shows the need to balance politics, food and religion. Political and religious leaders must carefully consider how different segments of society will perceive their actions regarding spiritual matters. When faith is politicised, it becomes susceptible. Politicians must be vigilant not to make it an emotional issue. In any case, we must wait to see what the Supreme Court does as it has the final word.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SC SLAMS NAIDU OVER TIRUPATI LADDU

Madam — The Supreme Court not only addressed the Tirupati laddu controversy, asserting that religious matters should remain separate from politics, but also admonished Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu for publicly alleging without basis that adulterated ghee was used to make laddus at Tirumala Tirupati temple, causing distress among devotees. The bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan questioned the State and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) for proof and discussed the potential transfer of the investigation to an independent agency, seeking assistance from the solicitor general. Though the SC observed that politics should be kept out of the issue of faith, how to keep God out of politics? At the Ram Mandir inauguration, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was doing Aarti. In Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud's house PM Modi was doing Ganapati Puja while CJI was only standing by. People want to know why PM Modi was invited to the CJI house if God is to be kept out of politics. No doubt Naidu's allegation about animal fat seems to be a simple political allegation. Very rightly, the top court questioned whether there was any material with the CM to conclude definitively that animal fat had been used to prepare laddus at the Hindu shrine in Andhra Pradesh, where Lord Venkateswara is worshipped. However, the fake story by Chandrababu Naidu is nothing but to take revenge against his predecessor YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, because he jailed him? But he did not even think it would hurt crores of Hindu devotees.

Bidyut K Chatterjee | Faridabad

IMPROVING URBAN WATER RESOURCES

Madam — Apropos the article, 'Revive shallow aquifers for urban water woes in India', published on October 1. Aquifers can be a useful and permanent solution to improve groundwater levels across the country during the summer. Bore wells that

Dada Saheb Phalke for Mithun Da



Apropos to 'Dadasaheb Phalke finally acknowledge Mrigayaa actor' published on October 1. Gouranga Chakraborty aka Mithun Da was born in Barisal, Bangladesh. He

has had his share of struggle when he had to sleep on Bombay pavements with a hungry stomach in his early life. He even assisted yesteryear's dancing sensation Helen. He is the only actor to be awarded a National award for his debut film and later he won two more National awards. He also holds a black belt in martial arts. Today it is common for chiseled body actors to flaunt their six or eight packs, but it was Mithun Chakraborty who started this trend.

His super hit film 'Disco Dancer' not only became a hit movie in India but has a cult following in the former USSR, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East. A Limca Book of Records in his name, 19 movies released in 1989, is still unbroken. His rise to the top is indeed a testament that one can fulfil his dreams. He truly deserves this esteemed honour.

Bal Govind | Noida

are sunk several feet deep have much affected the groundwater resource.

The open wells, which tap the top shallow aquifer, can help preserve rainwater. This is a traditional method followed immediately after the rains during winter. The groundwater source is in two discontinuous layers: one, the top or shallow aquifer comprising water-bearing rocks like sandstone, and two, sand and gravel and the deeper aquifer. These two are separated by hard rocks. The top aquifer is fed with water from the rain that percolates. Based on the geology of the area, some of these aquifers could, in fact, have more water than those below, experts say. But how big are the aquifers beneath us, and what is their storage capacity? Well, it is for the respective state water boards to find answers to these complex questions.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

PARENTING IN DIGITAL AGE

Madam — It refers to 'The challenges of parenting in the age of technology' (October 1). The pressures of parenting have become overwhelming in the past two

decades, especially in this new age of technology. While countless resources, both books and online guides, offer seemingly perfect solutions, none can fully deal with each child's unique needs.

The communication barriers of gadgets introduced in this era are disrupting the natural flow of interaction. As Freud proposed social responsibilities, along with the implications of rewards and punishments, this can profoundly impact mental health, particularly in today's highly competitive environment. Not only teens, but parents these days feel compelled to showcase their children on social media as stars of extracurriculars and academics, often succumbing to the added pressure of 'helicopter parenting', which can lead to more harmful methods of discipline. The harsh reality is that the extreme consequences of strict parenting can lead to perilous consequences, proving that striking a balance is the key to avoiding such tragedies.

Shaswat Jena | Ghaziabad

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FIRST COLUMN

TRAITS OF A TRUE LEADER

The impact of servant leadership on a team or organisation brings about profound transformation



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

The concept of servant leadership is an interesting and refreshing approach to leadership in the competitive corporate environment of the present day. In this style of leadership, the focus is on empowering individuals within the team to grow and excel in their careers, fostering a culture of success and personal development. Servant leadership is a strong force in building teams that are high-performing, loyal, and motivated. At its essence, servant leadership revolves around genuine concern and care for individuals. It's not about seeking popularity or seeking approval. Creating the right atmosphere is crucial for everyone to thrive.

A true leader understands that their success is intertwined with the success of those they serve. Small gestures can have a big impact on the team. Whether it's a thank-you note, lending an ear, or offering a helping hand during tough times, these actions can make a difference. Creating a culture that values humility, acknowledges mistakes, and respects diverse perspectives fosters an atmosphere of respect and openness. When leaders prioritise the well-being of their members in their leadership, they earn loyalty through a genuine concern for their people rather than relying on their authority or instilling fear. Only then will they likely go the extra mile when they sense genuine care and understanding on a deeper level. Loyalty is not something that can be demanded, but rather something that can be earned through consistent and authentic action.

A manager or supervisor who truly appreciates the hard work of their team members goes beyond just words and takes action, offering



growth opportunities, publicly recognising achievements, and providing support during challenging times. This fosters a positive atmosphere, resulting in members who are more motivated and dedicated to the group. Inspiring leaders foster a strong sense of camaraderie and purpose within their teams by instilling a deep sense of belonging to the vision. They create a sense of collective purpose while ensuring that every individual feels included in the task at hand. This will ignite a fire within the team members, driving them to reach new heights of productivity and effectiveness. Leaders who prioritise the success of the team over personal recognition are more effective at inspiring and rallying people.

By doing so, a powerful chain reaction is set in motion: It fosters a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. We thrive on collaboration, celebrating achievements as a team, and fearlessly tackling obstacles together. Contrary to what many believe, the foundation of strong and influential leadership lies in humility and compassion. Leaders who embrace a servant mindset are not afraid to get their hands dirty and collaborate with their team members. They understand that true power comes from empowering others, rather than simply exerting authority.

The impact of servant leadership on a team or organisation runs deep and brings about profound transformation. The servant leader places a high emphasis on the growth and success of their members, using actions that instil a strong sense of loyalty, dedication, and motivation. Acts of kindness, modesty, and generosity are not signs of weakness but powerful tools for creating strong and cohesive teams. In a world where leadership is often seen as a display of power, servant leaders demonstrate that true strength lies in selflessly serving others.

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

Navigating the new safety norms for heavy industry



A S MITTAL

The manufacturing landscape in India is set for a seismic shift as the Ministry of Heavy Industry rolls out the 'Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety Regulation 2024'

The manufacturing industry is already grappling with a complex web of regulations, and a new stringent regulation has been added to the mix. Recently, The Ministry of Heavy Industry has introduced the 'Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety Regulation 2024' to ensure that safety practices in India align with global standards. While these new standards aim to enhance safety and compliance, they are expected to significantly impact Indian manufacturers, primarily micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which previously also complied with over 400 regulations. The new regulation will impact over 50,000 types of machinery, including industrial equipment like pumps, compressors, cranes, and transformers. Manufacturers must adhere to stringent safety requirements set by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). However, many Indian manufacturers, particularly MSMEs, may struggle to meet these new standards within the given one-year deadline (August 2025), as they often operate with limited resources. Under the new machinery safety standards, all manufacturers must register with the BIS and obtain a BIS standard mark or certificate of conformity. Compliance will be governed by three distinct safety standards: Type A, B, and C. Type A standards are general safety guidelines for all machinery. At the same time, Type B covers generic safety requirements, and Type C standards are machine-specific safety guidelines.

While the regulation does not apply to machinery exclusively manufactured for export, most companies produce goods for domestic and export markets, making BIS certification necessary for their entire product range. The requirement for prior BIS approval for both production and imports could create bottlenecks in production and impact the availability of essential machinery and equipment. Fiscal and Technical Burden: The new machinery safety standards will impose a significant financial burden on MSMEs. Compliance costs vary widely, ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh, depending on the type and complexity of the machinery. These costs cover certification, safety upgrades, risk assessments, employee training, and the technical requirements to bring machinery up to standard.

Many MSMEs operate within thin margins, and these costs may lead to closure for some businesses. In addition to financial challenges, many smaller firms need help with a technological gap, as they may need access to advanced machinery or technology that complies with the new standards. Retrofitting existing equipment or purchasing new machinery will require a significant investment, which may be out of reach for smaller businesses. Furthermore, MSMEs often need a more skilled workforce to implement the necessary safety measures, which can strain already tight budgets. Another major challenge is the complexity of the regulations themselves. The technical language used in the order is complex for smaller firms to navigate, and the lack of detailed implementation guidelines from BIS has only added to the confusion.

MSMEs, which frequently operate with



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limited administrative resources, struggle to understand how to comply with these multi-layered standards. More precise instructions would enable many firms to proceed with the necessary upgrades. Impact: This regulation will have a significant effect. India's machinery and electrical equipment imports, totalling \$25 billion in FY2024, could face delays as companies await BIS approval. With 39.1 per cent of these imports originating from China, delays could worsen supply chain bottlenecks, further slowing industrial growth.

Domestic manufacturers catering to the local and export markets must successfully navigate the new compliance landscape, which adds to the regulatory burden on an already stressed sector. While machinery intended for export is not subject to the regulation, most manufacturers produce goods for both domestic and international markets. This means that even businesses focused on exports will need BIS certification for their entire product line. Consequently, the exemption offers limited relief, and manufacturers must adhere to the same safety standards. Challenges in Implementation: Adopting a phased approach to implementation is imperative to address these challenges.

The current one-year compliance timeline is unequivocally inadequate, particularly for MSMEs that lack the financial and technical resources to meet stringent safety standards. Extending the deadline to afford MSMEs more time to adapt is not just a preference but a necessity. A three-year timeline for meeting Type A standards and an addi-

tional five years to comply with Type B and C standards is not just a suggestion but a requirement. This approach aligns with the phased regulatory models in other countries, such as the European Union, where industries are routinely allocated five to seven years to transition to new safety standards. Furthermore, implementing the standards in phases based on the machinery's complexity and risk level is not just a recommendation but a mandate. This approach allows firms to prioritise safety upgrades without jeopardising their operations. For example, enforcing horizontal safety standards (Type A) followed by vertical (Type B and C) standards as businesses gain the technical and financial capacity to comply is not just an option but a necessity.

The medical devices industry in India provides a practical example, where voluntary registration was initially encouraged, followed by mandatory standards based on the risk level of the device. This model is not just a suggestion but a blueprint that could be adapted for the machinery sector, providing a more manageable path toward compliance.

The Way Forward: Government support is crucial in helping MSMEs meet the new safety standards. Financial assistance, such as subsidies or low-interest loans, must help smaller firms afford the necessary upgrades to their machinery. Additionally, the government must conduct awareness campaigns and training programs to educate businesses on the importance of these regulations. It is imperative to establish a dedicated helpdesk to guide MSMEs through the certification process,

alleviating confusion and streamlining compliance efforts. MSMEs often lack the expertise needed to navigate such complex regulations, and without access to trained consultants, many businesses will struggle to meet compliance requirements. Here, industry associations can and must play a pivotal role. By negotiating bulk certification agreements, conducting training sessions, and providing technical guidance to MSMEs, these associations are ideally placed to bridge the gap between government regulations and industry readiness, ensuring a smoother transition for smaller firms. Certifying technical professionals who can assist in implementing these standards is essential. The Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety Regulation-2024 represents a necessary step toward improving manufacturing safety in India. However, the challenges facing MSMEs in complying with these new regulations are substantial. Therefore, a phased approach to implementation, combined with targeted government support, is crucial to ensure that the benefits of these new regulations are fully realised without unduly burdening the MSMEs, the backbone of Indian manufacturing.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA); Views expressed are personal)

Navigating opportunities and challenges in a shifting energy landscape

The Adani Group finds itself at a critical juncture as Bangladesh gears up to renegotiate the Power Purchase Agreement

The energy market dynamics, particularly in rapidly growing economies like India, present unique opportunities for merchant and untied capacities. For the Adani Group, one of India's largest conglomerates with a substantial footprint in the energy sector, the current Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Bangladesh is both an opportunity and a potential challenge. With growing voices within Bangladesh calling for the renegotiation of the PPA, the landscape is shifting, presenting both risks and advantages for Adani. Background of the Agreement: The PPA between Adani and Bangladesh was established to enhance energy security for a nation facing persistent power shortages and increasing



SURYA SARATHI RAY

the northern regions of the country. **Current Challenges** Recent criticisms from Bangladeshi media allege that Adani is selling power at exorbitant rates. In response, Adani has referenced government data to assert that its electricity is indeed the cheapest compared to other similar fuel-based power plants. However, Bangladesh is facing a significant financial crunch, with over \$800 million owed to Adani for power supplied. Despite this outstanding debt, Adani has continued its supply but finds the situation increasingly untenable, given its obligations to lenders and suppliers. This growing receivable issue threatens to affect Adani's credit profile, potentially raising the cost of funds

across its operations. In a significant policy shift, the Indian government recently allowed power plants exporting electricity to connect to the national grid. This move could be advantageous for Adani Power, as it opens up the domestic market for the Godda plant, which is currently not integrated with the Indian grid. Adani remains committed to honoring its contract with Bangladesh while also requesting the early settlement of outstanding dues. If Bangladesh fails to meet its payment obligations or decides to terminate the PPA, Adani can pivot its focus towards sales within India.

Economic Considerations One of the main economic factors influencing this scenario is the disparity in electricity

rates between India and Bangladesh. The Indian power market has seen a marked increase in electricity prices driven by robust economic growth. By redirecting power supplies to India, Adani could take advantage of these higher rates, thus boosting profitability. Recent trends indicate that peak power prices have reached around Rs 10/kWh for extended periods, a figure



likely to rise due to heightened demand for coal-based power. The cost of coal, crucial for power generation, is influenced by global market fluctuations. While the Godda plant operates on imported coal, its proximity to India's coal reserves allows for reduced logistical costs, further enhancing Adani's operational efficiency.

Given this context, Adani stands to benefit significantly from redirecting its power supply to the Indian market, rather than continuing to fulfill its obligations under the existing PPA with Bangladesh. **Regulatory Environment** The Indian government's focus on self-reliance and energy security has created a favorable environment for domestic power producers. Initiatives

like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and "Make in India" seek to reduce import dependency and promote local production and consumption. In line with these national priorities, Adani could leverage its resources to address India's escalating energy demands effectively. The National Electricity Plan forecasts that India's peak power demand will surge from 203 GW in FY22 to 277 GW by FY27, and further to 366 GW by FY32. This growth implies the need for an additional 80 GW of coal-based capacity by FY32. With its existing 1.6 GW capacity at the Godda plant, Adani is well-positioned to play a pivotal role in meeting this demand. **Navigating Future Decisions** While the potential benefits of terminating the PPA are com-

elling, such a move carries inherent risks. Breaking an international agreement could lead to diplomatic consequences and adversely affect Adani's global reputation. Nevertheless, if the Bangladesh government were to initiate a renegotiation or termination of the agreement, Adani would likely find itself in a more advantageous position, allowing it to pivot toward the lucrative Indian market without the constraints of the PPA. The company must balance its commitment to the agreement while remaining agile enough to capitalise on emerging market conditions in India, ensuring its long-term growth and sustainability in the energy sector. (The writer is a financial journalist; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Govt discussing scheme for 'made in India' label

The government is discussing a proposal to formulate a scheme for 'made in India' label with a view to promote brand India in the global markets, an official said. The official said that a high level committee is examining the details of the scheme. The objective is to create a strong brand identity for India, similar to how 'made in Japan' or 'made in Switzerland' evokes about specific images and qualities. "That we want for India also," the official said, adding, for instance, "when we think of Switzerland, we often think of their watches, chocolates, and banking systems." "We are having discussions on how we can do that. Do we make this scheme for specific sectors like textiles where we have strength in that. So we are looking into such things," the official added. According to experts, quality consciousness is key to promote Brand India. The government at present has India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) to promote and create international awareness about the 'made in India' label in



AI introduces new policy for cabin crew

Air India is introducing a revised policy for the cabin crew members of domestic and international flights, wherein certain sections of the members will have to share rooms during layovers, according to a source. The revised policy will also be applicable for Air India Express, which has merged AIX Connect with itself. Among other changes, the source in the know said the allowances for cabin crew of international flights will be increased from USD 75-125 bracket to USD 85-135 bracket. There is no change in the allowances for the cabin crew of domestic flights. An airline spokesperson said that with the merger of Air India and Vistara formalising, there is a need to harmonise these policies for employees of both the organisations. "As part of that exercise, we have communicated the changes applicable to Air India employees."



Adani merges step-down subsidiaries with ANIL

Adani group has merged two step-down subsidiaries with green hydrogen and wind turbine manufacturing firm Adani New Industries Ltd, according to a stock exchange filing on Wednesday. "Adani Infrastructure Private Limited and Mundra Solar Technology Limited stands amalgamated with Adani New Industries Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the company," Adani Enterprises Ltd, the group's flagship firm said in the filing. Adani Infrastructure and Developers operates as a real estate company, constructing and developing thermal and solar power projects as well as providing engineering, techno-commercial, project management and control, and commissioning services. Less than three years old Mundra Solar Technology is involved in production, collection and distribution of electricity. Adani New Industries Ltd (ANIL) is a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd that undertakes low-carbon projects. It undertakes green hydrogen projects, manufacturing of wind turbines and solar modules batteries.

Uttarakhand's GSDP increases 1.3 times in 20 months

Uttarakhand's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has increased by 1.3 times in the last 20 months, the state government said on Wednesday. New policies brought by the state government, amendments in the old ones besides employment and self-employment programmes underway have contributed to the GSDP growth, Secretary energy, housing and planning R Meenakshi Sundaram said at a press conference. The per capita income of the state in 2021-22 was Rs 2,05,000, which rose to Rs 2,60,000 in 2023-24, he said, adding that the per capita

income of the state increased by 26 per cent in the last two years, which is better than the national average. The per capita income at the national level has increased from Rs 1,50,906 to Rs 1,84,000 in two years, registering an increase of 20 per cent during the period, he said. According to the central government's Periodic Labor Force Survey, the labor force participation rate in the age group of 15 to 29 in the state was 43.7 per cent in 2022-23, which increased to 49 per cent in 2023-24. Similarly, the employment population ratio of the state has increased from 37.5 per cent to 44.2 per cent.

POWER EXPORT TO BANGLADESH
Tripartite pact to be signed today

PNS ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal, Bangladesh and India will ink a long-awaited tripartite agreement on Thursday to export electricity to Bangladesh, an official said on Wednesday.

The agreement will involve the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), NTPC Viduyt Vyapar Nigam Limited of India and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), according to Chandan Kumar Ghosh, spokesperson at the Nepal Electricity Authority.

Under the terms of the agreement, the NEA will get 6.40 US cents per unit of electricity. The Indian side is involved in the deal as Nepal and Bangladesh would use India's transmission line to distribute electricity through its territory.

Earlier, the agreement was scheduled for July 28, which was postponed due to politi-

cal turmoil and a change of government in Bangladesh.

According to sources at the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, meetings at the energy secretary and joint-secretary levels were held in Kathmandu on Tuesday and Wednesday to prepare for the agreement.

The NEA plans to sell electricity to Bangladesh annually during the rainy season, from June 15 to November 15. In the beginning, Nepal will export 40 MW of electricity generated in the country to Bangladesh through India. The expected

export is 144,000 megawatt-hours, and the NEA estimates earnings of USD 9.216 million over these five months, according to the media reports. Electricity will be exported to Bangladesh via the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur 400 kV transmission line, with the metering point in Muzaffarpur.



'Singapore among stakeholders in Bengaluru becoming tech hub'

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore has been one of the key stakeholders in the development of Bengaluru as a global tech hub over the past 30 years, a senior official of the Karnataka government has said.

"We have a very deep association with Singapore right from the beginning of the tech revolution in Bengaluru, some 30 years ago," said Ekroop Caur, Secretary to Government of Karnataka, Department of Electronics, Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science & Technology.

Among Karnataka's biggest partners is Singapore's Capitaland under a public-private partnership, and it continues to be one of the leading tech infra partnerships, Caur said on Tuesday at a Bengaluru Tech Summit 2024 roadshow here.

"We are natural allies and we can accelerate a lot of business growth in Bengaluru via Singapore," said the secretary who is working on getting one of the largest delegation-company participations from Singapore.

She noted Singapore, being a cluster of global companies, could further connect with cor-



porations around the world.

Further, she also observed the mobility of Indian talent globally as well as Indian-origin startups returning home, especially to Bengaluru, to scale up their businesses.

"We have this tag line -- 'skill locally, work globally' -- and we have the appetite to serve the global requirements," said Caur, underlining, "India has the appetite to serve the global requirements with its talent."

Addressing business executives here on Bengaluru's progress over the decades and

updating them about the planning for the summit to be held next month, she highlighted the potential of skilled manpower exports, given the country's demographic dividends.

Caur also said that tech startups initiated by overseas Indians are returning to India, and especially working in Bengaluru which is now rated as the most advanced technology hub and is among the best tech cities in the world.

"Singapore is our global innovation alliance partner and, as a result of that, companies based

in the city state do keep participating in the Bengaluru summit," added Jagdish Patankar, Executive Chairman of MM Activ, a sci-tech communication company.

Patankar said his company, as part of the Bengaluru summit, is working with Enterprise Singapore and other agencies to organise a government-led mission to the 27th edition of the summit to be held on November 19-21. More than 5,000 companies are expected to participate in the exhibition and conferences during the summit.

RECORD-BREAKING RALLY IN MKTS

Investors richer by Rs 110.57 lakh cr so far

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth surged by a whopping Rs 110.57 lakh crore so far this year, driven by a remarkable rally in the stock market, where the benchmark indices shattered many records.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms soared Rs 110,57,617.4 crore to Rs 4,74,86,463.65 crore (USD 5.67 trillion) so far this year. The market valuation of all listed firms at the BSE hit an all-time high of Rs 477.93 lakh crore on September 27.

The BSE Sensex jumped 12,026.03 points or 16.64 per cent so far in 2024, giving handsome returns to investors. The benchmark scaled its all-time peak of 85,978.25 on September 27, this year,



breaching many milestones.

Analysts attributed the sharp rally in the markets to robust domestic liquidity along with strong fundamentals of the Indian economy.

"One of the key highlights of this year is the robust domestic liquidity, driven by record inflows into the mutual fund industry," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Despite selling pressure from FIIs (Foreign Institutional Investors), the Indian equity markets reached record highs, delivering solid gains, he said.

"Notably, the midcap and smallcap indices outperformed and several stocks turned into multibaggers, rewarding retail investors handsomely," Meena added.

At the beginning of the year, the BSE Sensex was at 72,271.94 level and the benchmark gauge is now at 84,266.29.

Overall, 2024 has been an outstanding year for retail investors, marked by strong market performance, especially in midcaps and smallcaps, backed by domestic liquidity and resilience in the face of FII outflows, he said.

Anil Ambani's Reliance forays into Bhutan

To set up 1,270 MW projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group on Wednesday announced its foray into Bhutan and said it will set up 1,270 megawatt solar and hydroelectric projects in the Himalayan Kingdom.

"It entered into a strategic partnership agreement with Druk Holding and Investments Ltd (DHD), the commercial and investment arm of the Royal Government of Bhutan, to undertake various initiatives aimed at bolstering investment in the renewable and green energy landscape of Bhutan," the group said in a statement.

The partnership between Reliance Group and Druk Holding will focus on green energy generation, specifically solar and hydropower initia-



It will set up a 500 MW solar plant in two phases of 250 MW each over the next two years.

Reliance Power and Druk Holding will also jointly develop the 770 MW Chamkharchhu-1 hydro project. The project has been classified as a run-of-the-river project and under a concession model in accordance with Bhutan government policy.

"Reliance Group will collaborate with government-owned companies in Bhutan to implement infrastructure projects that support Bhutan's net-zero goals," the statement said.

The partnership agreement was signed today by Harmanjit Singh Nagi, President (Corporate Development), Reliance Power Ltd and Ujjwal Deep Dahal, CEO, Druk Holding and Investments, in the presence of Anil Ambani.

'Cos pushing workers very hard can't sustain pace'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid an intense debate in India Inc about high stress at workplaces, Zoho CEO and Co-founder Sridhar Vembu has said companies that push workers "very hard" will not be able to sustain the pace and advocated that a "different" mindset is needed to build long-term and sustainable organisations.

In an interview to PTI, the billionaire businessman and social entrepreneur said burnout, loneliness post-migration to big cities, long-commutes and stressful work conditions are throwing people into "a very big pressure cooker" like environment.

W Asia war may push logistics cost
Disrupts oil, electronics agri trade: Exporters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The escalation of conflict in the West Asian region is expected to push already high logistics costs besides hurting trade in sectors such as oil, electronics and agriculture, according to exporters.

They said that insurance costs for exports to the countries directly involved in the war could also go up, which will impact Indian exporters' working capital.

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) stated that the conflict is already hurting India's trade with countries like Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon.

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said the Iran-Israel conflict has the potential to significantly impact world trade



and the global economy in several ways.

"Iran is a key player in the oil market. Any escalation in conflict could disrupt oil supplies, leading to higher prices, which would impact global economies, especially those reliant on oil imports. Oil prices have already moved up by USD 4 per barrel," FIEO DG Ajay Sahai said.

Expressing concerns, he said increased tensions could

destabilize the Middle East, affecting trade routes like the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil passes.

"Disruptions could lead to higher shipping costs and delays. Many global supply chains depend on the stability of the Middle East. Conflict could disrupt transportation and logistics, affecting industries ranging from electronics to agriculture," Sahai said.

'Women bunk tech career for lack of support'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Companies struggle to find right women talent with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) profiles as lack of family support and higher cost of education discourage girls from pursuing higher education in this stream, according to industry experts.

The gender gap persists largely in STEM education due to societal and cultural factors including gender biases and lack of support.

"While the higher cost of education can sometimes be a factor, the bigger issue is a lack of encouragement from a young age, limited role models, and not enough support for women entering STEM related fields," workforce solu-



tions provider NLB Services CEO Sachin Alug said. This is making it difficult for companies to find the right women talent from the STEM stream, he said, adding that lack of gender diversity is limiting creativity, innovation and different perspectives to solve complex business problems.

Echoing a similar view, home-grown software solu-

tions provider in business processes Tally Solutions executive director Nupur Goenka said there is a huge gap in men-women ratio in the STEM area as access to continuous education is a privilege rather than a right.

"To encourage women, it is important to change how we perceive a woman's role in society at a fundamental level across the population. Without this, it is difficult to imagine how social construct, education opportunity, workforce opportunity, culture, safety, and policies will all start working together to create a system where women can succeed in STEM," he noted.

Quess Deputy CEO - IT Staffing, Kapil Joshi said that there is an improvement in male-female ratio in STEM across colleges, which will gradually reflect in the job market in the future.

SBI to add 600 branches in its network: Chairman Setty

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India (SBI) is planning to open 600 branches across the country in the current financial year in a bid to tap business opportunities in emerging areas including large residential townships.

"We have strong branch expansion plans...this would be mainly focused on emerging areas. A lot of residential colonies are not covered by us. Around 600 branches is something we are planning in the current year," SBI Chairman CS Setty said.

The country's biggest lender opened 137 branches last fiscal. Of the total, 59 new rural branches were inaugurated.

SBI has a network of 22,542 branches across the country as of March 2024. Apart from branch presence, SBI has 65,000 ATMs and 85,000 business correspondents. "We serve about 50 crore customers and we take pride in saying that we are the banker to every Indian, and, more importantly, to every Indian family," he said.

He also said it would be his

endeavour to transform SBI into the best bank, the most valued bank not only from a shareholder point of view but from the point of view of every stakeholder who deals with SBI.

"It could be my customers, it could be our shareholders, it could be the larger ecosystem -- the society, the institutional framework -- all the stakeholders should be saying that this is the best bank to deal with," he added.

In a bid to attract depositors, State Bank of India is contemplating to come out with innovative products including a combo product of recurring deposit and SIP.

With the economy progressing, he said, customers are becoming financially more aware and demanding, and have started looking for innovative investment instruments. "Obviously, nobody wants to put everything in a risky asset or a speculative asset...banking products will always be part of the basket. So, we are trying to bring products which will appeal to them," he said.



"We have strong branch expansion plans...this would be mainly focused on emerging areas. A lot of residential colonies are not covered by us. Around 600 branches is something we are planning in the current year," SBI Chairman CS Setty said.

Artistic heritage of Hyd cries for help!

TEJAL SINHA
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Hyderabad Art Society is one of the oldest organisations in the country after the Bombay Art Society. HAS organised several one-man and group shows and national and international exhibitions in collaboration with Central Lalit Kala Academy, AIFICS and All India Industrial Exhibition Society. They have been organising All India Art Exhibitions for the past 82 years, providing opportunities to artists of all states.

MV Ramana Reddy, a visionary sculptor from Telangana, has made a profound impact on the art world with his monumental works. Born in Siddipet on July 10, 1966, Reddy completed his MFA in Sculpture from Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University (JNAFAU) and graduated as a gold medalist from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) in 1991.

One of his most iconic works is the Telangana Martyrs Memorial, also known as Telangana Amara Jyothi, inaugurated in June 2023. This stainless steel sculpture, the largest of its kind globally, honours the 369 students who died during the 1969 Telangana agitation. With a diya-inspired design, it symbolises sacrifice and eternal hope. The sculpture, spanning 2.88 lakh square feet, fuses art and architecture, mirroring Telangana's cultural roots while reflecting its surroundings.

Beyond the Telangana Martyrs Memorial, Reddy's public art can be seen across prominent locations in Hyderabad and internationally, with exhibitions in over 80 countries. He has contributed works such as the Telangana Thalli bronze sculpture and numerous public installations in spaces like Park Hyatt and Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. His accomplishments have earned him prestigious awards, including the First Best Sculptor award from the Telangana government and the Vishista Puraskaram from Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University. 'Life is art and art is life', an artist can never separate either. While art is a community that many look forward to, The Hyderabad Art Society, estab-

The Hyderabad Art Society, which has created a legacy of its own, is now calling for action. Struggling over the funds, president of the society, M V Ramana Reddy, speaks to The Pioneer on how the community of artists is now seeking support



lished in 1941 under the leadership of notable figures like Mehdi Nawaj Jung, Nawab Salarjung Bahadur, Khan Bahadur Syed Ahmed, and Yazdani, has played a significant role in promoting this cause of art. As one of the oldest and leading art organisations, it has been instrumental in nurturing the artistic landscape of the region.

This society has played the role of a stepping stone in shaping the careers of eminent artists, including M F Hussain. Well-known

artists of Telugu states also participates in the art camps and activities of HAS!

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the president of HAS, M.V. Ramana Reddy, shares, "Before 1984, the art society was very active but because the society was funded by the national Lalit Kala Akademi. However, the academy was later closed due to several reasons. We, as a society, have given several representations to revise the academy. But there was no relief. When the Telangana state was

formed, the previous government had already put in its first manifesto in 2014 to revive all the academics. Unfortunately, the academy could not start."

But due to the lack of the art academy's presence, the HAS has been struggling to gather funds.

However, keeping up with the motive of society, Reddy, who took over the charge as the president in 2015, continues to organise several activities by integrating different departments, including I&PR, irrigation and many more.

Even before getting on board as the president, he was actively involved in art, conducting several camps when he lived in Europe or kept travelling to over 80 countries.

"Hyderabad Art Society has been the only source left to support different artists," affirmed the artist himself. "We as the team of HAS have been the ones who have been dividing the duties among ourselves. Now we are limited to annual shows. Now, the I&PR department has been a support, but still, it does get difficult. We go and try to bring in a financial source, but it's not possible for us to regularly visit them. With more than 200 artists here in Hyderabad, though they've been confident about their works."

As we go ahead in this chat, he highlights that for all the artists, there's nothing beyond the culture. "Every time that I've been promoting the art in different countries, I've been referred to as an Indian artist, which brings a sense of pride. We've been promoting the culture in the foreign states, which automatically brings an industrial promotion. One needs to respect their own culture. But for us artists, who are not much looked upon, we are struggling to sustain. One needs to appreciate the artist."

In fact, he tells us how Germany has Künstlersozialkasse, a health insurance scheme that treats artists, performers, publicists, writers, editors and journalists like employees: the scheme pays half of the contributions for your health insurance, pension and long-term care insurance. Thus, he urges the government here in India and the state to do something beneficial for artists here too. The Hyderabad Art Society, which has created a legacy of its own, is now calling for action. Struggling over the funds, the President of the society.

The Hyderabad Art Society has continued its art activities and gained a place of honour in the art world in particular and the public in general. The society stands as an example to many of its sister institutions, and everyone can look forward to similar and ever-better activities in the years to come.

He urges that now it's high time that the government revives the Lalit Kala Akademi, just like Sangeet Natak Akademi and Sahitya Akademi!



Fuelling fasts and firing up ketosis

Ghee, a form of clarified butter originating from India, has long been revered in Ayurvedic practices for its healing properties and nutritional benefits. In recent years, it has gained prominence in modern dietary trends like intermittent fasting and the ketogenic (keto) diet. These diets focus on managing energy levels, promoting fat loss, and boosting overall health, and ghee has become an essential ingredient in both. Its nutrient-dense profile, rich in healthy fats, makes it the perfect food for those seeking balanced energy, especially when carbohydrate intake is limited.

★ ROLE OF GHEE IN FASTING

Intermittent fasting involves cycling between periods of eating and fasting, typically done in a 16:8 or 18:6 ratio, where individuals fast for 16-18 hours and eat within a smaller window. During fasting, maintaining stable energy levels without triggering insulin spikes is key, and ghee can play a pivotal role in achieving this.

★ GHEE'S NUTRITIONAL POWERHOUSE

Ghee is rich in healthy fats such as omega-3 fatty acids, butyric acid, and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). These healthy fats help sustain energy during fasting without causing insulin spikes, allowing the body to remain in a fat-burning state. One tablespoon of ghee provides around 112 calories and 12.7 grams of fat, making it an excellent energy source during fasting windows.

★ BOOSTING KETOSIS IN FASTING

For individuals combining intermittent fasting with a keto diet, ghee is particularly beneficial. In fasting, when the body's carbohydrate stores deplete, it turns to fat for fuel, a metabolic state known as ketosis. Ghee, rich in saturated fats, supports this process by increasing the production of ketones, the molecules used as an alternative energy source when glucose is scarce.

A 2021 study published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* showed that incorporating ghee during fasting helped maintain ketosis for longer periods, supporting more effective fat loss and improved energy levels in participants. The study also noted that individuals experienced fewer energy crashes or cravings during the fasting window when ghee was consumed in the form of bulletproof coffee or on its own.

★ BENEFITS OF GHEE IN KETO DIET

The keto diet, which emphasizes high fat, moderate protein, and extremely low carbohydrate intake, relies on fat as the primary energy source. With the body transitioning from using glucose to burning fat for fuel, consuming the right kinds of fats becomes essential.

★ ENERGY AND SATIETY

Ghee provides a steady stream of energy without spiking blood sugar or insulin levels, which is critical for those on the keto diet. Due to its high fat content, ghee promotes satiety and reduces hunger pangs. This is crucial on a keto diet, where carbohydrate cravings can be challenging to manage initially.

A study from the National Library of Medicine found that participants who incorporated ghee into their keto meals reported a 23% longer period of feeling full compared to those who consumed meals with regular butter or other oils. This feeling of satiety makes it easier to stick to the restricted eating plan, reducing the temptation to snack between meals.

★ SUPPORTS GUT HEALTH

Butyric acid, a short-chain fatty acid found in ghee, plays a significant role in supporting gut health by promoting the healing of the intestinal lining and reducing inflammation. Butyrate is also essential in the keto diet, where digestive issues can occur due to the drastic reduction in fiber-rich foods like fruits and grains. Incorporating ghee can help alleviate these problems by nourishing gut cells and promoting healthy digestion.

In the same study mentioned earlier, 68% of individuals consuming ghee regularly on the keto diet reported improved digestion and fewer cases of constipation or bloating, compared to those who didn't incorporate ghee.

★ GHEE VS. OTHER FATS IN KETO

When compared to other fats like coconut oil, olive oil, or butter, ghee stands out due to its high smoke point (250°C/482°F), which makes it ideal for cooking at higher temperatures without breaking down and forming harmful compounds. Additionally, ghee is free of lactose and casein, making it a suitable option for people with dairy sensitivities.

How to incorporate ghee into your diet?

There are numerous ways to add ghee into your fasting and keto routines. Here are some ideas:

- Bulletproof coffee:** Adding 1 tablespoon of ghee and 1 tablespoon of MCT oil or coconut oil to your coffee can provide sustained energy during fasting without breaking your fast.
- Cooking and baking:** Use ghee as a replacement for butter or oil in cooking and baking. It's especially useful for frying or sautéing due to its high smoke point.
- Topping for veggies:** Drizzle ghee over keto-friendly vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, or zucchini to add a rich, buttery flavour.
- Keto snacks:** Ghee can be added to fat bombs or used as a spread for keto-friendly bread or crackers, enhancing flavour and keeping you full for longer.

(The author, is Ravin Saluja, director with STERLING AGRO INDUSTRIES LLIMITED, Nova Dairy Products.)



AARTI SREENATH
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FROM MALEGAON TO TIFF

Shashank Arora reflects

In a world where instant stardom is often handed out like a party favour, Shashank Arora has steadily charted his own path, resisting the temptation to fit in or fade away.

With the recent buzz surrounding his latest film, *Superboys of Malegaon*, making its way to TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival), the *Moonthon* star sat down to share his journey, one that's as unpredictable as it is inspiring.

Through a mix of earnest reflection, dry humour and an artist's unwavering devotion to storytelling, he reveals what keeps him going in an industry full of fleeting glories.

"It's a blessing," says the *Made in Heaven* actor when asked about his film reaching TIFF. His sincerity speaks volumes: it isn't about red carpets or flashy premieres. It's the simple thrill of being part of a festival where people truly celebrate cinema. He laughs as he adds, "You're doing what you love and people are there to see it. It's a wonderful kind of feeling." For Shashank, this isn't a career; it's an ongoing adventure.

The *Tanaav 2* fame's career is a curious one, woven from roles in films like *Titli*, *Made in Heaven*, *Moonthon* and now. When asked about the journey that brought him here, he's honest about the roadblocks. "The biggest challenges? You face new ones every day," he says with a shrug. "I'm not from this city. I had no idea how the business worked. I came here alone and made a lot of mistakes. But, hopefully, I got some things right." The *Rock On 2* fame's voice betrays a mix of hard-earned wisdom and the youthful mischief of someone who still loves the unpredictable chaos of it all.

When it comes to selecting roles, he follows his instincts rather than any formulaic path to success. "I choose my roles based on the script and the people telling the story," he explains. "If the story excites the child in me, I'm on board. Everything else is secondary." It's this childlike

enthusiasm that makes him such a compelling performer—someone whose every role feels raw, real, and richly textured.

From indie darlings to mainstream thrillers, he has never been one to confine himself to any particular medium. He moves seamlessly from street performances in a small town indie to big-budget projects with hundreds of extras. "The difference is only in the technicalities—the number of cameras, the crew size. But the actor's job is the same everywhere. Whether you're performing on the side of the road or in a 2000-crore film, your job is to feel something, to tell a story. It doesn't matter if there's one camera or twenty; you're just trying to be honest."

Superboys of Malegaon, he explains, is about a bunch of boys who love storytelling. "They have nothing, but they put everything on the line to make films." The premise reminded him of people he knew—scrappy dreamers who throw caution to the wind and pour every ounce of themselves into their art. The production was, unsurprisingly, packed with memorable experiences, from sugarcane juice spills to hospital visits after falls from the village set. He muses, "But the best takeaway? The people. Always the people. It's not about the situation—it's about the relationships you build, the artists you create with."

His filmography is as eclectic as they come. When asked to pick a favourite role, he shakes his head. "I can't pick between my children," he says. "Every character is a part of me. Whether it's *Titli*, *Salim* from *Moonthon*, or any other—each one has left a mark. They're not big or small inside you; they're all just... there." For him, his characters aren't pieces to rank or compare—they're extensions of who he is, each unique and important.

He's worked with some of the most celebrated directors of our time, Kanu Behl, Reema Kagti, and Anurag Kashyap. The *Neeyat* fame speaks about them with genuine admiration, calling them some of the best directors and writers he's had the privilege of working with. He proudly drops another name: "I worked with Naseeruddin Shah. I worked with Irrfan Khan in his last ever movie. We had *Gulkaand ka halwa* and drove a bike to the Pokhran desert." There's a quiet reverence as he talks about these legends. "You learn something from every single one of them, whether it's Naseer sir, Konkona Sen, Vidya Balan, or Irrfan Khan. You just need to be perceptive and listen."

With projects ranging from *The Great Indian Murder* to *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, he has never shied away from politically charged narratives. Yet he's careful not to lean too heavily on what's "expected" of an artist in today's world. "It's very important to tell all types of stories," he insists. "But it's not an artist's responsibility to show political clarity. You must be politically aware, but a story doesn't have to lean towards something. It just needs to be told."

When asked about his upcoming projects, he keeps it simple: "*Superboys of Malegaon*—coming January 25th. Please watch it. Don't complain that good films don't come out." And for aspiring actors hoping to carve out their own place in the industry, his advice is equally straightforward: "Don't take yourself too seriously. And study acting. It helps."

Whether it's *Superboys of Malegaon* or any of his future projects, one thing is certain—he will approach it with love, humility, and a deep admiration for the art of storytelling.

Actor Shashank Arora, known for his roles in *Titli*, *Brahman Naman*, *Moonthon* and *Made in Heaven*, is currently over the moon with his upcoming venture *Superboys of Malegaon* heading to TIFF. Having him onboard for an exclusive *tete-a-tete*, he shares his feelings on the same, his journey, his process of selecting roles and more



what's brewing?



Swathy Reddy mesmerises Paris Fashion Week 2024 with her exquisite Indian Lehenga collection, celebrating the fusion of heritage and craftsmanship. At the Paris Fashion Week 2024, she took the global fashion stage by storm!



Shruti Hassan greeted the students of University of Roehampton London at the Park, Somajiguda.



Telangana Agriculture, Handloom and Textile Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao inaugurated a handloom garment exhibition organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India in the name of Special Event Expo at Ameerpet Kamma Sangham.



PARTY



Deepika and Ankita

Priyanka

Harita

Sonali

Sakshi

Luxury Kids Boutique India has opened its new branch in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad

Photos by - SV Chary

Celebrate Navratri with special festive menu

Navratri is a time for reflection, fasting, and celebrating with loved ones. At SOCIAL, they are bringing a festive touch with a special Navratri menu that blends traditional flavours with their signature twist. Their limited-time Navratri Thalis will be available at all SOCIAL outlets from 3rd to 11th October 2024.

The Navratri Thali is a balanced and flavourful spread featuring Aloo Jeera—spiced potatoes tossed with cumin, paneer in a rich tomato



gravy, crunchy makhana and vrat special samak rice. Savour the *falahari poori* and finish your meal with the sweet and satisfying *sabudana kheer*. To add even more variety, the Thali also includes crispy *sabudana vada* and *sabudana papad*, bringing a mix of textures and tastes. Each dish is thoughtfully prepared to make your fasting journey comforting, delicious, and full of flavour.

Date: 3rd to 11th October, 2024

Place: Mindspace SOCIAL, Hyderabad

FUN

ARCHIE



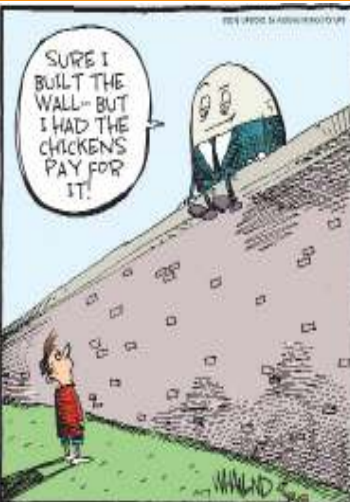
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



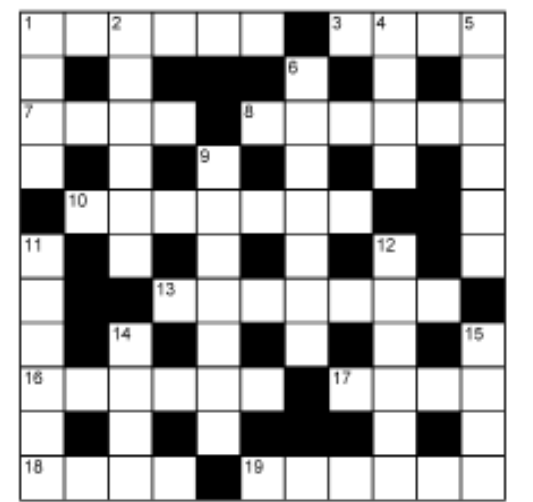
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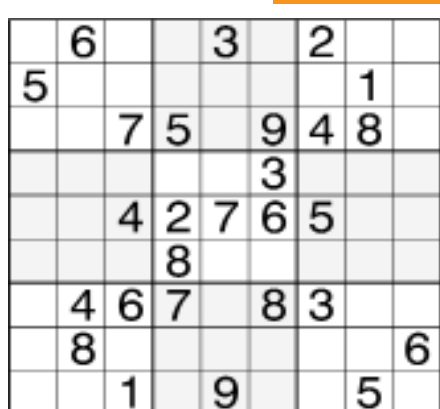
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- The crime of killing someone
- Light open shoes with straps
- This covers your body
- Baby goats
- Cardboard box
- People you like who like you
- Envious
- Fires a gun
- An easy card game
- A student's table
- The capital of the United Kingdom

DOWN

- Manufacture
- People on horses
- Fly this on a string
- One hundred less ten
- Light open shoes with straps
- Says again
- Overtook
- Spoiled
- Male children
- Twirl around

SOLUTION 706



GINGER MEGGS



Ester on finding challenging, out-of-the-box scripts!

ESTER NORONHA DISCUSSES HER UPCOMING FILMS AND THE TELUGU PROJECT SHE'S PARTICULARLY EXCITED ABOUT!

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Ester Noronha is one of the busiest actresses in Telugu and Kannada cinema. Recently, she made her debut as a director, writer, singer and music director with the Kannada film *The Vacant House*. Currently, she is working on three Telugu projects and a Kannada film. Her last Telugu film was *Tenant*, in which she portrayed a police officer and received appreciation for her performance. Ester is now eagerly awaiting the release of her upcoming Telugu films. "In these three films, all the characters are totally different and unique from each other, and they are set to release soon," said Ester, speaking about her upcoming projects. Among these, there is one project she is particularly excited about. "Yes, I am personally eagerly waiting for *Thala*, which is all set to hit theaters soon," she revealed. The film is directed by choreographer-turned-director Amma Rajashekhar. "When he narrated the script and told me about my role, I was so excited because, as an actor, I have always wanted to explore what all I could do. Getting that scope and freedom is truly a blessing," Ester said about *Thala*. The film is produced by one of the major production houses in the South, Super Good Films and marks their 100th project! Talking about *Thala*, she said it's a complete entertainer. "This genre is something I've never done before and the character is one I've always wanted to portray. The audience has never seen me in this shade," she explained. Ester credits her close friends, family, and colleagues for their constant support and encouragement. When people suggest that she should take on specific types of roles, she always responds, "It's up to the writers and directors to write roles that reflect my potential." She added, "Luckily, by God's grace, I am blessed with challenging, exceptional and out-of-the-box scripts and roles, which I'm thoroughly enjoying! Faith in patience, hard work, perseverance and sincerity does have a reward of its own."

The actress also revealed that she is currently working on several more projects in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam. "These films are very interesting and different from what I've done on screen so far and I am really looking forward to them," she said. Another reason for Ester's excitement is her Kannada film *DNA*, which will be screened at the prestigious Mysore Dasara Film Festival on October 6. "*DNA* is one of the films closest to my heart and to have it screened at such a renowned festival is beyond gratifying. It's one thing to do the work, but having it noticed, appreciated and celebrated at reputed platforms is truly a blessing," Ester expressed.

Besides *Thala*, Ester is also looking forward to the release of *Aadiparvam* and *Mangam Peta* in Telugu and a Kannada film, *Siddharth Bonaparte*. She is currently shooting in Hyderabad for one of her Telugu projects! Title: "Prince and Naresh Agastya's Performance Will Be the Highlight of 'Kali'"



'We have not compromised on VFX of Kali'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Young stars Prince and Naresh Agastya have been cast in the leading roles for the upcoming movie *Kali*. The film is produced by Rudra Creations and presented by renowned writer K. Raghavendra Reddy. Directed by Siva Sashu and produced by Leela Gautam Varma, this psychological thriller is set for a big theatrical premiere on October 4.

K. Raghavendra Reddy, who is presenting the film, spoke with the media about *Kali* and shared some insights. Throughout his career, whenever he heard stories he found interesting, he took on the role of a film presenter for them. In the past, he worked as the presenter for the movie *Alanti Sitrulu*. When he heard the story of *Kali*, he was deeply impressed and decided to get involved in this project.

Reddy highlighted that post-pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the number of suicide cases worldwide, including in India. He stressed that receiving help could prevent those contemplating suicide from pursuing those thoughts further! "Director Siva Sashu wrote the story of *Kali* with this point in mind. When I heard the story, I felt it was unique; it seemed like no one had made a film with such a background. The backdrop is fresh and I believed that if we made a movie like *Kali*, we would gain recognition, so I acted as a presenter for this project," he said.

He further added, "After the release of the *Kali* trailer, it received praise from many. *Kalki 2898AD* director Nag Ashwin released the teaser and Prabhas posted about it on social media, which helped film reach a wider audience. The trailer was released by director Prashanth Varma."

Reddy was all praise for Prince and Naresh Agastya, emphasising their talent. "Prince and Naresh Agastya are talented actors who have already proven themselves in many films. Their performances in *Kali* are impressive. Prince and Naresh performed as if they were in a competition," he shared.

Talking about the storyline, Reddy said, "A person named Sivaram decides to commit suicide due to the problems he faces in life. At that moment, a stranger knocks on his door. The story of *Kali* explores how Sivaram's life changes when that stranger enters his house. We have presented this point crisply, without unnecessary messages or introductions."

Reddy also spoke about the importance of choosing the right genre when making films



with smaller heroes. "You need to select a movie suitable for both theatre and OTT. If the cost of production increases by 10 to 15 percent, it is not ideal. However, spending a couple of crores more could be wasted. The producer will be safer if they make a movie by calculating all these factors."

He praised *Kali* producer Leela Gautam Varma for his passion for filmmaking. "Leela is a passionate young man in filmmaking. Many people of his age opt for love stories, but Leela chose a mature subject like *Kali*. He has a bright future as a producer and will produce more good movies in the future."

He was also appreciative of director Siva Sashu, calling him talented with a deep understanding of Puranas. Reddy believes *Kali* will bring the director good fame.

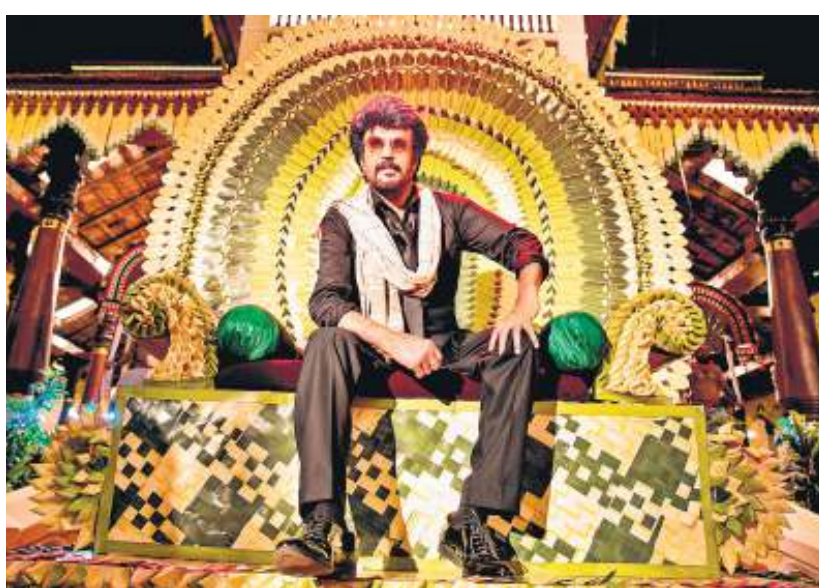
"My journey as a story writer continues," Reddy said enthusiastically. "Currently, a film for which I have provided the story is being shot in America. I have also scripted a movie with a devotional theme and pre-production work is ongoing for that film. I have no intention of directing; I find professional satisfaction in many of the films I've worked on."

POOJA AND MAMTA TO STAR IN THALAPATHY 69



ful Telugu film was *Ala Vaikunthapuramuloo*, after which she didn't experience much success in Telugu cinema. Now, she is shifting her focus to Tamil films. Alongside her new project with Vijay, she has also signed a Tamil film opposite Suriya, directed by Karthik Subbaraj, which will be Suriya's 44th film. This film with Vijay is another major project for her in the South.

Pooja Hegde is also working on a Hindi film titled *Deva*, starring Shahid Kapoor, directed by Rosshan Andrews, with filming currently underway. After a nearly two-year break from South Indian films, she is making her return with some significant projects.



Rajinikanth and Amitabh back in action!

Get ready to grab your popcorn and brace yourself for a cinematic experience like no other! The trailer for Rajinikanth's much-awaited film *Vettaiyan: The Hunter* has just dropped, fuelling the anticipation for its Dussehra release on October 10, 2024. With adrenaline-charged action sequences and an underlying layer of social commentary, the trailer sets the stage for a film that promises to keep you captivated from start to finish.

The legendary actor returns as a fiercely determined and effortlessly stylish encounter specialist, taking on a powerful role to fight those who exploit the legal system for personal gain. The trailer is a perfect showcase of Rajinikanth's signature charm and commanding screen presence, which continues to shine as he steps into yet another action-packed story. A key moment that has fans buzzing is the hint of a showdown between Rajinikanth and Amitabh Bachchan, raising the excitement to see two iconic stars sharing the screen.

Directed by TJ Gnanavel, *Vettaiyan* features a stellar cast, led by Rajinikanth and joined by legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan, making his debut in Tamil cinema. Also starring are Fahadh Faasil, Rana Daggubati, and Dushara Vijayan, each bringing their unique acting prowess to the film. With such a talented ensemble, the performances are sure to add depth and dimension to the story.

Although the trailer keeps the full storyline under wraps, it teases moments that

suggest a deeper, socially driven message within the action-packed narrative. Scenes of protests and powerful speeches point toward the film's engagement with important social themes, hinting at a plot that is more than just high-energy sequences. Music director Anirudh Ravichander's confidence in the film suggests it will appeal to those seeking thrilling action as well as a meaningful storyline, striking a balance between entertainment and relevance.

Clocking in at 2 hours and 43 minutes, *Vettaiyan* promises an immersive experience with a mix of gripping action, stellar performances and a thought-provoking undertone. The trailer's blend of intensity and purpose seems poised to cater to a broad audience, making it a must-watch for fans of Rajinikanth and beyond.

Excitement for *Vettaiyan* has also been fueled by key distribution deals. Asian Suresh Entertainment's LLP has acquired the Telugu theatrical rights, ensuring the film reaches a large audience in Telugu-speaking regions, while Srilakshmi Movies has secured the Ceded rights, further broadening the film's footprint. Additionally, Sony Music has bagged the audio rights, promising fans an enjoyable musical journey to accompany the film's release.

Mark your calendars for October 10, 2024 and get ready to witness the return of Rajinikanth in *Vettaiyan: The Hunter*, a film that promises to deliver a spectacular mix of action, powerful performances, and impactful storytelling!

Director VN Aditya's next titled Phani

Director VN Aditya, known for many successful films like *Manasantha Nuvve*, *Sreeram*, *Nenunnu*, *Manasu Mata Vinadu*, and *Aata*, is now coming up with a new film after a break. On Wednesday, he officially announced the title of his upcoming project as *Phani*. Dr. Meenakshi is producing the film, and Catherine Tresa will play the lead role. *Phani* will be released in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. The title unveiling ceremony was held in Dallas, America, where Dr. Thotakura Prasad launched the title and renowned producer Anil Sunkara was also in attendance. On this occasion, music director and producer Dr. Meenakshi Anipindi said that 50 percent of the film's shooting has been completed, with the aim of releasing it as a pan-India film soon. Leading actress Catherine Tresa mentioned that when she first heard the story, she immedi-

ately wanted to be a part of it. "It's a challenging character for me and working with VN Aditya has been a wonderful experience. His dedication to filmmaking is commendable and I've learned so much," said Catherine.

Director VN Aditya thanked Thotakura Prasad and Anil Sunkara for attending the event. "I know Meenakshi well as a music director and when she expressed interest in producing a film, I suggested she first make a short film to understand the challenges of production. Once Meenakshi heard the story of *Phani*, she immediately arranged for shooting. Catherine's support has been invaluable and without her, this film wouldn't have been possible," said VN Aditya. The film is being shot entirely in America, with a cast that includes Catherine Tresa, Mahesh Sriram, Neha Krishna, Tanikella Bharani, and Kasi Vishwanath.



The Pioneer recently reported exclusively that Pooja Hegde would star opposite Thalapaty Vijay in his upcoming film, tentatively titled *Thalapathy 69*. Directed by H. Vinoth and produced by KVN Productions, the film has now officially confirmed Pooja Hegde as the female lead. The announcement came on Wednesday, following Tuesday's news that Bollywood actor Bobby Deol has been roped in for an important role. Now, the sensational Mamitha Baiju is also gearing up to set our hearts on fire, joining the exciting #Thalapathy69 cast!

Interestingly, since *Acharya*, Pooja Hegde hasn't signed any Telugu films but has been focusing on Tamil projects. Her last success-

RIVALS AIM TO END AUSTRALIA'S DOMINANCE IN T20 WORLD CUP

PTI ■ DUBAI

The likes of India, England and South Africa will strive to end Australia's unrivalled dominance in the Women's T20 World Cup, beginning with a double header in Sharjah on Thursday.

Bangladesh will take on Scotland in the tournament opener in an afternoon fixture followed by a clash between Asian teams Pakistan and Sri Lanka later in the day at Sharjah.

Political unrest in Bangladesh forced the International Cricket Council to shift the 10-team event to the UAE back in August.

AUSTRALIA THE TEAM TO BEAT AGAIN: Australia will be the team to beat once again, having won the last three editions and overall six out of the nine editions staged thus far.

England, India and South Africa have repeatedly shown that the Australian fortress can be breached but when it comes to World Cup events, the team from Down Under remains invincible.

With Meg Lanning walking

into the sunset following the triumph in South Africa about 18 months ago, Alyssa Healy has been handed captaincy to maintain Australia's supremacy in global events.

Healy would like to lead from the front but if she is not able to, she can rely on the squad full of match winners including Ellyse Perry, Ashleigh Gardner and Grace Harris.

Witnessing the pace duo of Tayla Vlaeminck and Darcie Brown in operation will also be exciting.

Australia have been clubbed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan, New Zealand and Sri Lanka while Group B has England, South Africa, West Indies, Bangladesh and Scotland. Top two teams from each group qualify for the semifinals.

ENGLAND SHOW OMINOUS FORM AHEAD OF WORLD CUP: England, who won the inaugural edition in 2009 before losing three finals to Australia, will take a lot of confidence from the series win against their main rival during the Women's Ashes last year.

The pitches in the UAE are



expected to favour the spinners, bringing England's trump card Sophie Ecclestone into play. She will be supported by Sarah Glenn and Charlie Dean.

Veteran Nat-Sciver Brunt will provide the X-factor in the batting department. Opener Maia Bouchier will be one of the World Cup debutants to watch out for.

England will be supremely confident about their chances this time around, having whitewashed Pakistan and New Zealand in the summer.

CAN INDIA GO ALL THE WAY THIS TIME?: Another team who always challenges Australia but has hitherto not been able to cross the final hurdle is India. The Harmanpreet-Kaur led side has lost two big T20 finals to Australia - the Commonwealth Games in 2022 and T20 World Cup in 2020. India go into the event having not got a lot of game time following their surprising loss to Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup final. The team has worked extensively on its fitness and fielding, hoping it will make a big difference to its World Cup campaign.

The conditions could favour a

spin-heavy India. In the batting department, the onus will be on openers Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana while Harmanpreet and Richa Ghosh will be expected to hit the sixes in the middle and death overs.

Harmanpreet, who has led the team since the 2018 T20 World Cup, will be under tremendous pressure this time around as another loss could bring an end to her captaincy tenure.

South Africa look to go one better after memorable run at home

South Africa rode a wave of home support to make their maiden World Cup final last year. Tasting defeat to Australia in the showpiece in Cape Town, the Proteas have been busy in their preparations to do one better. The side, now led by Laura Wolvaardt, got its revenge over the reigning champions in Canberra at the beginning of the year.

However, South Africa lost that series and also went on to lose to Sri Lanka. The South African women have drawn series with Bangladesh, India, New Zealand before victory came over Pakistan earlier this month.



With Australia, you can't afford to make mistakes: Mandhana

PTI ■ DUBAI

There are no shortcuts to beating Australia and every team has to give its best if it aspires to overcome the six-time world champions, said India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup which begins here on Thursday.

Australia's dominance in the global showpiece has been unrivalled with the team winning the last three editions of the tournament.

With charismatic former skipper Meg Lanning calling it a day following the victory in South Africa about 18 months ago, Alyssa Healy has taken over the captaincy as Australia aim to maintain their dominance in global events.

"Every game in the World Cup is important, and you have to give your 100 per cent in each one. New Zealand and

Sri Lanka are strong teams, but with Australia, you know you can't afford to make mistakes," said Mandhana as India gear up to take on New Zealand in a Group A match here on Friday.

"You have to bring your best game on that particular day to get the better of them. There's always excitement when facing Australia because they're such a good team, and beating them is a great challenge," added the India vice-captain.

She added that the clash against Pakistan always brings out a lot of passionate response from the players. The arch-rival will lock horns here on October 6.

"I think the India-Pakistan rivalry is more about the emotions of the fans than anything else. It's not like the players don't talk to each other; it's the emotions from both nations that make it so intense," Mandhana said.

"For me, every World Cup match is special, and we put the same amount of effort into each game. But there's definitely a lot of emotion attached to the India-Pakistan games," said the veteran of 141 T20Is.

Mandhana said that playing Pakistan in the afternoon heat of Dubai would be a challenge and that her team had a couple of sessions lined up to acclimatise to the conditions.

"The afternoon game is going to be a challenge due to the heat, but when you play for India, there are no excuses. You have to prepare well, and I think we have a couple of afternoon sessions lined up to help us get used to the conditions.

"By the time we face Pakistan, I'm sure we'll be ready. Mentally, we need to stay strong and keep pushing, staying hydrated is key," she said.

Bumrah regains top spot in ICC Test rankings, Jaiswal jumps to spot 3

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is back at the summit of the ICC Test bowling rankings following his match haul of six wickets in the second Test against Bangladesh in Kanpur.

The 30-year-old replaced his India team-mate Ravichandran Ashwin - Player of the Series against Bangladesh - at the top of the chart.

Spinner Ravindra Jadeja maintained his sixth place, while fellow spinner Kuldeep Yadav stayed in 16th.

In batting, Player of the Match from the Kanpur Test, Yashasvi Jaiswal, moved to a career-high third position



after just 11 Tests. Jaiswal played scintillating knocks of 72 and 51 and helped India win the rain-marred match by seven wickets.

With 792 rating points, the 22-year-old is behind second-placed Kane Williamson (829) and Joe Root (899).

Also, veteran Indian batter Virat Kohli is back in the top 10, gaining six places to rise to the sixth position after knocks of 47 and 29 in Kanpur.

Rishabh Pant, too, remained in the top 10, dropping three spots to ninth, with skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman

Gill on 15th and 16th, respectively.

As for the all-rounders, there has been no significant change in the rankings, with Jadeja holding the top spot, followed by Ashwin at second and Axar Patel at seventh.

In team rankings, India were in the second spot with 120 rating points, separated from leader Australia by four points, while England remained in the third place with 108 points.

Meanwhile, the Indians continued to rule the World Test Championship (WTC) table, having a point percentage of 74.24% after 11 fixtures, above second-placed Australia (62.50% in 12 Tests).



Sumit Nagal crashes out in first round of Shanghai Masters

PTI ■ SHANGHAI

Indian tennis ace Sumit Nagal's campaign in the Shanghai Masters ended in a first-round exit after he suffered a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to China's Wu Yibing here on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old, who has been in the news recently due to his dispute with the All India Tennis Association (AITA) regarding his participation in the Davis Cup fixture against Sweden, went down in straight sets leading to his second straight first-round elimination.

In August, he had crashed out of the US Open in the first round after losing to Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands.

Nagal, who had been battling a back injury, was accused of demanding an annual fee of USD 50,000 by the AITA to represent India in the Davis Cup tie but the country's top singles player defended himself, saying it is "standard practice" for athletes across the world to be paid for their services.

Nagal had opted out of the recent Davis Cup tie against Sweden, citing a back strain that also forced him out of the US Open men's doubles competition last month.

This was Nagal's first event on the ATP Tour since his first-round exit from the US Open.

Tim Southee quits New Zealand captaincy

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Tim Southee has stepped down from New Zealand captaincy ahead of the three-Test series against India and Tom Latham has been appointed in the veteran pacer's place.

Southee captained New Zealand in 14 Tests in which the Kiwis won six, lost six and drew two.

"I've always tried to put the team first throughout my career and I believe this decision is the best for the team," said Southee in a New Zealand Cricket statement.

"I believe the way I can best serve the team moving forward is focusing on my performances on the field and getting back to my best, to continue taking wickets and helping New Zealand win Test matches."

The 35-year-old right-arm pacer has so far played 102 Tests alongside 161 ODIs and 126 T20Is. With 382 wickets, he is the second-highest wicket-taker for the Kiwis after legendary Richard Hadlee

LATHAM TO TAKE OVER IN INDIA TOUR



(431).

"I will, as I've always done, continue to support my teammates, especially the exciting young bowlers making their way on the international stage."

"I wish Tom all the best in the role and he knows I'll be there to support him on his journey, as he has done for me over the years," said Southee. New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said

Southee took the decision in the best interests of the team.

"Tim's a fantastic player and a very good leader who is held in high regard by the players and support staff."

"He's been a great servant of New Zealand Cricket over nearly 17 years playing on the international stage, and I'd like to acknowledge his humility in stepping down from the role as Test captain."

"It's not easy giving up something you love, but Tim is a true team-man and he's made the decision with the team's best interests at heart. He's one of our greatest ever players and we still very much see him playing a part in our Test side moving forward."

Southee took over as New Zealand captain after Kane Williamson stepped down from the role in December 2022.

Currently on tour of the subcontinent, New Zealand have played a two-Test series in Sri Lanka while their one-off Test against Afghanistan in Noida was washed out.

Dwindling black soil resources force UPCA to look beyond Unnao

PTI ■ KANPUR

For years, the UPCA has procured black soil from Unnao to prepare pitches at the Green Park Stadium but the natural resource is vanishing fast in that city, leaving the state cricket association worried.

Not only the high-quality resource is dwindling in Unnao - about 25km from Kanpur - the quality of the available soil has also suffered considerable degradation.

The soil with more than 50 percent of clay particles is suitable for preparing a cricket pitch. The Green Park stadium hosts about 150 matches on nine pitches in a season and that requires renovation in the off-season.

According to UPCA pitch curator Shiv Kumar, the soil requirement in each season is 1200 cubic feet.

"In my entire career, we have used soil only from Unnao. What worries me now is that Unnao is not left with much of that natural resource. We can manage two more years with the available stock and before it finishes, we need to identify a new area," Shiv Kumar told PTI.

"The soil has almost finished in that area and the quality we are getting now is not up to the mark."



UPCA procures black soil from a pond in Unnao and a village called 'Kali Mitti'. The agricultural fields in that area are the biggest source of soil but the years of digging means the resource is emptying.

Explaining the phenomenon, the UPCA curator said that the main content of soil is clay.

"The main particle in the soil is clay. It's such a small particle, about 0.002

microns. It takes about 30-40 years for the soil to convert into clay in a pond. Then there is sand, gravel, and other things. Soil with 50-60 per cent clay presence is considered good."

Shiv Kumar said earlier the good-quality soil was available just one foot below the top of the field but it's not the case anymore due to the consistent digging over the years. "The curators have started to

understand the soil with which they work. So, the selection of soils has also changed, not in our place but everywhere with BCCI's education programme.

"Earlier we just used whatever was available and just watered and rolled the pitch. No one knew about the roots of the grass. No one knew about the compaction potential of the roller."

"Now we are checking the moisture, temperature, how much water is to be kept and how much compaction should be given. We can see good cricket only if the pitch is made using a scientific method," he said.

UPCA is now looking at places like Odisha and Andhra Pradesh to get soil. "They have high-clay fields. There is good clay in MP also. We will see something from there. It can be an issue when we have to make new pitches, if we do not find a place nearby."

UPCA hosts about 150 matches, including age group, Ranji, first class, local league, and trials, in a single season. It takes about 45 days to prepare a pitch from start to finish. A few pitches require renovation/top-up, after being used three times.

"Like in January, we will have to do some repair work because a few pitches would have hosted matches. But for that, we will need soil from the same family, which means soil from the exact place from which the pitch was prepared in the beginning."

"We can't use soil from a different family because the content would be different," added Shiv, who is a science graduate.



PCB could appoint separate captains in all three formats

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan could have separate cricket captains in all three formats, given the heavy schedule of the side and the pressure it could put on one white-ball skipper, according to sources.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) was expected to hand over Babar Azam ODI captaincy as well for the upcoming white-ball matches, but the charismatic batter tendered his resignation around midnight on Wednesday to focus on his

batting. Insiders suggest that it would not be easy for white-ball head coach, Gary Kirsten or the selection committee to appoint the next captain in the shorter formats.

"Muhammad Rizwan is the obvious choice for the white-ball captaincy given that, along with Babar, he is the only player who is an automatic selection in all formats of the game," said an insider.

"But things are not so simple because, with the hectic international calendar of the

team, the workload on Rizwan is a worrying factor for red-ball coach, Jason Gillespie, Kirsten, the PCB and the selectors," he added.

Rizwan, Babar and Shaheen Shah Afridi are all-format players, so workload management is going to be a big issue. Pakistan are scheduled to play 18 ODIs and T20I in Australia, Zimbabwe and South Africa between November and December, which will be followed by a two-Test series in South Africa.