



**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 is Rahul Gandhi when people are dying due to the fear of HYDRRA and the Musi Project? The Musi Project is being driven by Rahul Gandhi and not Revanth Reddy. This is a scam planned by Rahul to raise money from Congress's golden duck Telangana to fund election campaigns in other states. The Congress high command wants bundles of cash from the Musi Project and it does not care about the hardships of those affected**

**-KT Ramarao, BRS MLA**

**DON'T MISS...**

**Minister calls for people's help to...**

Union Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries Bhupati Raju Srinivasa Varma appealed to people for their cooperation and support to protect the environment and keep surroundings clean and tidy. The Union Minister, along with Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, MLAs and other officials took part in the valedictory programme Swachhata Hi Seva programme, organized here on Wednesday coinciding the Gandhi Jayanthi. The Central government sponsored Swachhata Hi Seva programme concluded today. Addressing the...

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**'Court of conscience' above all courts...**

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...

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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

## Make 'Swachh AP' by 2029

### CM ANNOUNCES THAT GARBAGE TAX WILL BE SCRAPPED

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Wednesday, called upon all sections of people to turn 'Swachh service representatives', and make a resolve to transform the State into 'Swachh Andhra Pradesh' by 2029. The CM took part in the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programme organised here on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanthi. He personally served tea to the sanitary workers and had an interaction with them.

Addressing the gathering later, the CM gave the entire credit of a clean environment and neat roads to the sanitary workers. He particularly mentioned their earnest and energetic work during the recent cyclone.

Recalling the great services of Mahatma Gandhi during the national movement, the Chief Minister said that the policies adopted by Mahatma stand as a precedent for future generations. Gandhiji took part in the Satyagraha movement for the first time in Krishna district in 1919. Pingali Venkaiah, the son of this soil, handed over the national flag designed by him to Gandhiji, Chandrababu said.

"We can be proud that a great personality like Pingali Venkaiah, who won the hearts of the whole nation, is the son of this soil," Chandrababu remarked. He announced that the Andhra Jateeya (national) College will be managed by the government, and



● We can be proud that a great personality like Pingali Venkaiah, who won the hearts of the whole nation, is the son of this soil.

● The 'Clean and Green' programme was taken up in 1998 in the combined AP which is close to his heart.

● The inefficiency of the previous government, Budameru experienced heavy floods in the recent cyclone pushing Vijayawada city into danger.



● By 2047, the State will become Swarna Andhra and everyone can generate power through solar systems on their own.

it will be named after Pingali Venkaiah. The Chief Minister added that the 'Clean and Green' programme was taken up in 1998 in the combined Andhra Pradesh which, he said, is close to his heart. He announced that the tax on garbage will be scrapped, and that he is ordering Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Narayana to take urgent steps to remove the tax in the next 365 days in the whole State. The decision

will get the Cabinet nod soon, he added.

"Because of the inefficiency of the previous government, Budameru experienced heavy floods in the recent cyclone pushing Vijayawada city into danger," Chandrababu criticised. He added that donors responded enthusiastically and extended a helping hand to the flood victims.

Chandrababu regretted that the

YSRCP leaders who set the chariot on fire tried to pass the buck on the NDA. He said that the State government has developed a system which can catch hold of the criminals within just a few minutes. The criminals who dissected the head of Lord Rama still haven't been caught, and no action has been initiated against those who took away the silver lions of goddess Kanaka Durga, he said.

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## Govt to launch investors' registration app

### App will help obtain all the necessary permissions

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for MSME and NRI Empowerment, Kondapalli Srinivas, has stated that this is the right time for NRIs to invest in Andhra Pradesh. An investors' meeting was organised by the NRI Telugu Desam in Dallas in the USA. Minister Srinivas, who is in the US, addressed the NRI Andhras. He announced that a special portal is soon to be launched by the government, which will facilitate the process of obtaining all the necessary permissions for investors.

Minister Srinivas remarked that the days when enthusiastic investors had to run around government officials with their proposals are over. He explained that as soon as the investors' registration app is developed by the government, the officials will be accessible through virtual calls to investors. These officials will

stay in touch with investors, addressing their queries and providing all kinds of support.

The Minister indicated that Andhra Pradesh is like a haven for NRIs to invest in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, electronics, and healthcare. He elaborated on the government's plan to provide IT training to 50,000 students in their final semester annually in the State, and for this purpose agreements are being made with IBM and other IT companies. He also mentioned that capacity-building centres are being established with the assistance of the Central government.

Further, Minister Srinivas, along with AP Legislative Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyanna Patradu, visited the Gandhi statue in Dallas on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation. They paid floral tributes to Gandhiji with NRI TD leaders.

## Liquor licence: Bidders scrambling to secure funds

### Under new policy, applicants are to pay non-refundable Rs 2 lakh per application

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The newly-introduced liquor policy in Andhra Pradesh has triggered a wave of excitement and financial strain among aspiring liquor shop owners. As the deadline for submitting applications for 3,396 liquor licences approaches, prospective bidders are scrambling to secure the necessary funds to participate in the October 11 draw.

Under the new policy, applicants are required to pay a non-refundable fee of Rs 2 lakh per application, with no limit on the number of applications per individual. This has led many traders to explore all avenues to gather the substantial funds needed to participate in the draw.

Successful applicants will be granted liquor shop licences in their designated jurisdictions, but the financial commitments involved are significant. The annual licence fee ranges from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 85 lakh, depending on the location and business potential. Additionally, one-third of the annual fee must be paid upfront, requiring applicants to have at least Rs 25 lakh in hand to proceed.

This has led many prospective traders to turn to friends, family, and private moneylenders to mobilise funds, often offering high interest rates or partnerships in the business. "I'm planning to submit my application, but I'm still short on funds. Despite seeking help from friends and relatives, I had to approach a private moneylender at a high interest rate," shared a liquor trader from Visakhapatnam. "We don't have much choice. It's an emergency situation."

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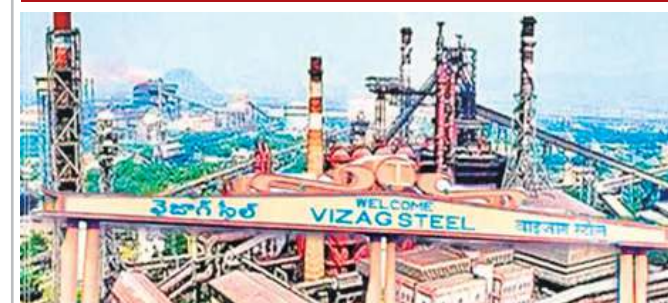
## SAIL takeover of VSP a win-win for everyone: Viswanatha Raju

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State general secretary and Independent Director of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Sagi Kasi Viswanatha Raju, stated on Wednesday that a SAIL takeover of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), would be a "win-win situation for everyone". He emphasised the significance of VSP, calling it the "pride of Andhra Pradesh".

Speaking at a 'Swachhata Hi Seva' event in Srikakulam on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, Viswanatha Raju noted that he had mooted the proposal for SAIL to take over VSP two years ago and hoped that the State government would now take an

### Calls VSP the pride of Andhra Pradesh



The Union government is holding a crucial meeting on VSP in New Delhi on October 8. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is expected to discuss the issue with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy. I am hopeful that the outcome of the meeting will cheer everyone up. If everything goes well, VSP will overcome all its financial hurdles and other problems.

active role in advancing the idea. "The Union government is holding a crucial meeting on VSP in New Delhi on October 8. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is

expected to discuss the issue with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy. I am hopeful that the outcome of the meeting will

cheer everyone up. If everything goes well, VSP will overcome all its financial hurdles and other problems," he told the media.

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**Bandar Port to be completed by 2025, says CM Naidu**  
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## 'Ankurarpanam' today

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The traditional Ankurarapanam or Ankuraranam 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 Ankuraranam. 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.

## Akkineni family condemns Surekha's remarks

### My divorce was a personal matter, no politics in it: 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 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.



## Cong Minister stoops to new low in politics

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Scripting a disgustingly new low in Telangana's cut-throat politics, Telangana Endowments Minister Konda Surekha on Wednesday threw mud at Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president and former minister K T 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 had refused to "go to KTR", as directed by Nagarjuna, she told shocked media persons.

◆ Links the MLA to divorce between actors Naga Chaitanya and Samantha.

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

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.

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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.

### 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.

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# 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.*

symbol of Congress overreach and disconnection from the masses.

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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



**RAMESH KANDULA**  
Chief Editor Swatantra TV and author

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 life-time 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.

## Bandar Port to be completed by 2025, says CM Naidu

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Wednesday, promised to complete the Bandar Port works by 2025.

After examining the progress of the ongoing works of the port, the Chief Minister told media persons that another 38.32 acres of land necessary for the port will be allocated soon. "The port works taken up with an estimated cost of Rs 3,669 crore did not move forward as the previous government totally neglected it," he alleged.

"Once the ongoing works are complete, the first four berths will be set up. But as per the master plan, upto 16 berths can be established," the Chief Minister said. When

**Says another 38.32 acres will be allocated soon**



the works are over, it will largely help for the development of Machilipatnam which is very close to the capital city of Amaravathi, he hoped.

Chandrababu promised to take steps to provide necessary road connectivity, police training centre and the water supply to the area. "If the port is converted into a container

port, it will also help the neighbouring States like Telangana."

Recalling the decades-long agitation for the Bandar Port, Chandrababu said that while he launched the works after identifying its priority, the party that came to power later totally neglected the port works. "But I will certainly

take up the ongoing works and try to bring more industries to the area. We will get clarity on BPCL soon," the CM said, and added that action will soon be initiated against the local YSRCP party office constructed on the land belonging to the State police, after getting the details.

## Cabinet meet on Oct 10

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP Cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will be held at the State Secretariat at Velagapudi in Amaravathi on October 10. Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad has issued the circular regarding the Cabinet meeting of the Council of Ministers.

He instructed that the Special Chief Secretaries/Principal Secretaries/Secretaries to Government of all departments are requested to send the proposals in the prescribed format duly following the instructions to the General Administration Department by 4 PM on October 8.

The CS stated that the departments are also requested to furnish soft copies of the Cabinet Memorandum and PowerPoint Presentations (PPTs).

## Phase II of Vamsadhara Project will be completed, says Minister

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu announced on Wednesday that the second phase of the Srikakulam district's Jeevanadi Vamsadhara Project will be completed with the joint efforts of the Central and State governments.

Speaking at an event on the Vamsadhara office premises, Naidu also confirmed plans to modernise the project's left main canal. The programme included the unveiling of statues honouring the late CRM Patnaik, architect of the Vamsadhara project, and Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya.

Naidu emphasised the importance of completing the connection between the Nagavali and Vamsadhara rivers, stating, "I have raised this issue in Parliament as an MP, and it is my responsibility to ensure its completion." He also mentioned efforts to secure funding from the World Bank and the Central government, while pledging that Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will meet with the Chief Minister of Odisha if necessary to resolve issues regarding the Neradi Barrage. "We are committed to finishing the Neradi



Barrage without disputes between the two States," the Minister promised.

Naidu paid tributes to CRM Patnaik. "Without the vision and leadership of great individuals like Patnaik, the Vamsadhara project would not have been realised in Srikakulam." He went on to reflect on the development challenges faced by the district. "Despite having life-giving rivers like Nagavali and Vamsadhara, Srikakulam is still seen as a backward district. Development is only possible through efficient irrigation, and CRM Patnaik understood that," Naidu remarked. "While an employee may retire, true service to society never ends."

State Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu, who was a special guest at the event, echoed Naidu's sentiments. "Individuals who dedicate their

lives to serving the public leave a lasting legacy. Without CRM Patnaik, there would be no Vamsadhara project." He also underscored the significance of unveiling statues of two great men on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. "Their contributions will inspire future generations."

Atchannaidu reaffirmed that the obstacles with Odisha regarding the Neradi Barrage would be resolved, allowing construction to begin soon. "The district is on track to become an agricultural powerhouse," he said.

Srikakulam MLA Gonda Shankar, North Coast CA Sugunakara Rao, Vamsadhara SE Rambabu, APTPC Chairman Vajja Baburao, former DCCB Chairman Dola Jagan, retired Odisha Chief Engineer CV Prasad, and CRM Patnaik's family members were present.

## Make 'Swachh AP' by 2029...

Continued from Page 1

The Deepam scheme, under which free cooking gas cylinders are being supplied, will be implemented from Deepavali, he said, and stated that free power and gas cylinders will be supplied at the doorstep. By 2027, safe drinking water will be supplied to all households through tap connections, he said.

Chandrababu Naidu also promised to complete the Bandar Port by December 2025. "It will be of great help to the people of the area. By 2047, the State will become Swarna Andhra and everyone can generate power through solar systems on their own," the CM maintained.

## Special review meet discusses Lift Irrigation projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources Nimmala Ramanaidu has conducted a special review meeting to address the challenges hindering the completion of the Handri-Neeva Sujanra Sraavanthi and Chintalapudi Lift Irrigation projects. These projects had significant progress during the previous TDP government, but were neglected during the previous YSRCP regime. The meeting took place at his camp office in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

Water Resources Department Special Chief Secretary G Saiprasad, Engineer In Chief (ENC) M Venkateswara Rao, Handri-Neeva Project Chief Engineers (CEs) Nagaraju, Rambhupal, Superintending Engineers (SEs) D Rajagopal, Desinayak, Chintalapudi Lift Project CE B Rambabu, SE Sivankrishna, EE Ramachandra Rao were present. The Handri-Neeva River project, crucial for Rayalaseema, was designed to carry Krishna waters to the joint districts of Kurnool, Anantapur, Kadapa, and Chittoor with a capacity of 3,850 cusecs.

Approximately 80 per cent of the work was completed during the previous TDP government, leaving 20 per cent unfinished. This incomplete work has led to water shortages in the lower districts due to underutilised lift pumps.

## SAIL takeover of VSP a win-win...

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Viswanatha Raju highlighted VSP's ongoing financial struggles, noting that the plant has been posting losses since 2016, with a Rs 5,000-crore loss reported for the 2023-24 financial year. He attributed these losses to difficulties in procuring raw materials and an inability to meet debt obligations. "SAIL, being one of the largest steel producers in the country, can put VSP on the right track," he said, pointing to SAIL's greater bargaining power in the procurement of raw materials, particularly iron ore. "SAIL's cost of borrowing will be much lower than that of VSP. It can save around Rs 400 crore annually in interest payments for RINL, which is currently forced to take loans at higher interest rates," he added.

Viswanatha Raju also mentioned that SAIL's management has expressed interest in the takeover proposal, seeing long-term benefits for both organisations. "This could lead to the creation of a mega Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), benefiting the steel industry as a whole," he said. On a positive note, Viswanatha Raju remarked that the VSP employees were supportive of the proposal. He shared that he had discussed the matter with IT and Education Minister Nara Lokesh during his recent visit to Visakhapatnam.

Minister Ramanaidu instructed the officials to submit a detailed comprehensive report with estimates within three days regarding the Handri-Neeva Project's remaining work. The orders of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will guide the initiation of the work. Additionally, Minister Nimmala emphasised the need to increase the pumping capacity of the Handri-Neeva project in the first phase, expand the main canal, and provide specific details on necessary lining works and their costs.

The Minister also highlighted the lack of progress on the Chintalapudi Lift Irrigation Project during the YSRCP government's tenure. After the NDA government resumed power, this project was prioritised. Minister Nimmala has been conducting multiple review meetings to expedite the pending works of the project. The Eluru Collector also stressed the importance of addressing land acquisition challenges, particularly concerning farmers, temple lands, and forest lands, which are impeding project completion.

As per the Chief Minister's directives, the pending works are expected to be completed within a year, aiming to provide irrigation through the Chintalapudi lift project, Minister Ramanaidu explained.

## Liquor licence...

Continued from Page 1

With the demand for funds soaring, private moneylenders are reportedly charging exorbitant interest rates. Typically, loans secured against property are offered at around 24 percent per annum, but the ongoing rush has pushed these rates even higher. Some lenders are now charging between Rs. 8 to Rs. 10 interest per month on every Rs. 100 borrowed, meaning a Rs. 10-lakh loan could cost an applicant Rs. 80,000 in monthly interest.

In districts like Vizianagaram, which has 165 shops, Manyam with 58, and Srikakulam with 180, liquor traders are mortgaging property documents, jewelry, and real estate assets to gather the necessary funds.

## Jagan slams TDP govt over 'poor handling' of floods

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has held discussions with the leaders of various associated wings of the party and announced that a workshop will soon be organised to train party leaders on coordination and grassroots-level organisation. During the meeting, Jagan criticised the TDP coalition government for its failure to manage key sectors like agriculture, education and healthcare.

He criticised the government's 'poor handling' of the Vijayawada floods, stating it failed to assess the damage and provide fair compensation, favoring those with political connections. He condemned the use of diversionary politics, stating that the government has been filing false cases to shift attention away from its failures. Jagan Mohan Reddy also highlighted the need for YSRCP to strengthen its grassroots presence. He stated that the 24 associated wings of the party are being activated to bolster the organisational structure. This would ensure that every party supporter and worker, from the village level to the State, plays a role in strengthening the party's foundation. The involvement of grassroots members is crucial for maintaining a strong and organised party that can effectively fight future battles.

He encouraged the leaders to ensure unity within the party, stressing the importance of reaching out to every village, district, and community to engage more actively.

## Cong minister stoops..

Continued from Page 1

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."

## Congress loose...

Continued from Page 1

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. 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 significant 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 his 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'.

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# Dasara Sarannavaratri fete from today

## Kanaka Durga Devi to be adorned as Sri Bala Tripura Sundari Devi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Dasara Sarannavaratri festivities at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada will commence on Thursday. These festivities will span 12 days, from October 3 to 12. The temple authorities have made extensive arrangements to provide all necessary facilities for devotees to have the darshan of the goddess Durga Devi. Also, the temple authorities illuminated the Durga Temple, Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam and the Ghat Road.

The State government machinery was also involved in making the event successful taking into consideration its importance. The deity Durga Devi will be adorned as Sri Bala Tripura Sundari Devi Avataram on the first day. On the first day of the celebrations, the temple will open at 9 AM for devotees. However, VIP darshan is permitted from 8 AM to 10 AM and from 2 PM to 4 PM.



The officials emphasised that arrangements are in place to avoid disruptions to the queue lines during these VIP visits. The temple is taking all necessary steps to ensure the

safety and convenience of devotees coming from various parts of the country. Already a series of meetings were conducted by the officials for smoothly conducting the event.

In view of this, Minister for Endowments Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana, Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu, Temple

Executive Officer KS Rama Rao, and other officials took part in a review meeting. As per tradition, the queue lines stretch from the Vinayaka Temple near the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation to the temple atop Indrakeeladri via the Ghat Road.

Speaking to 'The Pioneer', EO Rama Rao said that elaborate arrangements are being made to ensure the smooth conduct of the festivities. Additional coordination meetings would be held to finalise the remaining preparations and assign responsibilities, he said. The security and logistical plans, which include setting up holding areas for VIP vehicle parking and ensuring that all vehicles adhere to the designated protocol, he added.

"We have made provisions for VIPs to use specific protocol vehicles to reach the hill shrine, and have instructed that no other vehicles enter beyond the holding points," he said. Each day of the festival would feature the presiding deity, adorned in a different avatar, he said.

# AUCoET poised for IIT status

## It will be the second IIT in Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University College of Engineering & Technology (AUCoET) in Visakhapatnam may soon be recognised as one of the esteemed Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) if current discussions between Andhra University, the State government, and the Union Ministry of Education progress positively. If the proposal is approved, AUCoET could be renamed IIT-Vizag or IIT-Visakhapatnam, making it the second IIT in Andhra Pradesh, following IIT-Tirupati, and the 24th IIT in India.

The initiative dates back to 2005, when the Union government, acting on recommendations from the SK Joshi Committee, suggested upgrading seven prominent engineering colleges to IIT status. At that time, both Andhra University and Osmania University were included in the proposal, but it was ultimately put on hold for various reasons. Now, nearly 20 years later, the proposal is being revisited. A Union Ministry official has reportedly engaged with AU management to discuss AUCoET's potential and qualifications for IIT status, reigniting hopes for this long-cherished goal.

"AU boasts a rich history of over 90 years, a vast campus located in a vibrant city, and meets all eligibility criteria, especially as it is



now the only major city in the newly bifurcated Andhra Pradesh. A thorough and serious reassessment of the proposal is crucial for advancement, and the involvement of the AP government is vital," shared a trusted source involved in the discussions. If the State government approves the proposal, it will undergo several review stages, including an evaluation by the Council of IITs to assess AUCoET's readiness for the IIT upgrade.

Achieving IIT status will significantly enhance AUCoET's reputation on both national and international fronts. This change would lead to hundreds of seats being filled through a national pool, requiring local students to compete for admission at a national level. However, Visakhapatnam's image as a centre for education, employment, and tourism—strengthened by institutions like the Indian Institute of Petroleum & Energy—could draw stu-

dents from all over the country to pursue their studies here.

In a recent statement, AU in-charge Vice-Chancellor G Sasibhushana Rao mentioned, "Yes, the proposal has been revitalised. AU has already achieved rankings that surpass some existing IITs in various criteria. We are actively engaging with government officials on this matter."

The IITs operate under the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961, which designates them as "Institutions of National Importance". They provide a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, with admissions determined by national-level exams such as the Joint Entrance Examination (Advanced) for B.Tech and the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) for M.Tech. Transitioning to IIT status would also open up greater research opportunities and foster national-level collaborations for AUCoET.

# 'Swachhata fortnight' concludes with tributes to Gandhiji

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A series of programmes on the theme 'Swabhav Swachhata and Sanskar Swachhata', organised to celebrate 10 years of Swachh Bharat Mission, have concluded in Guntur with tributes to Mahatma Gandhi. Guntur Field Publicity Officer of the Central Bureau of Communications (CBC), R Ramesh Chandra, said that over 2,000 students from various schools and colleges of the region have participated in 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programmes in the last 15 days.

National Cadet Corps of the Vignana Nirula Institute of Technology & Science for Women garlanded the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Koritepadu, Guntur, and cleaned the premises. The cadets proceeded with a rally to create awareness among the public on Swachhata Abhiyan and the consequences in the use of plastics in daily



life. Under the supervision of Principal Dr Paturi Radhika and NCC Lieutenant Chennupati Jyotipriya, the cadets formed the CBC-choreographed Mahatma Gandhi and his iconic spectacles, which is the logo of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

Ramesh Chandra said that Swachhata Bharat Abhiyan has yielded positive results and created awareness among the

public in general. "In rural and urban areas, cleanliness infrastructure is being updated and modernised under various schemes. The fortnight-long programmes involving the students, youths and general public have inculcated Swachhata as a practice.

The movement should be continued by every individual to keep the country clean," he said.

# Varudu Kalyani flays new liquor policy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Women's Wing president and MLC Varudu Kalyani has slammed the TDP coalition government over the new liquor policy, and expressed concerns about its negative impact on the public, calling it harmful and designed solely for financial gains.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Wednesday, Kalyani condemned the privatisation of liquor sales, stating that it would lead to the formation of syndicates and widespread exploitation. She questioned why the government is pushing to increase liquor sales, when it should be focusing on improving essential services. The cancellation of the previous policy and the introduction of this new one raises doubts about the government's intentions.

She further criticised the government for offering cheap

liquor, emphasising that, instead of addressing rising prices of essential goods, the government is providing low-cost alcohol, which could harm the social fabric. Kalyani pointed out that instead of guaranteeing schemes for women's welfare, the government is promoting liquor sales, turning homes into distribution points for alcohol rather than welfare schemes.

Kalyani also voiced concerns over the introduction of liquor malls, comparing them to shopping malls. She warned that unregulated liquor sales would pose serious safety risks for women. Addressing the government's inconsistency, she questioned why the TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu continued liquor sales for three months despite claiming it was of poor quality.



# Rs.10,000 presented to 'Invite Your Commissioner' winner

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' campaign, the Commissioner of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), HM Dhyanchandra, presented a Rs.10,000 cheque to Dhavaleswarapu Naga Lakshmi, a resident of Bharathi Nagar in the city. Naga Lakshmi was the winner of the 'Invite Your Commissioner' programme. On Wednesday, Commissioner Dhyanchandra inspected the Terras Garden of the winner's building.

Dhyanchandra highlighted the health benefits of consuming food grown without toxic chemicals, emphasising the negative impacts of chemical fertilisers and pesticides on the human body. He praised the efforts of Earth One Life for promoting organically grown vegetables, fruits, and flowers, and urged for this approach to be taught to children from an early age.

Dhyanchandra suggested that the city administration incorporate weekly lessons in schools to teach students about

organic farming and sustainable gardening methods. He noted that widespread adoption of home gardening could reduce the city's temperature by 1%, improve public health, reduce pollution, and enhance the ecosystem by supporting bird life.

Meanwhile, he said the NGO 'One Earth One Life' is dedicated to promoting non-toxic, organic practices and works voluntarily, with support from the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation. He mentioned that the NGO 'One Earth One Life' is focusing on repurposing vegetables discarded at farmer's markets, transforming them into fertilisers to support sustainable farming practices.

During a recent initiative, several key officials from the Corporation participated in tours alongside the NGO, including Additional Commissioner (Project) Chandrasekhar, Chief Medical Health Officer Dr P Ratnavali, Assistant Medical Health Officer Dr Babu Srinivas, Deputy City Planner Zubin Cheeran Roy, Estate Officer T Srinivas, and sanitation survey staff.

# PM-JUGA to be implemented in 17 villages of five mandals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Pradhan Mantri Janatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PM-JUGA) was organised by the NTR District Tribal Welfare Department at the Pingali Venkaiah Meeting Hall on the premises of the NTR District Collectorate on Wednesday. District Collector Dr. G. Srijana attended the programme and said the scheme will be conducted in 17 villages of five mandals in the district.

Before the meeting, Collector Srijana, Tribal Welfare Officer J. Sunitha, several Tribal Association leaders, and students paid rich tributes to the late Mahatma Gandhi marking his birth anniversary.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Srijana said that the Swachh Bharat Mission, which began 10 years ago, has continued as a people's movement and resulted in good results. Similarly, the PM-JUGA is being implemented in the country by taking inspiration from the Swachh Bharat, she said. Any programme that had been started on October 2 would be the best and would give better results, she added.

Furthermore, she stated that the PM-JUGA would be implemented in 17 villages in all five Mandals - Ibrahimpatnam, Penuganchiprotu, A. Konduru, Jaggayyapeta, and Mylavaram. Under this scheme, housing, roads, drinking water schemes, energy, solar plants, Auyushman cards, gas, and other facilities would be provided, she added. Besides, tribal people can utilise the schemes of agriculture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, and others from the government, she explained.



# Missing girl found dead in summer storage tank

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

The incident of missing a girl ended in a tragic note as the body of the girl was found floating on the summer storage tank at Punganur on Wednesday.

Police said that six-year-old girl Aspiya went missing on the night of Sunday. Her parents and relatives searched all the area and did not find her. Her father Ajmatullah lodged a complaint with the Punganur police station. The

police formed 11 special teams to trace the girl and the teams conducted massive searches for the missing girl.

Sadly, the body of the missing girl was found floating on the summer storage tank on the outskirts of the village. The body was retrieved from the tank and shifted to the GGH for postmortem. It is yet to be investigated to ascertain whether she fell in the summer storage tank accidentally or miscreants dumped the body after killing her.

# CREDAI-Visakhapatnam holds blood donation camp

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

CREDAI-Visakhapatnam chapter, in association with Vizag Runners and supported by AS Raja Blood Bank, organised a blood donation camp at KSR Complex, Seethammadhara, on Wednesday. The camp saw active participation from more than 50 donors, including key members of CREDAI-Visakhapatnam.

National joint secretary Raja Srinivas, president V Dharmender, and other prominent members rolled up their sleeves to donate blood. Dharmender emphasised the critical role of blood donation in saving lives, stating, "Regularly donating blood can be a lifesaving act, as your donated blood has the potential to offer a second life to someone in need."

Raja Srinivas commended the success of the event,



emphasising its positive impact on the community. Key members of CREDAI-Visakhapatnam, including vice-president E Ashok Kumar, joint secretaries Kancheti Srinivas, N Narisimha Rao, G Karthik, Youth Wing coordi-

nator Sri Sridhar Burugupalli, Youth Wing joint secretary N Bharanidhar, Women's Wing secretary K Kiranmayi, and committee members Alapati Srinivas Rao and Kiran Kumar Rajanna, actively participated in the blood donation drive.

# Vijayawada Division celebrates Gandhi Jayanthi

## Mega Cleanliness Drive organised at Vijayawada Railway Station

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Commemorating the 155th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Vijayawada Division of the South Central Railway celebrated Swachh Bharat Diwas on a grand note on Wednesday. To mark this momentous occasion, a Mega Cleanliness Drive was held at Vijayawada Station. More than 20 Cleanliness Target Units were identified in advance and around 20 teams consisting of 25 members were deployed at various locations of Vijayawada station to conduct the event and bolster the Swachhata initiative.

Railway officers, staff, Bharat

Scouts and Guides, students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Jack n Jill, NGOs and other teams took part in this massive event. As a prelude to the Mega Cleanliness Drive event, Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, and Branch Officer paid floral tributes and homage to the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi at Clock Tower, East Main Entrance and Vijayawada Station.

Leading from the front, the DRM took part in the drive along with staff at a most challenging location near RMS office, Caltex Road at



Vijayawada Station. The enclosure behind Babu Waiting Hall became an unintended garbage dump and had been a neglected location for the last seven years. The DRM and team swung into action and cleaned the entire enclosure for around two hours. Almost 500 bags of garbage were collected from this single location and dispatched in trucks. Interacting with the

media, Narendra Patil praised the clarion call of Swachhata given by the PM. He underlined that in order to become a developed nation Swachhata Pakhwada was launched 10 years back as a transforming initiative to achieve all our environmental goals and cleanliness in all spheres of life. He highlighted that during the past 15 days around 1,000 CTUs were identified.

# Heavy rains flood low-lying areas; hamper Dussehra preparations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heavy rains lashed Vijayawada on Wednesday, inundating low-lying areas and causing severe disruption to traffic and city life. The downpour, which began in the afternoon and intensified in the evening, was accompanied by thunder and lightning, drenching areas such as Gunadala, Kundavari Kandrika, Payakapuram, Machavaram, One Town, and Gandhinagar. Several intersections across the city were submerged, bringing traffic to a standstill. The rain continued into the evening, further impacting Patamata, Labbipet, and Mugalrajapuram, creating waterlogging in various

neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the rain water entered into many houses at Kandrika, Rajiv Nagar and other flood-affected areas in the city. As a result, people expressed unhappiness with the district officials for not completing the flood works. The unseasonal rain also hampered preparations for the upcoming Dussehra festivities at the Kanakadurga temple. Officials, who had planned to complete all necessary arrangements by Wednesday evening, faced delays, especially in ongoing Q-line work on the ghat road. Authorities expressed concerns over the potential for landslides, as heavy rainfall poses a threat to the hill works around the temple.





# Minister calls for people's help to protect environment

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Union Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries Bhupati Raju Srinivasa Varma appealed to people for their cooperation and support to protect the environment and keep surroundings clean and tidy.

The Union Minister, along with Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, MLAs and other officials took part in the valedictory programme Swachhata Hi Seva programme, organized here on Wednesday coinciding the Gandhi Jayanthi. The Central government sponsored Swachhata Hi Seva programme concluded today.

Addressing the gathering, the Union Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat programme on October 2, 2014 Red Ford in Delhi. The Prime Minister launched the Swachh Bharat programme with an objective of keeping the surroundings clean and tidy and carrying out good sanitation across the country.

The Union Minister said that vehicles were provided to every village panchayat and municipality for the removal of garbage. The Swachh Bharat programme had completed 10 years today, he recalled. The Swachhata Hi

Seva programme was carried out across the country for 15 days from September 17 to October 2, with an objective of making the environment clean, Srinivasa Varma observed.

Collector Nagarani said that the United Nations declared October 2 as 'World Non-violence Day. Mahatma Gandhi had influenced the world with his non-violence concept, she stated.

Bhimavaram MLA Pulaparti Ramanjaneyulu underlined the cooperation of people to keep the city clean and tidy and lauded the initiation of Bhimavaram Municipal Commissioner for

inspecting a ward every morning as part of keeping the city clean and tidy.

Achanta MLA Pitani Satyanarayana and Undi MLA Kanumuri Raghurama Krishnam Raju also spoke.

Earlier, Union Minister for State Bhupati Raju Srinivasa Varma paid tributes to Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi by garlanding the statue on his birth anniversary. He also paid tributes to former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri by garlanding his portrait. Joint Collector T Rahul Kumar Reddy and DRO J Uday Bhaskar Rao were among those who took part in the programme.

# Pawan Kalyan relinquishes 'Prayaschit deeksha' in Tirumala temple

Pawan Kalyan's daughter signs on declaration



PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan relinquished his 11 days 'Prayachit Deeksha' in the hill shrine Tirumala Venkateswara temple on Wednesday. Pawan Kalyan went to the temple on foot by trekking the stairs and ghat road on Tuesday.

Pawan Kalyan embraced the 11 day 'Prayachit Deeksha', feeling remorse for using adulterated ghee to make the sacred Laddu Prasadam of Tirumala temple

during the previous government.

Pawan Kalyan visited the Venkateswara temple today, participated in a special pooja and worshipped the god. The priests put the Varahi declaration documents at the foot of the deity and perform pooja. Pawan Kalyan went to the temple along with his two daughters, K Aadya and Paleena Anjani, during the VIP break darshan through maha dwaram.

Later the priests blessed him and his daughters in the Ranganayakula mandapam.

Interestingly, Pawan Kalyan's daughter K Paleena Anjani signed the declaration before entering into the temple. Since Paleena Anjani is a minor girl, Pawan Kalyan also signed on the declaration form in the presence of officials

The priests gave him Prasadam and a portrait of the god. Pawan Kalyan visited the Tarigonda Vengamamba Annadanam hall where he was welcomed by the officials. Pawan Kalyan had lunch in the annadanam centre along

with other devotees. MLC Pidugu Hari Prasad, Railway Koduru MLA Arani Srinivasulu, popular film director Trivikram Srinivas and Art Director Anand Sai were among who accompanied Pawan Kalyan.

# Blood bank is being set up in Bhimavaram

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

A district level component Blood Bank is being established here by the District Red Cross Society.

District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani inspected the works of the blood bank centre at Rayalam village near here on Wednesday.

The Collector inspected the equipment, worth Rs 2 crore, given by the International Red Cross society for the blood bank.

The District Red Cross Chairman Dr. M Shivarama Bhadri Raju told the District Collector that the National Central Drug Authority, New Delhi, has granted a license to set up a blood bank here. The District Collector expressed satisfaction after knowing the functioning of the machinery and equipment.

On the occasion, the District Collector said that blood donors should be encouraged and people should



be made aware about blood donation. Everyone should be made aware that blood cannot be made artificially and blood can only be collected from donors. Steps should be taken to inaugurate the blood bank center as soon as possible and make it accessible to the people, the Collector

told the red cross society chairman.

District Collector Nagarani thanked the International Red Cross society and Indian Red Cross society, Andhra Pradesh, West Godavari district Red Cross district branch for providing equipment worth Rs.2 crore.

# Purandeswari bats for Swaccha Bharat

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

MP Daggubati Purandeswari appealed to the people to work to fulfill the ambition of Swachh Bharat of Prime Minister Narendra Modi by keeping surroundings clean and tidy.

The MP, along with East Godavari district Collector P Prashanthi, participated in the Swachhata Hi Seva programme at Kotipalli bus stand here on Wednesday. She and the Collector, along with other officials and activists, swept the road with brooms.

Speaking on the occasion, MP Purandeswari said Swachhata Hi programmes were held across the nation to keep the country clean and tidy and awareness among people was created. Mahatma Gandhi dream of Grama Swarajyam and the same is being achieved now.

She underlined that people's participation and support are required to achieve Gandhi's Grama Swarajyam and Narenra Modi's Swachh Bharat. The MP noted that keeping the surroundings of



their residence clean and tidy is the social responsibility of all.

"India will emerge as a clean and tidy nation in the coming days. The Prime Minister is making all efforts to achieve Swachh Bharat. The people of the country

should extend their mite to achieve the goals," Purandeswari observed. The MP administered a pledge with the participants that they would recommit themselves to achieve Swachh Bharat.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has aimed to achieve

Viksit Bharat by 2047 and all should strive for the same," MP Purandeswari stated.

Collector P Prashanthi, Municipal Commissioner Ketan Garg, RTO K Sharmila and other officials were among those who took part in the programme.

# Thunderstorm with lightning likely in AP in next 24 hours

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours and on October 5 and 6, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that the same situation is likely to prevail in Rayalaseema on October 5 and 6.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur in a few places or at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next seven days. The south-west monsoon has been weak in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema. Rain occurred at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours, the report added.

# 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 related to Musi and HYDRABAD.

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.



# Collector launches 'Mahila Rakshak' logo

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari district Collector P Prashanthi, flanked by SP D Narasimha Kishore, launched the 'Mahila Rakshak' logo here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prashanthi said that it is laudable to make a Mahila Rakshak programme by utilizing the available human resources. The team of East Godavari Police who took the initiative for this was appreciated by the Collector. She conveyed special gratitude to the SP for making her partic-

ipate in such a good programme.

"It is a good idea to form Mahila Rakshak without any additional financial burden," she appreciated. She welcomed organizing the programme coinciding Mahatma Gandhi's Jayanthi and she hoped that more security is possible for the protection of women.

"Nowadays the safety of women has become a problem and such an innovation towards providing protection to women is welcome", she extolled. The Collector stated that there is no doubt that Mahila Rakshak would be

helpful for early detection and prevention of complaints.

SP Narasimha Kishore said that all steps are being taken to provide protection to girls and women in the district and as part of Mahila Rakshak was launched.

Earlier, over 1000 women and girls formed a human chain from Pushkar ghat to Devi Chowk as part of creating awareness on their security. Women and Child Welfare officer K Vijaya Kumari and Additional SP AV Subba Raju and host officials were among those who took part in the programme.

# 63 red sanders logs, country-made gun seized; 2 arrested



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Red Sanders Anti Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) personnel seized 63 red sander logs, a country-made gun and arrested two red sander smugglers at Pacharamanu village in KVB puram mandal.

Police said here on Wednesday that a RSASTF team led by Kadapa Sub-control RI M Chiranjeevulu and RSI M Muralidhar Reddy conducted a search in the forest in the KVB Puram mandal. The task force team saw

some red sander smugglers were carrying red sander logs in the forest.

The task force police personnel arrested them and seized 63 red sander logs and a country-made gun from them.

The task force personnel arrested two persons. However on noticing the task force team personnel some of the smugglers fled into the forest.

The police registered a case and launched a search for those who fled. Some forest staff also took part in the operation.



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 Bhuvar, 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. "Girls who are at number two," that is, who are somewhat less good-looking, prefer someone who runs a grocery shop or paan kiosk, he said. "A number three girl would like (to marry) the son of a farmer," he said, adding that only girls who are "at the bottom of the lot" marry a boy from a farming family.



80 inmates of Nashik Jail appear for Gandhi peace exam

As many as 80 inmates of the Nashik Central Jail and eight officials appeared for the Gandhi peace examination conducted for propagating his ideals of peace and non-violence. The exam was conducted by Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal, a Gandhian public charitable trust. The inmates, including 70 men and 10 women, and the officials appeared for the exam on October 1 on the eve of the 155th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi with the active corporation of the jail administration, the Mandal stated in a release. The syllabus for the exam included Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography and other biographical literature, which was provided free to the inmates before the exam was conducted. The top three performers were awarded Khadi clothes and other participants were given certificates at a prize distribution function organised October 2.



Two ex-IAF pilots killed as helicopter crashes

Two ex-IAF pilots and an engineer were killed after a helicopter belonging to a private aviation company crashed and caught fire near Pune city on Wednesday morning, police said. The chopper, belonging to Delhi-based Heritage Aviation, had been hired by the Nationalist Congress Party, said its Maharashtra unit chief and MP Sunil Tatkare. He had flown in the helicopter only a day before, and was supposed to travel by it again on Wednesday, he told PTI. The chopper took off from Oxford County Golf Course helipad near Pune and was heading to Juhu in Mumbai when it crashed at 7.40 am, police said. The crash took place near a hilly terrain in Bavdhan area, close to the golf course and some 25 km from Pune city, police said. The deceased were identified as pilot Paramjeet Singh (62), co-pilot G K Pillai (57), both retired from the Indian Air Force; and aircraft maintenance engineer Pritam Kumar Bhardwaj (53), police said.



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 27 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 lasting 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 Pakhwada' (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.

Don't fall for BJP's poll promises: Cong



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Congress on Wednesday asked the voters of Haryana to oust the BJP in the October 5 polls, saying this is a fight against 'injustice and untruth' and also attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging he is the leader of those who break trust and an expert in telling lies. Urging the people of Haryana not to fall for BJP's poll promises, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge claimed the party has failed to fulfil commitments made to voters in the past. At an election rally at Badhra in Haryana's Charkhi Dabri, Kharge targeted the BJP over several issues, including demands for debt waiver and legal guarantee on MSP from farmers, and claimed people have made up their mind to bring the Congress to power in the state. "It is Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri's birth anniversary today. Mahatma Gandhi taught us truth and non-violence. I don't want to say this - how much truth and how much lies those in power speak," he said.

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. Birla said the path of spirituality and self-reliance shown by Mahatma Gandhi will guide the citizens to make India a developed nation by 2047. Earlier, Birla offered floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his memorial at Rajghat and at the iconic statue of the leader at Prerna Sthal on Parliament premises.

PK floats Jan Suraj Party Names Manoj Bharti working president

PNS ■ PATNA

Political strategist-turned-activist Prashant Kishor on Wednesday announced the launch of his political outfit Jan Suraj Party, a much-anticipated move by which he hopes to take the political landscape in Bihar by storm. Kishor also named Manoj Bharti, a Madhubani-born former Indian Foreign Service Officer, as working president of the party, saying the latter will hold the post till March next year when organisational polls will be held. The party was launched at Veterinary College Ground in the state capital in the presence of many renowned figures, including former Union minister Devendra Prasad Yadav, diplomat-turned-politician Pavan Varma and ex-MP Monazir Hassan. The party was floated exactly two years after Kishor had embarked on a more than 3,000-km-long 'padayatra' of the state,



from Champaran where Mahatma Gandhi had launched the first Satyagraha in the country, in a bid to mobilise the people for a "new political alternative" that could cure Bihar of its chronic backwardness. Speaking on the occasion, the I-PAC founder who gave up political consultancy a few years ago, said, "Jan Suraj has been a campaign aimed at making the people of Bihar understand that they have not been able to get quality education and job opportunities because they have never voted on these issues. We may be mocked by cynics who will say

how will we fulfil promises like putting an end to migration. But we have a blueprint. "We will need more than Rs 4 lakh crore to improve education in the state. We will raise the money by scrapping the prohibition law which is annually causing losses to the tune of Rs 20,000 crore. I reiterate that once Jan Suraj comes to power, the ban on liquor will be scrapped within one hour," said the 47-year-old leader, who is known to be a strident critic of the move by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, his former mentor.

'Ban on sexually explicit content in media' Survivors of sexual violence demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Utthan. The overwhelming sentiment was that such content on audiovisual media is corrupting society, turning ordinary individuals into predators. "Pornography is destroying the moral fabric of our nation," said one survivor, highlighting the psychological toll these crimes have had on their lives. Others echoed the direct connection between the rise of explicit content in media and the increase in sexual assaults across India. Uday Mahurkar, the founder of Save Culture Save Bharat Foundation, urged the government to impose a complete and permanent ban on the production, circulation, and consumption of sexually explicit material. An event organised on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi for rape survivors to share their traumatic experiences saw participants strongly advocating for an immediate ban on access to sexually explicit content. At the "Jan Sunwayi" or public hearing held by the Coalition of Organizations to Combat Production of Sexually Perverted Content, rape survivors recounted how men, influenced by pornographic content, became emboldened to commit sexual violence. The event was spearheaded by the Save Culture Save Bharat Foundation, alongside People Against Rape in India, Sampurna, and Sewa Nyaya

'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. "When T Rangachariar, the then chairman of the Cinematograph Committee placed a questionnaire before him to know his views on cinema in 1937, the father of the Indian nation described cinema a 'sinful technology'. Gandhi considered cinema a waste of resources and time," he said. Despite Gandhi's disdain, cinema has loved him unconditionally. From "Jagriti" in 1954 to "Lage Raho Munnabhai" in 2006, the list is long. Gandhi was eulogised by Hindi poet Kavi Pradeep in the song "De di azadi hamein bina

khadag, bina dhaal, Sabarmati ke sant tune kar diya kamal" (You gave us freedom without using any weapons, o saint of Sabarmati, you are great) from "Jagriti". Other films of the era recall the complex idealism that Gandhi represented. Dilip Kumar's 1957 movie "Naya Daur" dealt with the man versus machine debate. V Shantaram's "Do Ankhon Barah Haath", released the same year, focuses on the rehabilitation of six criminals by a humane jail warden. There is an entire genre of films based on chapters from Gandhi's life with Attenborough's "Gandhi" being considered the pinnacle of his depiction in cinema.

STUBBLE BURNING SC likely to consider CAQM's compliance report today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is likely to consider on Thursday the Commission for Air Quality Management's report on compliance of its directions for curbing air pollution in Delhi-NCR due to stubble burning. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Masih is hearing a bunch of pleas seeking to reduce air pollution in the region. The hearing holds importance as the top court on September 27 rapped the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) over its failure to curb air pollution in Delhi due to crop residue burning in the neighbouring states and said it needs to be more active in its approach. It had expressed dissatisfaction over steps taken by the panel to control pollution and said the CAQM needs to exercise its power under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021 to check air pollution due to stubble burning and other reasons. The top court had said efforts are needed to ensure that stubble-burning alternative equipment is used at the grassroots level.







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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 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 looming. 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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## 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 Kodiyeri 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 Communist party leader, 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





## 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 instill 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-

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# 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

the northern regions of the country.

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

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-

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(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 Vidyut 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-



tives, while also exploring innovative green technologies.

The Indian group has set up a new company, Reliance Enterprises, for investments in Bhutan's renewable and green energy sector. Reliance Enterprises will be jointly promoted by Mumbai-listed Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and Reliance Power Ltd.

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.

Tally, she said, talks to young girls in schools and colleges to encourage women to choose and continue in the STEM fields. "I do believe that every company should look at equal opportunity without compromising merit and talent," she added.

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 C S 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.



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## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM RINGS OF POWER SEASON 3!

As *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power Season 2* draws to a close, fans are eagerly anticipating news about a third season. While the show faced initial hurdles, its grand storytelling and cinematic quality have gradually won over its audience. With its massive budget, however, the future of the series remains uncertain. So, is Season 3 on the horizon?

As of now, Prime Video has not officially confirmed the renewal of *The Rings of Power* for a third season. However, Charlotte Brändström, one of the executive producers, has teased that an announcement could be on the way. In a recent interview, Brändström hinted, "I can't say much about season 3, but I think there will be good news soon." The show was originally envisioned as a multi-season epic,

with co-showrunner JD Payne stating that they aimed for five seasons from the start, with a well-defined narrative spanning 50 hours. According to Payne, some story arcs introduced in the first season won't reach their conclusion until the fifth season, reinforcing the show's long-term ambition. Given these hints, an official renewal announcement seems likely in the near future. That said, Prime Video holds the final decision!

If the show is renewed, fans might have to wait a while before returning to Middle-earth. The first season premiered in September 2022 and Season 2 debuted in August 2024. Considering the extensive production work and visual effects needed for such a large-scale project, a similar two-year gap seems probable. This means

Season 3 could likely premiere in late 2026, around August or September. Although official plot details remain tightly under wraps, Season 3 is expected to continue delving into J.R.R. Tolkien's expansive Middle-earth lore. Season 2 focused on key events such as the forging of the Rings, the conflict between Sauron and Celebrimbor and the Battle of Erebor. Co-showrunner Patrick McKay hinted at even more dramatic developments for the next chapter, though he stopped short of revealing any specifics.

Fans can expect epic battles, intricate political maneuvers, and deeper exploration of Tolkien's world—if Season 3 gets the green light.

## KIARA ADVANI BRINGS GLAMOUR TO ITALY

Actress Kiara Advani, currently in Italy for the shoot of her highly anticipated film *War 2* alongside Hrithik Roshan, has given fans a glimpse of her time on set. Amid the buzz around the movie, Kiara took to social media to share two breathtaking photos from the shoot. The pair is filming a romantic song for the film and the track has been making waves since behind-the-scenes footage was leaked online.

In the photos, Kiara dazzles in two stunning outfits. One shot captures her in a backless crochet top paired with a skirt, while the other shows her in a flowing blue gown, both pictures beautifully shot from behind to highlight her elegance. She kept her caption simple with "BRB," teasing her followers. Adding to the excitement, her husband, Sidharth Malhotra, has also joined her in Italy. In between shooting, the couple took some time off to enjoy each other's company, even sharing a fun video of themselves shopping together, complete with an impromptu outfit check for fans.

Directed by Ayan Mukerji, *War 2* also stars Jr NTR in a pivotal role alongside Kiara and Hrithik. Beyond *War 2*, Kiara is gearing up for her next Telugu release, *Game Changer*, where she stars opposite Ram Charan. The film is set to hit theaters on December 20, 2024.



## Thrilling clip from Citadel: Diana featuring Matilda De Angelis out now

Prime Video has just released a pulse-pounding new clip from its upcoming Italian spy series *Citadel: Diana*. Set to premiere on October 10, 2024, the series is produced by Cattleya—part of ITV Studios—and Amazon MGM Studios and comes from the creative minds of the Russo Brothers' AGBO. The sneak peek debuted during *Trailblazers*, an event highlighting women in front of and behind the camera, with Matilda De Angelis, the series' star, in attendance.

In the clip, viewers are treated to an adrenaline-fueled sequence featuring Diana, played by De Angelis, as she pursues her adversary through the stunning Cretto di Gibellina in Sicily, a massive land artwork by Alberto Burri. With breathtaking stunts, including a heart-stopping 450-meter zip-line flight, the series promises to deliver action on a grand scale. De Angelis per-

formed most of her stunts herself, undergoing four months of intensive training to prepare for the role.

During the *Trailblazers* panel, De Angelis reflected on her experience, sharing, "As an Italian actress, opportunities like this are rare. I embraced the challenge to do my own stunts and push myself beyond limits. I wanted to kick ass—Italian style!"

*Citadel: Diana* is the latest addition to the *Citadel* universe, a global spy thriller series that has captivated audiences with its unique storytelling and local adaptations. Directed by Arnaldo Catinari and developed by Alessandro Fabbri, the series is set in Milan in 2030. With six episodes launching worldwide on Prime Video, *Citadel: Diana* promises to be a high-octane thrill ride, featuring an international cast and packed with action, intrigue, and jaw-dropping stunts.

## Triptii Dimri sets record straight: Staying true to professional commitments!

Bollywood's rising star, Triptii Dimri, has always carried herself with grace and poise—both on-screen and off. Amid swirling rumors regarding her involvement in events beyond her professional obligations, Triptii Dimri's team has stepped forward to clear the air, issuing an official statement that reinforces her commitment to her craft.

The statement emphasised Triptii's dedication to her latest film, *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video* and her willingness to honour all scheduled promotional events. The young starlet was present for every session and appearance that was officially part of her promotional duties, reflecting her steadfast dedication to the project and its audience. "Triptii Dimri fully honoured her professional obligations, attending all scheduled events and sessions related to the film," said a spokesperson from Triptii's team, noting



that she did not participate or make any commitments beyond her promotional responsibilities. Importantly, her team clarified that Triptii remained strictly professional throughout the campaign, accepting no additional payments for activities outside of what was agreed upon for the film's promotion.

This clarification comes at a time when the entertainment industry is often inundated with speculations about celebrities' personal engagements and remunerations. For Triptii, however, it's clear that her focus remains entirely on delivering the best for her projects, free from distractions or detours. With *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video* gaining attention, Triptii has once again proven that her dedication to her work stands above and beyond the noise, allowing her talent to speak for itself.

## DELBAR ARYA JOINS ASHWATTHAMA: THE SAGA CONTINUES

Delbar Arya, known for her impressive performances in the Punjabi film industry and popular music videos, is all set to make her Bollywood debut with a key role in the upcoming movie *Ashwatthama: The Saga Continues*. The film, directed by Kannada filmmaker Sachin B Ravi, features Shahid Kapoor in the lead role and draws inspiration from the mythological epic Mahabharata, focusing on the story of *Ashwatthama*, the immortal warrior, as he faces the challenges of the modern world.

According to a close source, Delbar Arya has been brought on board for a significant role in the film. The source reveals, "Delbar has been cast in the project and will soon begin shooting. While details about her character remain under wraps, it's safe to say that her role will showcase her in a completely different light—something that fans have not seen

from her before. Her character is set to be striking and perhaps unrecognisable in the film."

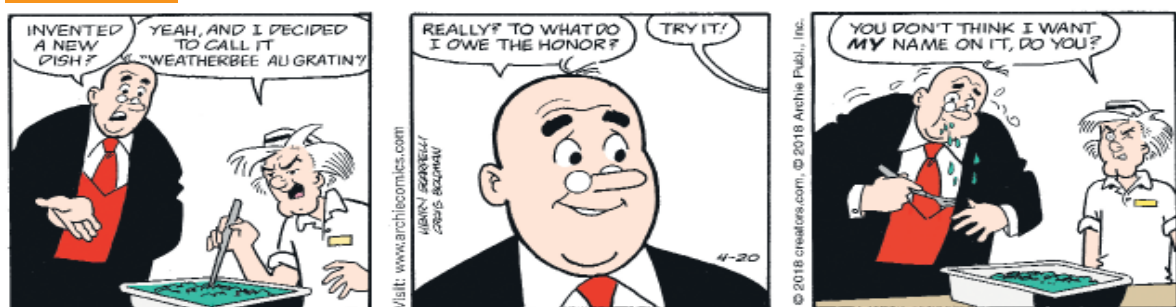
When approached for comments, Delbar Arya remained tight-lipped, neither confirming nor denying her involvement, adding further intrigue. The news of her potential role has certainly excited her fans, who are eagerly waiting to see her step into this high-stakes action drama.

The storyline of *Ashwatthama: The Saga Continues* delves into the myth surrounding Ashwatthama and his immortality, exploring how he copes with the complexities of modern-day conflicts. We look forward to seeing how Delbar Arya will portray her character in this blend of mythology and modernity, especially alongside such a talented ensemble cast.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



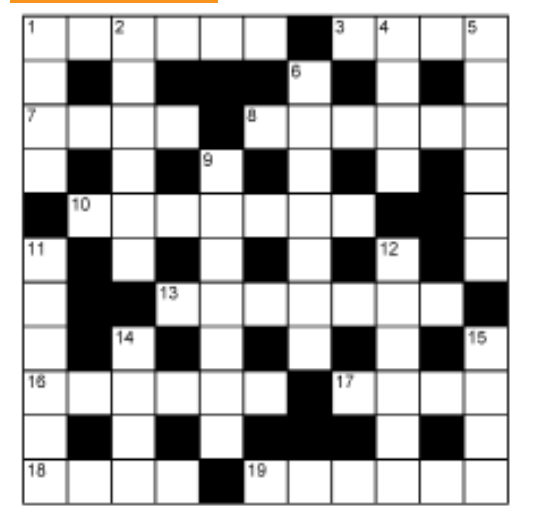
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



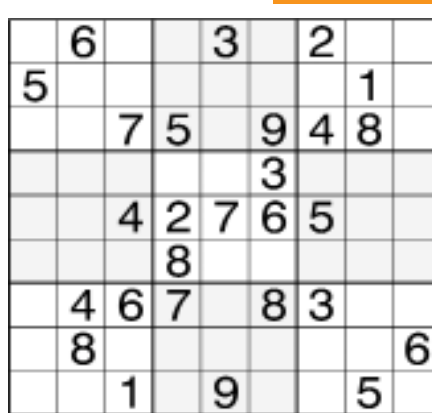
### CROSSWORD



### 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
- 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





## 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.)



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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**





# 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.



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

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

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**E**ster 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

**Y**oung 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



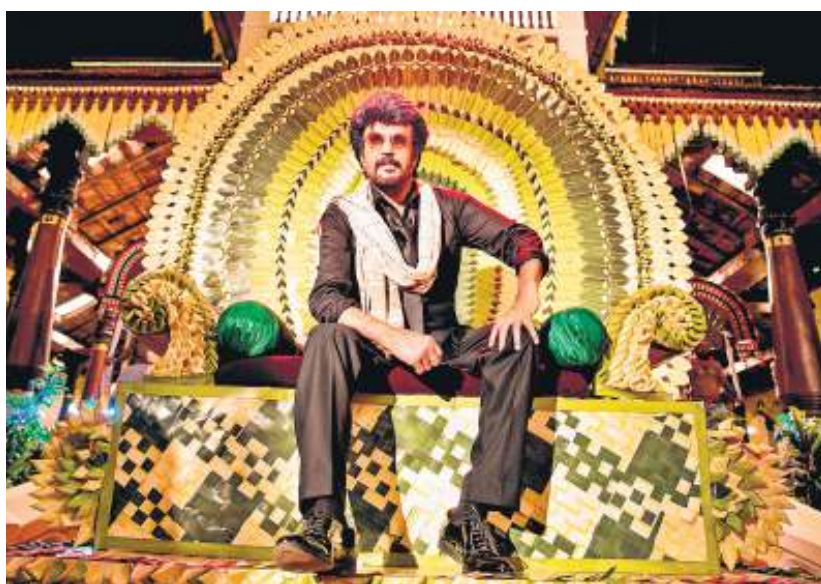
ful Telugu film was *Ala Vaikunthapuramuloo*, after which she didn't experience much success in Telugu cinema. Now, she is shifting her focus to Tamil films. Alongside her new project with Vijay, she has also signed a Tamil film opposite Suriya, directed by Karthik Subbaraj, which will be Suriya's 44th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



**T**he Pioneer recently reported exclusively that Pooja Hegde would star opposite Thalapaty Vijay in his upcoming film, tentatively titled *Thalapaty 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 #Thalapaty69 cast!

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



## Rajinikanth and Amitabh back in action!

**G**et 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

**D**irector VN Aditya, known for many successful films like *Manasantha Nuvve*, *Sreeram*, *Nenunnaanu*, *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.

