



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN



India assures support in Sri Lanka's development

GOYAL: NO CHANGE IN POLICY ON MULTI-BRAND RETAILING



SWAG is not so SWAG AFTERALL!



QUOTE OF THE DAY



The BRS will go to New Delhi and protest at Rahul Gandhi's house demanding to fulfil the promise to waive farm loans after Dusshera. In Karnataka, the Congress said five guarantees and got votes. In Telangana, they said six guarantees, in Haryana they are saying seven guarantees and tomorrow in Maharashtra they will say eight guarantees. Shouldn't Rahul Gandhi ask whether these guarantees are implemented or not?

- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

P4

DON'T MISS...

Kakani involved in illegal sand, quartz...

Telugu Desam party senior leader and MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy alleged that Rs 91 crore worth sand was illegally extracted from Surayapalem and Viruvur reaches, located in Sarvepalli constituency, during the YSRCP regime on the directions of former Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy. Talking to the media here on Friday, Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy said that 2,73,500 tonnes of sand was illegally extracted and transported from the two sand reaches from December 2023 to June 4, 2024...

-PAGE: 4

Significance of peace has grown...

President Droupadi Murmu said on Friday the significance of peace and unity has increased amid unrest in certain parts of the world. Addressing the inaugural session of a four-day global summit on 'Spirituality for Clean and Healthy Society' at the international headquarters of Brahma Kumaris in Mount Abu, the president said, "Today, an atmosphere of unrest is prevailing in several parts of the world. At a time when human values are declining, the importance of peace and unity is increasing even..."

-PAGE: 5

RE sector makes 'notable ...'

The domestic renewable energy has made a 'notable contribution' to the global renewable energy workforce which has grown to 16.2 million, a report has said. According to the 2024 Annual Review by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the total number of jobs in India's renewable energy sector reached an estimated 1.02 million mark in 2023. "The global renewable energy workforce grew to 16.2 million, up from 13.7 million in 2022, with India making a notable..."

-PAGE: 8

We can sense each other's feelings...

Shafali Verma, the significant other of the blockbuster Indian opening pair, says her no-holds-barred approach goes well with Smriti Mandhana's elegance and both can "sense each other's feelings just by our facial expressions" while batting. One of the factors behind the Indian women's cricket team's dominance in recent times has been the success of its openers, and Shafali admits they know how "important" they are to the team's fortunes. "I've been opening with Smriti for the past two-three years, and now we can..."

-SPORTS

'ADULTERATED GHEE IN TTD LADDU'

SC forms five-member SIT

Team will have two officers each from CBI, AP Police, and an FSSAI official

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court, on Friday, ordered for the constitution of a five-member independent agency to investigate whether adulterated ghee was used in the making of Tirumala laddus.

A Division Bench comprising Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan, while disposing of writ petitions filed by former MP Subrahmanian Swamy, former TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy, and others, said that the committee should conduct the inquiry under the supervision of the CBI director.

The committee will have two officers each from the CBI and the Andhra Pradesh police, and a Food Safety Standards Authority of India official (FSSAI).

The court said it was constituting an independent panel to investigate the charge of adulteration in the making of laddu at the Tirumala temple, keeping in view the sentiments of the devotees. "The committee is being formed to assuage the feelings of crores of people."

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu kicked off a controversy on September 18, stating that adulterated ghee, including animal fat, was used for making



"We don't want this to be turned into a political drama. There are sentiments of crores of people throughout the world," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan observed.

• We clarify that we would not permit the court to be used as a political battleground.

• In order to assuage the feelings of crores of people/devotees, we find that the investigation should be conducted by an independent SIT consisting of the representatives of the CBI, representatives of the state government and a representative of the FSSAI.

• The allegations in the FIR have the potential of hurting the sentiments of crores of devotees/people residing worldwide.

Tirumala's laddu prasadam during the previous YSRCP regime.

The Supreme Court-ordered team would work under the direct supervision of the CBI director. The court made it clear that it had no doubts about the fairness or independence of the SIT formed by the State government to probe the controversy, but was ordering an independent panel to soothe the feelings of the devotees of Lord Venkateswara.

Counsel for Subba Reddy, Kapil Sibal, expressed doubt over whether there would be an impartial investigation by the SIT since it was constituted by the government which made the allegation that adulterated ghee was used.

He wanted an independent panel to probe the allegation under the supervision of the court. Had Chandrababu not made the statement, then it was a different matter, he said.

Sibal argued that no animal fat was mixed with ghee and that the lab reports indicated the presence of only vegetable oils and vegetable fat. He said no adulteration of ghee took place at any stage.

CM welcomes SC decision to form SIT

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to establish a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the allegations of adulteration concerning the famed Tirupati laddu. The Supreme Court's directive mandates the formation of the SIT, comprising officers from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Andhra Pradesh police, and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Chandrababu, taking to social media platform 'X', stated:

Continued on Page 2



28 Naxals gunned down in Bastar

Encounter with Security forces

PNS ■ DANTEWADA

In one of the biggest operations against Maoists in Chhattisgarh, security personnel killed 28 Naxalites in a fierce encounter in the Bastar region on Friday, a senior police official said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed the security forces for their operation and said the 'double engine' government (BJP government in the state and at the Centre) is determined to eliminate the menace. The gunfight broke out at around 1 pm in the forest between Thulthuli and Nendur villages in Abhujmaad on the Narayanpur-Dantewada inter-district border, when a joint team of security per-

sonnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P told PTI over the phone.

Personnel belonging to the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF) were involved in the operation, he said. Sundarraj said that 28 Naxalites were gunned down in the encounter.

Along with the 28 bodies, a cache of weapons, including an AK-47 rifle and one SLR (self-loading rifle), were recovered from the encounter spot, he said.

Earlier, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai had said around 30 Naxalites were killed in the gun battle.

Jagan slams CM for 'continuing propaganda'

Says SC highlighted CM's political motives in stirring religious sentiments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Chief Minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has severely criticised TDP chief and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, after the Supreme Court's observations regarding the Tirumala laddu issue, stating that the court had clearly highlighted Chandrababu's political motives in stirring religious sentiments and warned him to stop misuse of religion politics.

Speaking to the media in Tadepalli here on Friday, Jagan noted that the Supreme Court had cancelled the SIT set up by the State government, and emphasised that if

Chandrababu had any real devotion, he should apologise to the public.

He added that Chandrababu neither feared God nor had any remorse, as evidenced by his repeated false claims about the adulterated ghee used in the preparation of the Tirumala laddu, despite TTD's Executive Officer publicly clarifying that no such ghee was used.

He further condemned the false propaganda being spread on TDP's social media, stating that even after the Supreme Court criticised Chandrababu, his party was spreading lies and defaming others. "Who did the Supreme Court actually hold accountable? Who should be fearful of standing before God? Who truly has devotion?"

Continued on Page 2

The Supreme Court had cancelled the SIT set up by the State government, and emphasised that if Chandrababu had any real devotion, he should apologise to the public.



No question of privatising railways: Vaishnav

PNS ■ NASHIK

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Friday said there is no question of privatising the railways and asserted the national transporter's focus is on providing affordable service to all.

The aim is to ensure people can travel up to 1,000 kilometres in comfort in less than Rs 400, the railway minister said here.

"In the next five years, the railways will undergo a complete

Sand shortage will be addressed soon: Meena

Sand stockyards, de-siltation points and reaches from Oct 15

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After the alliance government assumed office in June, a free sand supply mechanism was introduced from July 8. This initiative aimed to ensure that sand was available at affordable rates, fully compliant with environmental regulations. The sand operations were taken over from private agencies and entrusted to District Level Sand Committees, headed by district collectors.

Continued on Page 2

Suicidal thoughts rising among AP farmers

Financial instability, emotional strain leave farmers feeling trapped

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A recent study has highlighted a concerning rise in suicidal thoughts among farmers in Andhra Pradesh, primarily driven by escalating stress from unpredictable weather, uncertain crop yields, loan repayments, and fluctuating market conditions. Led by Prof MVR Raju from Andhra University, along with researchers K Meghana and B Srinivas, the study involved a survey of 302 farmers from the East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam districts.

The findings reveal a clear connection between stress levels and farmers' quality of life, with stress increasing as they age. Farmers aged 25-35 reported an average

stress level of 6.4 out of 10, while those aged 36-50 experienced an average of 7.1, and farmers over 50 reported a concerning 7.5. "As farmers grow older, their ability to meet family obligations diminish-

es, which raises their stress and further impacts their quality of life," Raju said.

The relationship between stress and suicidal thoughts is particularly alarming. Scores for suicidal

ideation rose with age, with younger farmers (25-35) reporting a score of 3.2, while those aged 36 to 50 had a higher score of 4.0, and farmers over 50 recorded a troubling score of 4.5.

"Chronic financial instability, increasing debt, and the emotional strain of farming leave many farmers feeling trapped," Raju added. The study also pointed out several factors contributing to this growing mental health crisis, including crop failures, market fluctuations, and a heavy reliance on loans for seeds, equipment, and fertilisers. When crops fail or prices drop, farmers often struggle to repay their debts, becoming ensnared in a relentless cycle of poverty, worsened by high-interest rates from informal lenders.



"Chronic financial instability, increasing debt, and the emotional strain of farming leave many farmers feeling trapped." The study also pointed out several factors contributing to this growing mental health crisis, including crop failures, market fluctuations, and a heavy reliance on loans for seeds, equipment, and fertilisers.

'Govt aims to provide extensive employment opportunities'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The main objective of the coalition government is to provide extensive employment opportunities to the unemployed youth, stated Tammireddy Sivasankar Rao, who took charge as Chairman of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation (MSME DC) on Friday. Sivasankar Rao assumed office at the MSME headquarters in Mytalampadu, Vijayawada.

Speaking on the occasion, Sivasankar remarked that the previous government deceived the youth by promising job opportunities through a job calendar. He emphasised plans to shape the youth into

The coalition government is committed to providing jobs to the youth and clarified that the government is making extensive arrangements to set up skill development centres across the State. He stated that he has comprehensive knowledge of MSME and pledged to work towards bringing Andhra Pradesh MSME, which is currently in the seventh position in the country, to the top rank.

industrial entrepreneurs through MSMEs and urged the unemployed youth to move away from the notion that jobs only mean government

employment. He also encouraged them to settle by taking advantage of the incentives provided by MSME.

He assured that the coalition government is committed to providing jobs to the youth and clarified that the government is making extensive arrangements to set up skill development centres across the State. He stated that he has comprehensive knowledge of MSME and pledged to work towards bringing Andhra Pradesh MSME, which is currently in the seventh position in the country, to the top rank.

Sivasankar Rao expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan for placing trust in him.

Drainage problem in city linked with Railways: MP

SCR GM holds meeting with MPs to discuss pending railway projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The drainage problems in the West constituency in Vijayawada city are linked with the Railways and the previous government did not show interest to address these issues, said Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath. "If at all the YSRCP government had worked with integrity to address the problem, there would be no flood in Vijayawada during the recent heavy rains," he added.

MP Sivanath said that the Railway, Revenue and VMC officials conducted a joint inspection to find a permanent solution to the drainage problem, and SCR General Manager Arun Kumar Jain responded positively. During a meeting, the MP brought to the notice of the GM the pending railway projects with-



in the Vijayawada Parliament segment. He explained the problem to the Railway Department and sought a permanent solution, mainly in the West constituency.

Speaking to the media later, the MP criticised that the State is lagging behind in railway projects due to the negligence of the previous YSRCP government. Due to the negligence in

acquiring land for the Visakhra railway zone, the project did not kick-start. The Railway officials said that the previous government did not pay attention to the proposals for the railway projects. He said that he will work sincerely with the cooperation of the railway authorities to complete the pending works.

He pointed out that the

meeting was convened with the aim of completing the pending projects in Andhra Pradesh. Proposals such as ROBs, railway under bridges, new railway lines and new trains were discussed. The proposal for the Amaravati capital railway line has been prepared and the work will start soon. When asked for new trains and Vande Bharat Express to the capital, the Railway officials said they would inform the Railway Board and work to get them.

He further said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Indian Railways will progress and under the leadership of CM Chandrababu, the railway projects in the State will be completed. The MP said that in the coming five years, all the pending projects will be completed.

Minister advocates for better rail connectivity in Srikakulam

Calls for swift action in upgrading rail infrastructure

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu underscored the urgent need to enhance rail connectivity in Srikakulam district, which borders Odisha, to better integrate it with the rest of the country. Addressing railway officials during a meeting at Khurda Road DRM in Bhubaneswar on Friday, the minister called for swift action in upgrading the region's rail infrastructure. "The development of Srikakulam's rail network is essential not just for local growth but also for strengthening our national connectivity," said Rammohan Naidu, urging railway authorities to prioritise projects that link this critical region.

During the meeting, chaired by East Coast Railway General Manager Parameshwar Pankwal, Cuttack MP Bhartruhari Mahtab was unanimously elected by the MPs in the divisional railway election. Speaking at the event, Minister



Naidu highlighted the importance of introducing the Vande Bharat semi-high-speed sleeper class train, connecting Bhubaneswar, Srikakulam Road, Vijayawada, and Secunderabad. "This route will not only connect three state capitals but also significantly improve travel efficiency for passengers across the region," Naidu explained.

The Minister also advocated for a Vande Bharat train service between Puri and Tirupati, stating, "Linking these two

iconic pilgrimage sites—Puri Jagannath Temple and Tirumala Venkateswara Swamy Temple—will benefit devotees and boost tourism."

During his visit, Naidu reviewed key railway development works in Srikakulam district under the Amrit Bharat Scheme. He emphasised the need to reflect local culture in station designs and suggested direct platform access at Mandasa railway station. Expressing frustration with delays in the Mandasa and

Jadupudi RBO projects, he urged authorities to expedite the completion of these works. "The progress is too slow, and we must accelerate to meet our development goals," Naidu remarked.

Ichapuram MLA Bendalam Ashok, who attended the meeting, requested DRM HM Bajwa to include Ichapuram as a stop for several important trains. "Ensuring stoppages at Ichapuram is crucial for the convenience of local travellers," Ashok noted.



Pending compensation credited to 14,000 people's accounts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr. G Srijana announced that the State government disbursed flood compensation to the remaining 14,000 flood-affected families on Friday. She mentioned that around 18,000 families had faced delays in receiving the compensation due to technical issues with their bank accounts. After resolving these issues, the government successfully deposited the financial assistance into their bank accounts, as stated in a press release on Friday.

Dr. Srijana assured that the remaining 14,000 families would receive their compensation within two days. Delays were caused by factors such as the absence of bank accounts, the demise of account holders, accounts held by minors and other reasons.

Bail granted to Nandigam Suresh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Division Bench of the AP High Court, on Friday, granted conditional bail to former Bapatla MP Nandigam Suresh, who was arrested in Hyderabad by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) police last month and has since been lodged in the Guntur Central Jail.

Earlier, the Mangalagiri court had rejected his bail petition twice and extended his judicial remand. It also granted two-day police custody of Suresh and the CID authorities questioned him before sending him to jail on judicial remand.

As the Mangalagiri court extended his judicial remand till October 17, the former MP moved the High Court seeking bail. Finally on Friday, the court granted him conditional bail.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Tritiya: Oct 05 05:31 AM to Oct 06 07:49 AM
Nakshatram: Swati: Oct 04 06:38 PM to Oct 05 09:33 PM
Vishaka: Oct 05 09:33 PM to Oct 07 12:11 AM
Rahukalam: 9:07 AM to 10:35 AM
Yamagandam: 1:32 PM to 3:01 PM
Varjyam: 03:46 AM to 05:32 AM
Gulika: 6:10 AM to 7:39 AM
Amritakalam: 11:41 AM to 01:28 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:40 AM to 12:27 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 63%
Sunrise: 5:58 AM
Sunset: 5:53 PM
Updated: October 4, 2024 5:00 PM



ABCD awards: Kakinada SP gets top honour

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State DGP Dwaraka Tirumala Rao felicitated and honoured the police officers who received the Awards for Best in Crime Detection (ABCD), for adopting modern procedures and innovative ways to solve crime cases quickly. The ABCD Awards, which had been suspended for the past few years, were restarted by the DGP on the instructions of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha.

CID-Additional DGP Ravi Shankar Ayyannar selected four best cases for

the second quarter of April-June 2024 after fully examining the antecedents of 22 cases. Kakinada District SP S Satish Kumar won the first prize for cracking a bank theft case.

Anakapalli District SP K Murali Krishna won the second prize for solving the case of a serial killer. Guntakal Railway Police SP K Chowdeshwari received the third prize for cleverly cracking a train theft case. Konaseema District SP S Sridhar received the consolation prize for cracking the Ambedkar statue destruction case. A prize money of Rs 1 lakh was given to the

first prize winner, Rs 60,000 to the second prize winner, and Rs 40,000 to the third prize winner.

Certificates of Appreciation were given for the best performer in Lok Adalat to Nellore District SP G Krishnakanth, Kurnool District SP G Bindu Madhavi, Guntur District SP S Satish Kumar, and the officers who helped settle most of the cases in National Lok Adalat from Andhra Pradesh.

DGP Dwaraka Tirumala Rao added that all the staff in the Police Department should improve their professional skills.

ATTACK CASE: Relief for Sajjala till Oct 25

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP High Court has granted huge relief to YSRCP general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy in the case pertaining to the attack on the Telugu Desam party office in Mangalagiri during the YSRCP rule.

After hearing the arguments on Sajjala's petition seeking anticipatory bail, the High Court directed the police not to take any coercive and hasty action against him till October 25, when the petition will be heard again.

The counsel for the CID police told the court that the attack on the TDP office was done following the directions of Sajjala, who was then in the Tadepalli camp office, as per the statements given by the other accused. Sajjala's counsel, however, produced media clippings as evidence stating that he was at Porumamilla, about 60 km from Mangalagiri.

After the government's counsel said he would have to examine the statement of the accused, the court deferred the case to October 25.

Need to implement RAMS in AP: Janardhan Reddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Roads and Buildings, Investments and Infrastructure, BC Janardhan Reddy, has said that the Road Asset Management System (RAMS) is being implemented successfully in Assam. The manner in which road details are being collected with state-of-the-art equipment is laudable and there is a need to implement RAMS state-of-the-art procedures in Andhra Pradesh. A two-day visit to Assam under the leadership of Minister BC Janardhan Reddy for a comprehensive study on RAMS in Assam ended successfully on Friday. A high-level delegation led by the minister toured various parts of Assam.

Janardhan Reddy said that the State government is taking fast steps towards the construction of better roads. The government is taking mea-

asures to attract investments, especially through the creation of minimum infrastructure in any area.

Accordingly, today the government is preparing action plans with the idea of adopting advanced approaches in the construction and maintenance of roads and infrastructure in the State.

The team visited Palas Bari-Mirza-Chandubi Road in Assam Mala Corridor for the demonstration on live data collection on RAMS. They inspected the prestigious road taken up by the Assam government under the Assam Mala scheme.

On the occasion, both the Australian-made HawkEye vehicle and the state-of-the-art American-made Path Runner vehicle were inspected. Also, the Minister who travelled in this vehicle observed how the collection of road details is done.

APHA to boycott Swiggy and Zomato operations in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Hotels Association (APHA) has decided to "Boycott Swiggy and Zomato" in Andhra Pradesh starting from October 14. The members of APHA told the media persons on Friday in Vijayawada that food delivery apps, Swiggy and Zomato, began operations in Andhra Pradesh eight years ago. Initially, they operated with 0% commission fees for restaurants. However, over a period of time, these commission rates have escalated to 20-30% which is not feasible.

RV Swamy president APHA said that Swiggy and Zomato without the knowledge of restaurant manage-



ment, discounts are being applied and deducted from the restaurant's earnings and the practice led to unhealthy and unethical market conditions.

He said that by offering discounts to the tune of Rs 125, Rs 150, or Rs 175 off on orders, the delivery apps are not only harming the restaurants' business but also misleading customers into believing that these discounts

are provided by the Swiggy and Zomato. He said that even if a restaurant has already prepared an order, if the customer cancels it, the delivery apps often enforce harsh refund policies, where neither the customer nor the restaurant receives a refund.

M Nagaraju secretary APHA said that these apps have introduced offers like "Biryani at Rs 49" or "Biryani at Rs 99" or "Biryani at Rs

129," convincing restaurant owners that these deals will increase their order volume. However, the extremely low prices force restaurants into heavy losses, often leading to debt and, in some cases, bankruptcy. They not only charge high commission rates but are also taking commissions on the Goods and Services Tax (GST) payable by the merchant to the government which is illegal and highly unethical, said Nagaraju.

He further said the apps showed flexibility and assured that they would work towards more restaurant-friendly policies but remained inflexible and refused to address the pressing issues raised by restaurant owners.

Sand shortage will be...

Continued from Page 1

Principal Secretary Mines Mukesh Kumar Meena said that sand excavation from Patta lands has been permitted through GO 59 from October 1 to increase the sand availability. The government is prepared to cater the demand of sand through stockyards, de-siltation points and reaches from October 15. From October 15, 108 reaches with 70 Lakh MT capacity will be operationalised using manual methods, significantly increasing supply across all districts.

MK Meena said that in February 2023, NGT revoked all environmental clearances for sand reaches, mandating public hearings for semi-mechanised mining. Unfortunately, no hearings were conducted before June 2024. The coalition government initiated steps for operationalisation of these reaches and complet-

ed 18 public hearings since then, and 32 more are in progress. The State Environmental Appraisal Committee is not yet in place, but the government is working closely with the Environment Department to expedite the process and operationalise additional reaches.

The Principal Secretary said that to control illegal mining district-level task forces have been strengthened to combat illegal transportation and excavation of sand. All systems are being reinforced to ensure that the public can access sand at affordable rates with minimal costs. He said GPS tracking has been made mandatory for all sand-transporting vehicles. Any vehicle found deviating from its assigned route will be blacklisted. All orders are being verified by GS/WS staff to ensure that sand requirements are valid. Transporters found involved in hoarding or re-selling sand will face strict penalties.

Over 60,000...

Continued from Page 1

The temple priests decked up the deity as Sri Gayatri Devi to tell the devotees that Gayatri Devi, as a mother, protects the one who chants the maha-mantra devotedly by giving them salvation, relief, emancipation, money, food, worldly pleasures and good offspring. Gayathri Devi is the whole and sole cause of 'Srishti' (creation), 'Sthithi' (well-being) and 'Laya' (destruction) of living things. Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra, Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath alias Chinni, Amalapuram MP G Harish and others visited the temple during the day.

CM welcomes...

Continued from Page 1

"I welcome the Honourable Supreme Court's order, which seeks to ensure that such malpractices do not tarnish the sanctity of the Tirupati laddu. It is crucial that the investigation is thorough and transparent, restoring the trust of devotees in this revered offering."

Minister for Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh also welcomed the apex court's decision. He stated on 'X': "I welcome the Hon'ble Supreme Court's decision to strengthen the ongoing investigation with additional support from national agencies (CBI and FSSAI), who will be part of the SIT to identify the culprits behind the adulteration of the sacred Tirupati laddu. Truth will prevail."

KVP backs Musi Project, rues YSR couldn't initiate it...

Continued from Page 1

However, due to priorities such as free electricity for agriculture, subsidies for farmers, loan waivers, prevention of farmer suicides, and free medical services under the Rajiv Arogyasree scheme for the poor, along with significant irrigation projects, the Congress government decided to utilize financial resources carefully and not burden future generations with debt.

"Understanding that sig-

nificant funds were necessary to provide satisfactory resettlement for every poor/middle-class individual affected by the Musi rejuvenation and to restore the river to its former state; the Congress government could not continue the project. Although YS had a strong desire to implement it effectively in the subsequent term, this could not happen due to his untimely death.

"In January 2020, while serving as a Member of Parliament, I registered as a

voter in the Nereducharla Municipal Corporation as per party directives. During the Municipal Corporation presidential elections, I visited Nereducharla twice with then PCC president Uttam Kumar Reddy. I learned in detail about the polluted Musi waters, the problems faced by the local people, and the need for rejuvenation. I felt deep regret that this rejuvenation could not be initiated during YS's tenure.

"Therefore, I fully welcome and support the Musi rejuvenation/beautification initiative now undertaken by the Congress government under your leadership. In fact, I suggested that it would be beneficial for the government to carry out the Musi rejuvenation in the first phase and the beautification in the second phase. However, noting your interest, vision, and competence, I have faith that this matter will be considered. As a disciplined Congress worker, I welcome all development works undertaken by our government that do not harm the

poor. "In this project, both BRS and BJP leaders, along with their supportive media, speak of injustice to the poor, but all of this is to protect their self-interests. The welfare and development of Dalits, tribals, backward classes, minorities, and the poor is the fundamental principle of the Congress party. The attempts by the Opposition to undermine your aspirations are merely crocodile tears, which the people of the country are aware of. I also condemn

their efforts to thwart your goals.

"Regarding the farmhouse owned by my family in Aziz Nagar, opposition leaders are repeatedly making allegations for their own selfish interests, attempting to put a gun to your shoulder and shoot me, thus trying to corner you. It deeply distresses me as a disciplined Congress worker that the opposition uses me and the farmhouse in my family's name to make baseless accusations against you and our party.

- KVP Ramachandra Rao

CM presents silk robes to Lord Venkateswara



PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu presented silk robes to Lord Venkateswara at the hill shrine Tirumala on Friday. Chandrababu Naidu, accompanied by his wife Nara Bhuvaneshwari visited the temple.

The Chief Minister, flanked by his wife Bhuvaneshwari, participated in a procession which began at Bedi Anjaneya Swamy temple and reached the Venkateswara temple. TTD DE J Shyamala Rao and Additional EO CH Venkata Chowdary welcomed the Chief Minister at the temple. The Chief Minister worshipped the sacred Dwajastambam in the temple.

The Chief Minister, accompanied by his wife, had a darshan of Lord Venkateswara in the temple. Later the priests blessed the couple at the Ranganayakula mandapam, gave them Theertha Prasadam and a Kalamkari image of Venkateswara Swamy.

The Chief Minister released the 2025 calendar and diary of TTD at the Ranganayakula mandapam on the occasion. It may be mentioned here that the Srivari Salakata Brahmothsavam began on Friday at the hill shrine Tirumala.

Brahmothsavam: TTD EO opens media center in Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive officer J Syamala Rao along with the Additional Executive Officer Ch Venkaiah Chowdary inaugurated the Media Center at Rambhageecha 2 Rest House here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion,

Rao said, the media plays a vital role in taking forward the glory of Sri Venkateswara Swamy and various other pilgrim amenities extended by TTD to the devotees in a big way to the outside world. Keeping in view your valuable services, the Media Center with all facilities including wi-fi connection, computers, scanners, tele-

phone facility, LED TV have been provided till the completion of annual Brahmothsavam, he said.

An exclusive Annaprashadam facility has also been arranged for the media persons in the second floor of RBRH 2 till the annual fete, the EO said. Our PR department will issue press notes and photographs

from time to time to all the print and electronic media regarding the various religious activities during these ten days and give wide publicity for the better information of the global devotees of Sri Venkateswara, he maintained. TTD Chief PRO Dr T Ravi, PRO (FAC) P Neelima and media personnel were also present.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Due to the high temperatures, there should be no shortage of drinking water for the devotees coming for the goddess's darshan. The Commissioner of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, Dhyanchandra, instructed officials to provide drinking water packets to devotees multiple times if needed. On Friday morning, Commissioner Dhyanchandra conducted a teleconference from the Command Control Room in the main office with field officers involved in the Dasara festival duties.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Dhyanchandra directed that the officers and staff should be present at their assigned points to supervise the arrangements. He emphasized that there should be no shortcomings in the arrangements made for the devotees visiting the temple.

He instructed that the drinking water points should be constantly restocked and

Plea to provide water packets to devotees in queues



hourly stock reports sent to the Commissioner. Temporary toilets should be

cleaned regularly to ensure that the public does not face any inconvenience, he said.

Sanitation should be maintained consistently, ensuring that waste is properly disposed of and areas identified through drone surveillance are kept clean, he explained.

The Commissioner directed the officials to be vigilant and ensure that the public does not face any issues, continuously providing facilities for drinking water, toilets, and sanitation.

For devotees walking from one point to another, staff should ensure that there are no shortages in the drinking water facilities in the queue line. The staff should go directly to the devotees and provide them with water packets, and the officials must regularly monitor and send these packets to those who need them.

Animini Ravi takes charge as SAAP Chairman

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Chairman of the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP), Alimini Ravi Naidu, assumed his position at a ceremony held at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada on Friday. After taking charge, Ravi Naidu signed important files, witnessed by Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra, Minister for Youth Services and Sports M Ram Prasad Reddy, and others.

Ravi Naidu expressed his commitment to the State government's vision of developing sports and games in Andhra Pradesh. He also pledged to implement beneficial schemes for players in the future, emphasising the high priority given to sports and games during the TDP regime.

Ravi Naidu highlighted Chief Minister N



Chandrababu Naidu's efforts to support outstanding players at the international level by providing government jobs and allocating sites for starting academies, expressing hope for the continuation of this support in the state. He

also mentioned the State government's plan to develop Andhra Pradesh as a Sports Hub.

The programme was attended by numerous MPs, MLAs, MLCs, corporation chairpersons, and TDP leaders.

Rythu Sadhikara Samstha collaborates with ANGRAU

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

B Rajsekhar, Special Chief Secretary to Government, Agriculture & Cooperation Department, has said that the AP State Government's Rythu Sadhikara Samstha is collaborating with ANGRAU to promote natural farming. He urged students to learn from real-world contemporary issues, especially the policy impacts on agriculture by emphasising the emerging model of natural farming. A workshop on Natural Farming in Krishna Auditorium of ANGRAU (Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University) was organised by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha in collaboration with ANGRAU.

Rajsekhar spoke about the integration of science, Vedic agriculture and traditional agricultural practices.

GITAM hosts National conference on pharmacology; showcases innovation



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Pharmacologists Society (APPS) successfully hosted a two-day national conference at GITAM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (GIMSAR). The event brought together leading experts, students, and researchers from across India to discuss the latest advancements in pharmacotherapeutics.

Dr B Geetanjali, Pro Vice-Chancellor of GIMSAR, inaugurated the conference, emphasising the importance of research in emerging areas of pharmacology. She highlighted the need for

innovative approaches to enhance medication safety and patient care.

The conference featured a diverse range of topics, including medication safety, career opportunities for young pharmacologists, and therapeutic trends. Participants presented over 100 scientific papers and posters, showcasing groundbreaking research in the field. Panel discussions on critical issues such as the challenges facing young pharmacologists, rational medication use, academic authorship, and the emerging role of food as medicine were also held. Renowned speakers and senior

professors from various institutions across India enriched the discussions with their expert insights.

Dr K Shankar, APPS Founder, emphasised the importance of embracing technology in the field, highlighting the transformative potential of AI and data analytics in drug development and medical education. The conference not only provided a platform for academic exchange but also fostered meaningful collaborations and networks that will undoubtedly contribute to the advancement of medical pharmacology in the years to come.

'Approach Waqf Board for marriage certificates any working day'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Waqf Board Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdul Khadir has informed the public that the Waqf Board issues Muslim marriage certificates based on the records of marriages solemnised by the Khazis appointed by the government in their respective jurisdictions. He further said that those who require marriage certificates can approach the State Waqf Board during office hours on any working day.

In a press release, Waqf Board CEO Khadir said that the bride, bridegroom, or any of their authorised relatives may apply for the issuance of marriage certificates by submitting a duly filled application form with the information entered in the marriage booklet by the government, along with the original marriage booklets and Xerox copies of the same, in person at the

office of the AP State Waqf Board.

He stated that to obtain the marriage certificate, the applicant has to pay Rs. 300 for each Tatkal Certificate and Rs. 200 for each Ordinary Certificate. Tatkal Certificates will be issued in 48 hours and Ordinary ones, after seven working days. Under unavoidable circumstances, it may take some more time, he added.

He advised the public to provide standard personal details such as names, date of birth, occupation, etc., as required by the government Khazis at the time of solemnising marriage to avoid complications of marital status and not to involve mediators, agents, or brokers in this process.

Besides, he mentioned that the AP State Waqf Board processes all applications directly, ensuring transparency and efficiency. For more details, people can contact 0866-2424286.



New Dy TC takes charge

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Deputy Transport Commissioner (DTC) A Mohan assumed his position at the DTC office near MG Road in Vijayawada on Friday. Officials and staff members of the DTC welcomed the newly appointed DTC.

Addressing the gathering,

Mohan expressed his commitment to reducing road accidents in the district by devising an action plan. He emphasised his goal of achieving zero registered cases of accident-related deaths. He also stated that, with the cooperation of officials and other related departments, he aims to decrease the number of road accidents in the district.

DTC Mohan urged all district officials to collaborate in addressing new vehicle registration issues promptly and efficiently. He encouraged officials and staff to deliver the services expected by the public.

Meanwhile, M Raja Babu, zonal president of the AP Transport Department Employees Association, along with others, met the DTC.

Port's Rs 18-cr 'Prominence Centre' to boost tourism

Visitors can witness movement of ships, restricted due to security reasons

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to enhance the city's tourism appeal and attract international visitors, the Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA) has announced plans to construct a 'People Prominence Centre' near the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple. The estimated Rs 18 crore project will offer visitors an immersive experience, allowing them to witness the movement of ships, typically restricted due to security reasons.

The centre, designed as a theme park, will include seating areas for the public to observe ship operations and a museum showcasing the port's history and activities. In addition, the VPA plans to launch short circuit tours to

nearby tourist spots, catering specifically to international tourists. "The objective is to attract international tourists by creating new facilities, developing basic amenities at existing tourist spots, and making the city an attractive destination for cruise operators," said Srinivas Pani, Regional Director of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Department.

Pani emphasised the significance of enhancing local tourism circuits to make Visakhapatnam a port of call for international cruises. "International tourists arriving by cruise liners prefer half-day tours, and the prominence centre near the port is a great idea to capitalise on that."

Visakhapatnam's rich cultural and heritage sites make



it an ideal location for international tourists, according to

Pani. "International tourists are more interested in culture,

local cuisines, and heritage. The heritage buildings in Old

Town, the Dutch cemeteries near Bheemunipatnam, and the Buddhist sites at Thotlakonda and Bavikonda are sure to attract visitors."

However, K Vijay Mohan, president of the Tours and Travels Association of Andhra (TTAA), pointed out a key issue hindering international tourism at Visakhapatnam Port - the lack of an e-Visa facility. "Unlike other ports, Visakhapatnam Port doesn't have an e-Visa facility, making it less attractive to cruise line operators."

Mohan also highlighted the need to address high handling charges at the port, which have deterred operators in the past. "If such issues are addressed, it could go a long way in attracting more international cruise operators."

APHA to boycott Swiggy and Zomato

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Hotels Association (APHA) has decided to boycott Swiggy and Zomato in Andhra Pradesh, starting from October 14. The members of APHA told the media on Friday that food delivery apps, Swiggy and Zomato, began operations in Andhra Pradesh eight years ago. Initially, they operated with zero per cent commission for restaurants. However, over a period of time, these commission rates have escalated to 20-30 per cent, which is not feasible.

RV Swamy, president of APHA, said that Swiggy and Zomato without the knowledge of restaurant manage-

ment, discounts are being applied and deducted from the restaurant's earnings and the practice led to unhealthy and unethical market conditions.

He said that by offering discounts to the tune of Rs 125, Rs 150, or Rs 175 off on orders, the delivery apps are not only harming the restaurants' business but also misleading customers into believing that these discounts are provided by the Swiggy and Zomato.

He said that even if a restaurant has already prepared an order, if the customer cancels it, the delivery apps often enforce harsh refund policies, where neither the customer nor the restaurant receives a refund.



Manohar assures farmer centric paddy procurement

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendra Manohar assured of adopting farmer centric paddy procurement from ensuing Kharif 2024-25.

The Minister held a meeting with the organizations of farmers here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, Nadendra Manohar assured of taking steps to minimize the farmers

visit to Paddy Procurement Centres.

He said that the required number of gunny bags would be provided to the farmers and transportation facilities would also be arranged to shift their paddy produce to procurement centres.

The Minister said that transportation of paddy to farmer preferred and nearest Rice Mills would be provided while

more tenant farmers would be encouraged to sell their paddy produce.

Nadendra Manohar said: "Difficulties of the farmers during paddy procurement will be minimized to the possible extent. Bio-Metric based procurement systems will be implemented and steps will be taken to track the paddy transportation vehicles through GPS devices."

Hence every transport vehicle shall mandatorily carry GPS device, he said adding that payment delay of MSP to the farmers reduced noticeably when compared to previous seasons. The Minister asked the farmers to cultivate consumer preferred varieties of paddy. The farmers were also asked to dry their paddy produce and clean after harvesting the crop to get MSP.



Pawan Kalyan welcomes Apex Court's verdict on probe

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan has hailed the verdict of Supreme Court to set up an independent SIT to investigate the use of adulterated ghee to make Laddu Prasadam of Tirumala shrine.

In a statement here on Friday Pawan Kalyan said that he welcomes the verdict of Supreme

Court to order for a five-member independent Special Investigation Team to probe the adulterated ghee issue.

"In accordance with the orders of the Supreme Court, two officials from the CBI, two police officers of Andhra Pradesh State government and a senior official from the E.S.S.A.I will be part of the SIT to conduct an inquiry independently. The use of adulterated

ghee to make Laddu Prasadam of Lord Venkateswara hurt the sentiments of devotees and it also caused worry to those who have faith in Sanathana Dharma," the Deputy Chief Minister acknowledged. Pawan Kalyan stated that the opinion of devotees that the quality of Laddu Prasadam and Anna Prasadam declined during the erstwhile TTD board should be taken into consideration by the SIT.

Pawan promoting RSS agenda: Ramakrishna

Expresses concern over his remarks and actions supporting Sanathana Dharma

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

K Ramakrishna, State secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), has accused Andhra Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party leader Pawan Kalyan of promoting the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) agenda under the guise of advocating for the protection of Sanathana Dharma. Ramakrishna expressed concern over Pawan Kalyan's recent remarks and actions supporting Sanathana Dharma, claiming they have confused the public.

While acknowledging Pawan's reputation as a secularist, Ramakrishna criticized the shift in his stance,

particularly after assuming a prominent political role. He emphasised that both Pawan Kalyan's family and the Jana Sena Party have traditionally adhered to secular principles, and it was disappointing to see a deviation from that. Ramakrishna condemned Pawan Kalyan's participation in various religious Deekshas and denounced his efforts to protect Sanathana Dharma, arguing that it served as a pretext for pushing the RSS agenda.

He further critiqued Pawan's statements that targeted those who oppose or disregard Sanathana Dharma, suggesting that such comments were divisive and undermined secular values.

Kakani involved in illegal sand, quartz mining: Somireddy

PNS ■ NELLORE

Telugu Desam party senior leader and MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy alleged that Rs 91 crore worth sand was illegally extracted from Surayapalem and Viruvur reaches, located in Sarvepalli constituency, during the YSRCP regime on the directions of former Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy.

Talking to the media here on Friday, Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy said that 2,73,500 tonnes of sand was illegally extracted and transported from the two sand reaches from December 2023 to June 4, 2024. The officials conducted a survey at Surayapalem sand reach and imposed a penalty of Rs 54.70 crore on sand illegal transporters.

The mining officials confirmed that illegal sand mining and transportation took place at the two sand reaches, he claimed. The officials confirmed that 1,85,000 tonnes of sand was extract-



ed and transported illegally from the Viruvur sand reach and the officials also imposed a penalty of Rs 37 crore on the illegal sand transporters.

Kakani Govardhan Reddy was also involved in the illegal quartz mining in the district. Only 10 percent of illegal sand mining of Kakani Govardhan Reddy has come to light so far, Somireddy revealed. TDP MLA and former Minister Chandra-mohan Reddy said that a comprehensive inquiry would be carried out on the illegally sand mining, quartz mining and transportation.

MP urges SCR GM for more facilities

PNS ■ ELURU

ML Putta Mahesh Kumar appealed to South Central Railway General Manager Arun Kumar Jain to provide more facilities in Eluru and Nuzvid railway stations and provide a halt to three super fast express trains.

South Central Railway held a meeting with Members of Parliament belonging to Vijayawada, Guntur and Guntakal divisional jurisdiction in Vijayawada on Friday.

Two Union Ministers of State and 15 MPs representing the state of Andhra Pradesh took part in the meeting. Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, SCR, Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division, M. Ramakrishna, Divisional Railway Manager, Guntur, M Vijaya Kumar, Divisional Railway Manager, Guntakal, Lokesh Vishnoi, Divisional Railway Manager, Hyderabad, Principal Heads of the Departments of SCR and other senior Railway officials attended the meeting.

Eluru MP Putta Mahesh

Eluru, Nuzvid railway stations



Kumar speaking on the occasion, urged the SCR GM to provide halts to Kakinada-Jodhpur express, Kakinada-Bhavnagar express and Yashvantpur superfast express in Eluru railway station. The MP also urged the SCR GM to provide a halt to Gowthami express in Nuzvid railway station.

The MP explained the necessity of constructing a passenger waiting hall, general waiting room, deputy station superintendent's room, waiting lounge, 4 passenger sheds on platform-1, construction of 4 passenger sheds on platform-2, construction of approach roads to all platforms and construction of

toilets in Nuzvid railway station. The MP also brought to the notice of SCR GM the provision of lift facility and 24x7 ticket counter on platform 2.

Eluru MP Mahesh Kumar underlined the need of increasing general and sleeper berths in trains. Keeping in view the benefits to the peasantry and the industrial sector, it was requested to speed up the construction of the new broad gauge railway line between Kovvur-Bhadrachalam road.

South Central Railway General Manager Arun Kumar Jain stated that deliberations of the meeting would immensely help the Railways in finalizing the Railway developmental plans for the people of this region. The suggestions and views expressed by the MPs would be given due consideration while formulating the proposals for new works / services, the SCR GM added.

Officials told to develop WG expeditiously

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu directed the district officials to evolve proper plans for the development of West Godavari district as part of "Swarndhara @ 2047" programme. A meeting was organized on the "Vision Plan 2029" here on Friday for which district Collector, MLAs and other officials attended.

Minister Ramanaidu reviewed the development programme being carried out in the district. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that a vision plan should be evolved with the aim of achieving a better growth rate to keep the state at the top, and as a part of this, a comprehensive plan should be formulated to pave the way for the development of the district by collating the resources available in the district.

The officials were asked to prepare the best plan for the development of WG district by taking into account the main aspects of



agriculture, aqua, coconut, tourism in the coastal area and temple tourism. Minister Ramanaidu cited that the major source in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia is coconut crop.

On the lines of Kodaikanal and Ooty, tourism centres should be developed in the district taking the advantage of the river Godavari and beaches. Ramanaidu underlined the need of encouraging temple tourism on par with the conventional tourism in the district, adding that hotels and restaurants should be set up which will help to generate employment.

The Minister also stressed the need of constructing roads for the development of the district. He also mentioned that drains should be modernized and better procedures should be introduced for purchase of paddy produce from the farmers. The government is contemplating to encourage the allied sectors of poultry and coconut in the district.

Uandi MLA K Raghurama Krishnam Raru proposed for the establishment of an airport in West Godavari district to ensure achieving progress expeditiously. He lamented that plastic

material and plastic bags constitute 20 percent of the silt removed from the irrigation canals which indicates how the plastic material inhibits flow of water in the irrigation canals in the district.

TP Gudem MLA B Srinivas highlighted that WG district has earned reputation for its abundance of aquaculture and agriculture but unfortunately the two sectors were damaged due to heavy rains and floods. He emphasized the need of extending a helping hand to the two sectors. Narasapuram ML B Nayakar also spoke.

Three persons killed in lightning strikes

PNS ■ KADAPA

Three persons, including a boy, were killed when lightning struck on them when they were in an agriculture field at Tummalur village in Pendlimarri mandal on the night of Thursday.

According to the revenue officials, some farmers were working in their field. Rain accompanied by lightning occurred.

They took shelter under a tree on which lightning struck killing Nandireddy Shiva Parvathi (30), Nandireddy Tejaswar Reddy (10) and Maruti Prasad Reddy (30).

The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the Government General Hospital for postmortem. Revenue and police officials visited the village and were assured of ex gratia.

BRS to take farmers' protest to Rahul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At a farmers' gathering in Thorrur in Mahabubabad district, senior BRS leader Harish Rao announced that the party would take Telangana farmers' grievances to New Delhi after Dasara if the Congress-led government of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy fails to fulfil promises.

He said if the crop loan waiver is not implemented the BRS will go to New Delhi and protest at Rahul Gandhi's residence if needed.

Harish accused the government of abandoning critical commitments, including farm loan waiver and pending Rythu Bandhu payments. He demanded immediate action to help farmers and said they would protest in front of Rahul's residence. Harish highlighted repeated delays and broken promises in loan waivers, noting that Revanth initially assured that his first action as Chief Minister would be to waive farm loans. However, deadlines changed from December 9, 2023, to August 15, 2024. Yet no relief reached farmers.



"Revanth even swore at sacred sites like Komaravelli Mallanna and Yadadri promising to prioritize farmers, but all we see are empty assurances," he said. He criticized the administration

for failing to deliver on several welfare schemes, including Rythu Bandhu payments, pensions, and the Mahalakshmi initiative. He pointed out that in Palakurthi Mandal alone, 4,314

farmers still await loan relief, underscoring the widespread frustration among Telangana's farming community.

Reflecting on the Warangal Declaration, Harish reminded the government of its pledges, including a crop bonus for all varieties, Rs 15,000 per acre for farmers, and crop insurance for tenant farmers. "None of these promises have materialized. The Congress government is letting down the entire agrarian community of Telangana," he said, adding that Podu land ownership rights remain unresolved as well.

Harish also drew attention to the government's handling of the law and order situation, particularly in Hyderabad, where he alleged that rowdiness is growing under the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Management Authority (HYDRAA).

He warned the Congress government against demolishing homes near the Musi River and added that the BRS would support the affected communities.

21 red sanders logs seized, six smugglers arrested

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Red Sander Anti Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) seized 21 red sander logs, two vehicles and arrested six red sanders smugglers in Atmakur.

On the directions of Task Force SP P Srinivas, a task force team led by sub-controller RI K Krupanand and RSI Alli Basha team conducted combing in the forest area in Atmakur forest division.

The team noticed some red sander smugglers were loading red sander logs into two SUVs in the forest. The task force team personnel arrested the



red sander smugglers, seized 21 red sander logs and two SUVs. Three of the arrested smugglers belong to Veluru district in Tamil Nadu and

other three belong to KV Puram in Tirupati district. SI CH Ravi registered a case and produced the arrested before the court.

4 persons stabbed in a clash during religious procession

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Four persons were stabbed in a clash which took place during the procession taken out as part of Dasara festival at Lingampally village in Nidadavole mandal in EG district on the night of Thursday.

Circle Inspector Srinivasa Rao told the media that the villagers of Lingampally took out a procession on the occasion of Dasara Navaratri. When the procession was going on, one person, Guntu Sunil, who was going on a motorcycle, insisted the organizers of procession at Nelamma temple give him a way to go forward for which



they refused. A heated argument took place between Sunil and the procession organizers. Irate over this, Sunil called his brother Anil and his friends. They clashed with the organizers of the procession

and stabbed with a knife. Four persons including Kakarla Puttayya, Kakarla Srinivas, Kakarla Pravin and Meesala Srinu were stabbed in the clash and they were admitted to the Government General Hospital in Nidadavole.

As the condition of the injured Kakarla Srinu turned to be critical, he was shifted to the GGH in Rajahmundry for better medical treatment. Three of the injured Pravin, Srinivas and Puttayya belong to one family. The accused including the siblings were absconding. CI Srinivas Rao and SI Sobhan Kumar registered a case.

Nearly 4k srivari sevaks to offer services to pilgrims during annual Brahmotsavams

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The Srivari Seva volunteers should feel the presence of Sri Venkateswara in every devotee and offer their best possible services to them with utmost devotion, dedication and discipline, asserted Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Executive Officer J Syamala Rao.

Addressing the huge gathering of Srivari Sevaks at the Asthana Mandapam here on Friday, Rao said, TTD has invited nearly 4000 Srivari Sevaks to offer services to the pilgrims at various designated places during the annual brahmotsavams.

Lauding their services to the pilgrims especially while distributing Annaprasadam, water, Laddu Prasadam, managing queue lines in Tirumala temple, Kalyanakatta, outside services to them with utmost devotion, dedication and discipline, asserted Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Executive Officer J Syamala Rao.

Without the blessings of Sri Venkateswara Swamy, all the 4000 Srivari Sevaks can't come here to offer services to pilgrims. Make use of this divine opportunity provided by Srivaru and offer services to the devotees with commitment, he said.

ACROSS THE STATES



2,200 opportunities listed on PM Internship portal

More than 2,200 internship opportunities have been listed on the portal for the Prime Minister Internship Scheme, which has been rolled out on a pilot basis, sources said on Friday. Under the pilot project, which is estimated to cost around Rs 800 crore, the internship will start on December 2 and expects to cover 1.25 lakh candidates in the current financial year ending March 2025. The scheme, announced in the Union Budget 2024, will be implemented through the online portal 'www.pminternship.mca.gov.in' developed by the corporate affairs ministry. Registration for candidates is expected to start from October 12. The sources at the corporate affairs ministry said that over 2,200 internship opportunities were listed on the portal as of 3 pm on Friday. An intern will receive a monthly financial assistance of Rs 5,000 for 12 months and a one-time grant of Rs 6,000. The government aims to provide internships for 1 crore candidates, in the age group of 21-24 years, over a period of 5 years.

India assures support to Sri Lanka's development

PNS ■ COLOMBO

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday met Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and discussed "ways to deepen ongoing cooperation and strengthen India-Sri Lanka ties," and assured India's continued support to the island nation's economic rebuilding.

Jaishankar, who is here on a day-long visit, less than a fortnight after President Dissanayake was sworn in, also met Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya and his counterpart Vijitha Herath.

Jaishankar is the first foreign dignitary to visit Sri Lanka since the National People's Power (NPP) government led by Dissanayake came to power on September 23. "Honoured to call on President @anuradisanayake today in Colombo. Conveyed warm greetings of President Droupadi Murmu and PM @narendramodi," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Appreciate his warm sentiments and guidance for the

EAM meets Lanka's President



India-Sri Lanka relations. Discussed ways to deepen ongoing cooperation and strengthen India-Sri Lanka ties for the benefit of people of two countries and the region," he said further in the post.

Soon after, Dissanayake took to X to post and said discussions focused on boosting cooperation in tourism, energy, and investment and on continued collaboration on fisheries, security, and national unity. "Met

Indian External Affairs Minister @DrSJaishankar today (04), during his official visit to Sri Lanka," he said.

"Discussions focused on boosting cooperation in tourism, energy, and investment. Dr. Jaishankar reaffirmed India's support for Sri Lanka's economic recovery. The importance of continued collaboration on fisheries, security, and national unity was also discussed," the Sri Lankan president added in his post on X. He was earlier received at the airport by Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Aruni Wijewardena and the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha.

Jaishankar also met Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya after which he posted on X along with the photos of the two leaders: "Pleased to meet PM @Dr_HariniA today. Conveyed good wishes for her new responsibility. Discussed Digital Public Infrastructure, training and capacity building. Agreed to work together to advance our partnership."

OPPOSING ST STATUS TO DHANGARS

Maha Dy Speaker, tribal leaders jump onto Mantralaya net



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Tribal leaders, including Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal, protesting against the demand to include the Dhangar community in the Scheduled Tribe list, on Friday jumped from the third floor of Maharashtra state secretariat Mantralaya on the safety net just a floor below.

No injuries were reported in the incident that saw tense moments unfolding at the six-storey Mantralaya complex.

Zirwal, his fellow Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) legislator Kiran Lahamate and BJP tribal MP Hemant Savara were among those who jumped from the third floor onto the safety net installed on the second floor, a precaution taken in response to previous suicide attempts at the site.

The incident occurred around 12.40 pm, a police official said. The protest, which involved two MLAs and an MP from the ruling Mahayuti alliance, highlighted escalating tensions over the government's handling of tribal issues.

After the police personnel

removed these leaders from the net, these tribal representatives then gathered in the ground floor passage and began a sit-in claiming that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was not meeting them to discuss the quota issue.

Dhangar or shepherd community in the state is demanding ST category inclusion for the purpose of reservation. But Zirwal and other tribal leaders are protesting against this demand.

"I am an adivasi first and then an MLA and a deputy speaker," Zirwal told reporters when asked what led him to resort to such a protest.

"CM Shinde should meet the protesters," he added.

BJP MLC Gopichand Padalkar said Zirwal holds a constitutional post and there is no need to take such an extreme step. Zirwal said the state government should offer protection to students who have been protesting since a fortnight against the halt to recruitment under the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) in Maharashtra.



Sri Lanka releases 50 Indian fishermen

Sri Lanka on Friday released 50 Indian fishermen arrested by its Navy for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, the Indian mission here said. Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters. "Returning home! 50 Indian fishermen from Mayiladuthurai, Pudukottai and Nagapattinam have been released today and will be repatriated from Sri Lanka to Tamil Nadu later this week," the High Commission of India in Colombo posted on X along with some photographs of the released fishermen. The development comes amidst External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visiting Colombo to further strengthen India-Sri Lanka ties. The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters.



HC sets aside selection of 14 District Malaria Officers

The Gauhati High Court on Friday set aside the selection of 14 District Malaria Officers conducted by the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) in 2016. A division bench, comprising Chief Justice Vijay Bishnoi and Justice N Unni Krishnan Nair, ruled that since eight years have passed after the issuance of the select list by the APSC and no appointment has been provided to any of the selected candidates, it is deemed appropriate to set aside the selection process for the posts of District Malaria Officer. APSC had issued an advertisement on December 15, 2012, inviting applications for filling up various posts which included 14 District Malaria Officers under the Assam Health and Family Welfare department. Subsequently, a screening test was conducted by APSC in April 2015 and 59 candidates were declared qualified for the interview which was held in September 2015 with 14 candidates selected as District Malaria Officer and the selection process was concluded by 2016.

SELECTION PROCESS OF JUNIOR ENGINEERS

SC sets aside Bihar govt's decision

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday described as "impermissible" the Bihar government's decision to scrap the 2019 selection process for the appointment of over 6,000 junior engineers in the state's water resources department.

A bench comprising Justice Bela M Trivedi and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma said scrapping the entire selection process after its completion "amounts to effectively changing the rules of the game after the game was played,

which is impermissible".

It directed the Bihar Technical Service Commission (BTSC) to proceed with the appointment process according to the fresh select list submitted by them before the Patna High Court.

"The Fresh Select List be prepared in view of order dated April 19, 2022, passed by the High Court and the fresh select list shall also include as far as possible those meritorious candidates who were otherwise eligible but were declared ineligible solely on account of the 2017 amendment to the Rules i.e. on account

of their institute not being recognised by the AICTE, and all similarly placed successful candidates," the bench ordered.

It directed the BTSC to prepare the revised select list of successful candidates within three months and ordered the state government to appoint them within 30 days thereafter.

The judgement came on an appeal against the Patna High Court verdict which had closed the pending cases against the appointment process after taking note of the state's decision that it has cancelled the selection process.

India needs to catch up with China : IAF Chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on Friday said the IAF is aiming to have its entire inventory produced in India by 2047 under the indigenisation programme even as he asserted that Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd must produce 24 Tejas light combat jets annually as promised to offset the delays in supplies.

At a press conference ahead of Air Force Day on October 8, the Chief of Air Staff also said India needs to catch up with China on technology and speed in production of military equipment, holding that "we are way behind" the neighbour.

He, at the same time, said the Indian military is way ahead in terms of personnel including



those operating various machines and platforms.

On the eastern Ladakh stand-off between India and China, the IAF Chief said the situation remains same as it has been for the last one-year-plus, but noted that the development of infrastructure "on the other side has been very rapid."

"We are trying to match up

with it. We are upgrading our airfields. There are new airfields coming up," he said.

The Chief of Air Staff underlined the importance of India becoming self-reliant in weapons and other systems and said it is important to face future security challenges.

"On the whole, IAF has got a vision. By 2027, we should have the entire inventory being either produced in India or developed and produced in India," he said.

"In a conflict situation when 200 to 300 missiles are fired in one day, then you have to have manufactured them in India. You cannot afford to have them procured from outside," he said.

His comments came when asked about Iran firing over 200 missiles into Israel a few days back.

Peace-loving nation like India should have enough teeth: CDS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan on Friday said the current geopolitical environment is in a "flux" and every nation is hedging a bet due to "this uncertain kind of a future".

His remarks at an event hosted by the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) here come in the backdrop of a prolonged Russia-Ukraine war and escalation in conflict in parts of West Asia.

The CDS, in his keynote address, also said the Israel-Hamas and Israel-Hezbollah conflicts are likely to "escalate further".

"The world we see around us is actually going through an unprecedented kind of a cri-



sis... The basic question that comes to everyone's mind is whether wars will continue to remain instruments of states' policy to resolve political disputes, the simple answer to all this is yes," Gen Chauhan said.

He told a gathering of defence industry leaders that he believes "conflict is an

inevitable part" of human life and human nature, and wars and warfare have been part of civilisations.

"War and warfare are as old as human civilisation and they will continue. The current geopolitical environment is in flux and everyone, every nation is hedging a bet because of this uncertain kind of a future," he said.

"Another important maxim about wars is that there are no runners-up and the winner takes all. Hence, all nations are actually, trying to, as they say, keep the powder dry. India too has to follow that suit," the CDS added. In his address, he also alluded to the first Joint Commanders' Conference held in Lucknow in September.

Cong turned entire north India into hotspot of drug trade: Amit Shah on Delhi drug bust

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday attacked the Congress over the Delhi drug seizure, and accused it of turning entire north India into a hotspot of illegal drug trade when it was in power before 2014.

In one of Delhi's biggest drug busts, police seized over 560 kilograms of cocaine and 40 kilograms of hydroponic marijuana estimated to be

worth around Rs 5,620 crore earlier this week.

Addressing a gathering in Mansa town of Gandhinagar district, Shah said the arrested accused, Tushar Goel, is the chairman of the Delhi Youth Congress' RTI cell.

Giving data about the seizures made during the last 10 years, Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Drugs Free India' campaign soon after assuming office in 2014.

BJP eyes hat-trick, Congress a comeback after a decade as Haryana votes today

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The fate of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Vinesh Phogat of the Congress besides JJP's Dushyant Chautala and 1077 other candidates will be decided on Saturday as elections to the 90-member Haryana assembly will be held with over 2 crore people eligible to vote.

The ruling BJP is eyeing a hat-trick of wins in the state while the Congress is hoping to make a comeback after a decade. Counting of votes will be held on October 8.

Haryana's Chief Electoral Officer Pankaj Agarwal said 2,03,54,350 voters, including 8,821 centurions, are eligible to exercise their franchise and the voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm.

A total of 1,031 candidates are contesting in all 90 assembly constituencies, including 101 women. Among these candidates, 464 are contesting as independent.

A total of 20,632 polling booths have been set up for voting. Agarwal said on Friday. The key contesting parties in the fray are BJP, Congress, AAP, INLD-BSP and JJP-Azad Samaj Party.



The high-octane campaign came to an end Thursday evening. The BJP's campaign was spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who addressed four rallies, where he attacked the Congress on several issues and said they kept every matter important for the country entangled, including the Ram temple issue.

He also said corruption runs in veins of the Congress and alleged it has "turned into a party of 'dalals' (middlemen) and 'damad' (son-in-law)". Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also addressed many public meetings where he

asserted that a "Congress storm" is on its way in Haryana and his party would form the government which will be one for the poor and farmers, and a 'mohabbat ki dukan' will be opened in every corner of the state.

In the previous assembly polls in 2019, the BJP had won 40 seats, the Congress 31 and JJP 10.

The Congress has left the Bhiwani assembly seat for its INDIA bloc partner CPI(M) while the BJP is not contesting the Sirsa seat, from where Haryana Lokhit Party chief Gopal Kanda is seeking re-election.

Most seats are likely to see a direct fight between the BJP and the Congress.

Prominent among those in fray include Chief Minister Saini (Ladwa), Leader of Opposition Hooda (Garhi Sampla-Kiloi), INLD's Abhay Singh Chautala (Ellenabad), JJP's Dushyant Chautala (Uchana Kalan), BJP's Anil Vij (Ambala Cantt), Capt Abhimanyu (Narnaund) and O P Dhanak (Badli). AAP's Anurag Dhand (Kalayat) and Congress's Phogat (Julana).

From Tosham seat, former MP Shruti Choudhry of BJP and Anirudh Chaudhary, both cousins, are contesting.

From Dabwali, Devi Lal's grandson Aditya Devi Lal, an INLD candidate, is taking on JJP's Digvijay Singh Chautala, great grandson of the former deputy prime minister.

The BJP has fielded former chief minister late Bhajan Lal's grandson Bhavya Bishnoi from Adampur segment in Hisar while its nominee from Ateli in Mahendragarh is Arti Rao, whose father Rao Inderjit Singh is a Union Minister.

Among the independent candidates include Savitri Jindal (Hisar), Ranjit Chautala (Rania) and Chitra Sarwara (Ambala Cantt).

Significance of peace has grown amid atmosphere of unrest: President Murmu

PNS ■ JAIPUR

President Droupadi Murmu said on Friday the significance of peace and unity has increased amid unrest in certain parts of the world.

Addressing the inaugural session of a four-day global summit on 'Spirituality for Clean and Healthy Society' at the international headquarters of Brahma Kumaris in Mount Abu, the president said, "Today, an atmosphere of unrest is prevailing in several parts of the world. At a time when human values are declin-



ing, the importance of peace and unity is increasing even more."

She added, "Peace is also located deep inside the mind. So everyone must keep their mind, words and deeds clean."

protection. We are trustees, not owners. We have to protect this planet with our own discretion."

Somewhere there is excessive rain while somewhere there is a drought, she said on the impact of climate change.

"The Government of India has requested every person to plant a sapling in the name of mothers. If 140 crore saplings are planted, the number of trees will increase which will slowly improve the climate. To achieve this, everyone must plant a sapling each year," she said.

Murmu urged people to come together to overcome the challenge of global warming and pollution and said, "People should understand that they are not the owners of this earth, but are responsible for its



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

How secular is India?

As India grapples with internal strife and external criticism, the debate surrounding its commitment to secularism intensifies

India, a nation characterised by its rich tapestry of religious diversity, has long championed the values of secularism and pluralism. However, the landscape of religious freedom in the country has come under scrutiny, particularly with the recent designation by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) of India as a "Country of Particular Concern." This designation has ignited a contentious debate, leading to a sharp rebuke from the Indian government, which labeled the USCIRF a "biased organisation with a political agenda." In its 2024 report, the USCIRF highlighted alarming trends regarding religious freedom in India. The commission reported instances of violence against individuals based on their religious identity, citing cases of killings, beatings and lynchings carried out by vigilante groups. It also noted the arbitrary arrests of religious leaders and the demolition of homes and places of worship, characterising these actions as severe violations of religious freedom. The report further pointed to changes in India's legal framework that, according to the USCIRF, target and disenfranchise religious minorities. These changes include the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the implementation of a uniform civil code. Such measures, the USCIRF argues, contribute to a climate of fear and marginalisation for non-Hindu communities. In response to the USCIRF's assertions, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs firmly rejected the report. Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal described the commission's narrative as a "motivated" misrepresentation of facts aimed at maligning India's image on the global stage. The ministry's statement emphasised that the USCIRF's reporting is unscientific and driven by an agenda that fails to reflect the realities of India's democracy. It is true that no external agency or country has right to give us lessons in religious freedom and tolerance as we have practiced it since ancient times. Moreover, they have skeletons in their own cupboard which they would better take care first. The trigger happy policemen in the US don't think twice before shooting a black guy for not pulling over his car. But having said that it is time for us to reflect and introspect. To be fair, religious freedom has eroded in the recent years. There have been lynching incidents and that is not a made up thing. We may say that they are isolated incidents but they are enough to send a message to the community. Moreover, the attacks on churches and other religious places have been reported from across the country all this while the police looked the other way or just took mild action. It is time to ensure one and all that India is safe as it has been for ages for people of all religions and castes. And India as a State does not discriminate people for the religion they practice or food they eat. The concerns raised by the USCIRF may be exaggerated and they may make isolated incidents look mainstream but the government must maintain zero tolerance for such incidents so that no outside agency dare raise a pointing figure at us.



entific and driven by an agenda that fails to reflect the realities of India's democracy. It is true that no external agency or country has right to give us lessons in religious freedom and tolerance as we have practiced it since ancient times. Moreover, they have skeletons in their own cupboard which they would better take care first. The trigger happy policemen in the US don't think twice before shooting a black guy for not pulling over his car. But having said that it is time for us to reflect and introspect. To be fair, religious freedom has eroded in the recent years. There have been lynching incidents and that is not a made up thing. We may say that they are isolated incidents but they are enough to send a message to the community. Moreover, the attacks on churches and other religious places have been reported from across the country all this while the police looked the other way or just took mild action. It is time to ensure one and all that India is safe as it has been for ages for people of all religions and castes. And India as a State does not discriminate people for the religion they practice or food they eat. The concerns raised by the USCIRF may be exaggerated and they may make isolated incidents look mainstream but the government must maintain zero tolerance for such incidents so that no outside agency dare raise a pointing figure at us.

PICTALK



A child looks at dolls depicting scenes from Ramayana during the Dussehra Doll festival, in Bengaluru

Double-edged sword of social media: Impact on relationships

While it offers the promise of community and instant communication, the allure of curated perfection can lead to unrealistic expectations and strain relationships

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, connecting people from all corners of the globe. While it offers numerous benefits, such as facilitating communication and fostering community, it also poses significant challenges to relationships and mental health. One of the most significant ways social media can impact relationships is by creating unrealistic expectations. The carefully curated images and posts that people share online often portray an idealised version of their lives. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and comparison, as individuals may feel pressure to measure up to the perceived perfection of others. Additionally, the constant stream of information and updates can make it difficult to maintain deep and meaningful connections with loved ones. Social media can also contribute to the breakdown of relationships. The anonymity and lack of accountability that the internet provides can create a breeding ground for cyberbullying, harassment and online infidelity. These behaviours can erode trust, damage relationships and have a devastating impact on mental health. Furthermore, the constant pressure to be online and connected can lead to feelings of anxiety and stress. The fear of missing out (FOMO) can drive individuals to spend excessive amounts of time scrolling through social media feeds, neglecting their relationships and other important



aspects of their lives. This can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness and low self-esteem. The impact of social media on mental health can be particularly severe for young people, who are often heavy users of these platforms. Studies have shown that excessive social media use can be linked to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. This is in part due to the exposure to negative content, such as cyberbullying and hate speech, as well as

the constant comparison to others. On the other hand, social media can also have positive effects on relationships and mental health. It can provide a platform for connecting with like-minded individuals, building supportive communities, and sharing experiences. Social media can also be a valuable tool for staying in touch with friends and family who live far away. To mitigate the negative impacts of social media on relationships and mental health, it is important to use it mindfully. Set limits on your social media usage, be mindful of the content you share, take breaks from social media, prioritize real-life connections, and seek support if needed. By using social media in a healthy and balanced way, individuals can reap its benefits while minimising its risks. (The author is an award-winning poet, novelist, writing retreat curator, and founder of TheWriteScene.com, based in Dubai; views are personal)



DEEBA SALIM IRFAN

NATO's eastward march threatens Asian stability

For Asia, aligning with NATO's expansionist policies risks destabilising the region and eroding cultural values of peace and coexistence



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

NATO's expansion into Asia poses a monumental danger that threatens not only regional stability but also the core values of peace and coexistence that many Asian countries uphold. The recent change in NATO leadership, with Mark Rutte taking the helm, may suggest a potential for new strategies, but the underlying policies and militaristic attitudes of the alliance remain unchanged. The illusion of progress is merely that—an illusion—while NATO's intentions to maintain a prolonged battlefield in Ukraine serve as a reflection of its true objectives. As observed, the US weapons sales surged dramatically in 2023, reaching a record total of \$238 billion as the demand for arms skyrocketed due to the ongoing conflict. Profiting from the sale of weapons on one hand and exploiting the suffering of unarmed civilians across Europe and West Asia is becoming increasingly reprehensible. This reflects a strategic mindset where war is not an unfortunate circumstance but an industry. This is, however, not a new phenomenon. This is how we "civilisations" behave. The history of military alliances has consistently illustrated a paradoxical truth: nations often proclaim peace while simultaneously preparing for war and engaging in it. The recent rise of Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, who has advocated for an 'Asian NATO', is nothing but a sign of a looming storm ahead. Ishiba's call for deeper ties among Asian nations and the establishment of a NATO-like grouping echoes sentiments that prioritise militarisation over diplomacy. This vision stands in stark contrast to the scepticism expressed by India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who highlighted India's unique historical position and its reluctance to embrace the treaty alliances that such a framework would entail. Ishiba's proposition to station Japanese troops on the US soil and share control of nuclear weapons highlights the extreme lengths to which some leaders are willing to go in the name of security, yet it has not received significant backing from



the US administration, signalling the complexities and limitations of this vision. While NATO presents itself as a bastion of defence, its actions betray a far more sinister agenda.

The alliance has not only prolonged conflicts but has also turned them into battlegrounds for competing ideologies and geopolitical power plays. This relentless devastation not only lays waste to nations but also serves the insatiable appetites of the arms industry, which reaps substantial profits from the chaos of ongoing warfare. Evidence reveals that the US government perceives conflicts as lucrative ventures rather than humanitarian crises. Nations that align themselves with NATO risk becoming collateral damage in a power struggle that has little regard for their sovereignty or cultural identity. The allure of NATO's promises can be enticing, but history teaches us that aligning with powerful military alliances often leads to disastrous outcomes. Karl Marx posited that "history repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce." NATO's past interventions, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, and today's Ukraine showcase a pattern of destruction that is all too familiar. The question remains: will Asia fall into this trap once again, sacrificing its autonomy



THE HISTORY OF MILITARY ALLIANCES HAS CONSISTENTLY ILLUSTRATED A PARADOXICAL TRUTH: NATIONS OFTEN PROCLAIM PEACE WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PREPARING FOR WAR AND ENGAGING IN IT

for the sake of Western agendas? Moreover, the political discourse surrounding NATO often ignores the implications of its militarisation on social stability and development. This is particularly relevant as Asian nations find themselves increasingly pressured to align with NATO's militaristic strategies. The focus on military expenditure detracts from addressing pressing social issues, economic development, and environmental sustainability. The growing arms race in Asia, driven by NATO's expansion, threatens to spark regional conflict with catastrophic consequences, echoing the historical precedent set before World War I. The belief that increased military presence fosters stability is fundamentally flawed, often leading to insecurity and competition as nations rush to arm themselves against perceived threats. This environment heightens the risk of miscalculations and unintended escalations, with incalculable costs in human lives and economic stability. Additionally, engagement in militaristic alliances under NATO's banner risks placing Asian nations in a moral quagmire, contradicting the region's philosophies that prioritise peace, harmony, and cooperation, as espoused by Confucianism, Hinduism, Islamism, and Buddhism. The very qualities that were undermined by colonialism, after years of suffering and the sacrifices of millions, must be protected and promoted, as aligning with NATO may ultimately undermine these cultural values in favour of a destructive path centred on military solutions. Moreover, the consequences of such an alignment are not limited to immediate military conflicts. Long-term geopolitical ramifications could destabilise the entire region, further entrenching power struggles that lead to conflict. Embracing a militaristic alliance may offer a temporary illusion of security but ultimately leads to self-inflicted wounds—akin to harakiri. The path toward a more peaceful and stable future lies not in militarisation but in diplomacy, cooperation, and mutual respect. Instead of succumbing to the pressures of NATO's warmongering agenda, Asian countries should seek to forge their paths, grounded in their cultural philosophies and values that prioritise harmony and coexistence. The rhetoric of security and defence masks a more insidious agenda—one driven by the military-industrial complex that thrives on conflict and arms sales. For Asian nations, the choice to align with NATO is a perilous one, fraught with the potential for self-destruction. (The writer is a journalist and author; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TEN YEARS OF SWACHH BHARAT

Madam — Swachh Bharat Mission, one of the first programmes announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he took office in 2014, completes 10 years on October 2. The aim was to equip all households with individual toilets, ensure communities have cluster toilets to eradicate the open defecation system followed in villages, and ensure that schools and anganwadi toilets have waste management systems for both solid waste and liquid waste. To achieve this, the government's assistance was increased from Rs 10000 to Rs 12000 under the SBM scheme. Amazingly, over 10 million toilets have been constructed in rural households in 6 lakh villages till date, benefiting 50 million people, and many of these villages have been designated as open-defecation-free, which is essential for a healthy environment. Before launching SBM, unsafe sanitation caused an estimated 199 million cases of diarrhoea annually, with 3 lakh deaths. Also, a UNICEF report indicates that women in Indian villages feel safer after the installation of toilets in rural households. Also in villages declared ODF, the risk of groundwater contamination due to human waste has been reduced a lot. Though villages benefitted a lot due to the Swachh Bharat Mission, a survey has emphasised the urgent need for action against plastic pollution and air pollution in rural and urban lands. Motivating the communities against air pollution and water pollution for adopting a proper sanitation model for a healthy life is the urgent need of the hour.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

LAWRENCE'S FUNERAL CONTROVERSY

Madam—Apropos of the story 'The battle over CPI (M) leader M M Lawrence's final journey,' October 3, 2024. The Communists globally are political chameleons with unequal rules for the comrades. Most of the Communists,

Indian PhD system needs revamp



The Indian education system, especially the higher and research-oriented education system, has gone through so many structural changes from the past till now. But the research-oriented PhD programme still lacks somewhere to provide ease to the people vis-à-vis their admission to the doctoral program. There exist some of the undoubted systematic flaws in the UGC-NET examination score as a mandatory requisite

for taking admission in a PhD. The research work and PhD are all about deep understanding instead of memory strength of the very field of students' specialisation and interest area, in which root learning from UGC-NET could merely assist. Already, the PhD course demands a minimum of a five-year time period for its completion, and mandating a UGC NET score as a prerequisite to taking admission in a PhD only extends the time period for aspirants interested in becoming research scholars. UGC needs to make either systematic changes in its examination pattern or needs to enhance critical thinking and innovative thinking tests for the students interested in doing PhDs from the reputed academic institutions of India. Otherwise, India will continue to bear the cost of losing some fantastic minds to non-Indian universities that offer research ease, especially at the time of admission.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

though they claim to be non-believers in God in public, may be passionate believers in God in private.

The unfortunate Lawrence episode points to the chaos the Communist ideology can create in a Communist family by vertically dividing its members into two warring factions. It also shows that even the deceased Communist may not be allowed to rest in peace by the comrades merely to accommodate their political ideology, what may to the grieving family. Once an individual is bitten by the Communist ideology, there is no escape from it, even if she/he desires to change his ideology after being convinced about the utopian Communist goals. If the die-hard comrades learn a lesson or two from the unfortunate Lawrence episode and the Party's insensitive handling of the entire episode, it would be better for the comrades.

Bichu Muttathara | Pune

STARVATION AMID GROWTH

Madam — India is the fifth-largest economy in the world. At the same time,

the Global Hunger Index-2023 ranked India 111th out of 125 countries, with the level of hunger falling in the serious category. Though the Union government had rejected this index as erroneous, it cannot be rejected altogether, as evidently West Bengal agricultural migrant labourer Samar Khan, 35, died of starvation in Chennai as he reportedly did not have money to buy food. He was admitted to Rajiv Gandhi Government Hospital after he collapsed owing to starvation. He had not eaten for six days.

His colleague, another agricultural labourer, Satya Pundit is still in the hospital. Even having a buffer stock; people dying of starvation is a slur on the country, especially when we are talking of the fifth largest economy in the world. Besides, hollow slogans of the government that nobody will be allowed to die of starvation are belied.

SK Khosla | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE POWER OF INTELLIGENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

The human mind should be open to positivity and confidence, to harness intelligence and knowledge



RAVI VALLURI

Two thousand five hundred years ago, a prince from the formidable Sakya dynasty, in the quest for reality and truth, discarded his monarchical apparel to adorn ochre robes and went on to become Gautama the monk. He and his mind incessantly wandered till the attainment of truth and insight. Upon attaining enlightenment after performing arduous tapas, Gautama the monk became Buddha the Enlightened and Compassionate One. The mind of the prince turned Bhikkhu had become hollow and empty from within and without realise the pristine verisimilitude. There is also the story of Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu.

Once a young evangelist who cast away the traditions and rituals of the Catholic order, only to serve the poor and infirm (particularly those afflicted by leprosy), she was first to become a sister, then Mother Teresa, after rendering selfless yeoman service to the populace of Kolkata (then Calcutta) and humanity at large. She was the fourth Indian to be canonised on September 4, 2016, and was set in stone as St Teresa of Calcutta by Pope Francis for the phenomenal work and the miracles that have taken place. Buddha and St Teresa were not confined to monasteries and convents respectively to live their lives as ascetics in contemplation, meditation, chastity and poverty. Both were prototypical individuals who transcended boundaries to carve a niche for themselves by providing an alternative ideology.

Meanwhile, way back in the year 1943 a young Swedish national, Ingvar Kampard set up a company called IKEA. IKEA is an acronym for Ingvar Kampard Elmtyard at Agunnaryd. Today it is one of the largest ready-to-assemble furniture companies in the world. These are individuals, who with their mettlesome moves hold the ordinary traveller's gaze in askance. What differentiates them from the rest of the pack? It is not the opaci-



ty of their thought process, but looking for out-of-the-box solutions. While IKEA sets up furniture in our households, and Jio and WhatsApp provide the necessary seamless connectivity in communication, it is intriguing to decipher the letters of the acronym IKW.

I stand for Intelligence, K signifies Knowledge and W represents Wisdom. Intelligence, Knowledge, and Wisdom need to be harnessed by humans in ample measure to metamorphose our minds and lives to become true achievers. In the wired world today, we are girded with far superior technology in comparison to a few decades ago and are surrounded by a plethora of gizmos at our disposal. The product and service should necessarily be flexible, adaptable, and positively meant for the public good. Only in such a scenario will the longevity of the article in question be ensured and assured.

Siddhartha with his superior intelligence grasped that he was encumbered by misery and suffering; he gained knowledge through the various techniques of pranayama and meditation and ultimately wisdom dawned on him in the form of enlightenment. Today a seeker without living in the monastic order, living like any ordinary individual could attain and experience bliss and enlightenment by practising the technique of Vipassana.

Similarly, in the Art of Living, through the regular practice of the Sudarshan Kriya, a seeker can live in the present moment by banishing antipathetic thoughts. St. Teresa of Kolkata too possessed enormous intelligence, knowledge, and wisdom to establish the order of the Missionaries of Charity to serve the distressed sections of humanity. The human mind should be developed into a sacred place, which is malleable to embrace positivity and confidence to harness the skills of intelligence and knowledge so that the Gods bestow us with a bounty of wisdom.

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

Bangladesh's interim Govt's crackdown on secularists



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Shahriar Kabir's arrest, amid controversial charges linked to his long-standing fight for secularism reflects Bangladesh fundamentalists working behind the interim government



It is important to examine in some detail Shahriar Kabir's arrest in Dhaka on September 17, 2024, and the subsequent related developments, to understand the forces driving Bangladesh's interim government and direction in which it is taking the country. To start with, one must briefly look at who Kabir is. Author, journalist, film-maker and an internationally respected champion of human rights, secularism and democracy, he has also been at the forefront of the struggle to bring to justice those who had collaborated with the Pakistanis during Bangladesh's liberation war of 1971 and were their accomplices in the perpetration of crimes against humanity including mass murder and rape. He played an important role in the formation of the Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee for the Uprootment of the Killers and Collaborators of Seventy-One) under the leadership of Jahanara Imam whose husband and one of whose sons were savagely killed by the Pakistanis in 1971. Kabir, who subsequently became the organisation's president, was, at the time of his arrest, president of its advisory committee. Second, one needs to look at the circumstances of his arrest, the charges against him and his accusers and their ties with the interim government. According to a report in The Dhaka Tribune, datelined September 17, 2024 and carried under the heading "Shahriar Kabir arrested in Dhaka," Mufti Harun Izhar Chowdhury, joint secretary of the Hefazat-e-Islam (Hefazat), filed, on August 20, 2024, a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Dhaka, against Sheikh Hasina and 23 others—one of them being Kabir—accusing them of crimes against humanity and mass murder in connection with a rally by Hefazat on May 5, 2013. Further, according to a report in The Daily Star, datelined September 18, 2024, and carried under the heading "Shahriar Kabir placed on 7-day remand", Kabir, along with Mozammel Babu, was produced before the court with a 10-day remand plea by the police, in a case concerning the death of a domestic help, Liza Akter, during the quota



TO START WITH, ONE MUST BRIEFLY LOOK AT WHO KABIR IS. AUTHOR, JOURNALIST, FILM-MAKER AND AN INTERNATIONALLY RESPECTED CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SECULARISM AND DEMOCRACY

reform protests. The report cited a sub-inspector of police present in the court as saying that Dhaka's Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Md Sanallah, passed the orders remanding him custody for seven days.

A report datelined September 17, 2024, and published in Prothom Alo English under the heading, "Shahriar Kabir, Nurul Islam arrested," cited sources as saying that Kabir was an accused in several murder cases filed with Jatrabari and other police stations in Dhaka. According to information available with this writer, seven murder cases have so far been levelled against him besides the one the ICT. The levelling of murder charges against a person of Kabir's stature is not only laughable but suggests, as in a number of other cases, planned and coordinated behind-the-scenes effort.

As seen, the case before the ICT has been filed by Mufti Harun Izhar Chowdhury, joint secretary of the Hefazat-e-Islam (Hefazat) accusing Sheikh Hasina and 23 others, including Kabir, of crimes against humanity and mass murder in connection with a rally by Hefazat on May 5, 2013.

According to a report in The Dhaka Tribune (August 19, 2024) under the heading "Hefazat rally in Shapla Chattar: Odhikar publishes list of killed people," Odhikar, a human rights organisation, published on Monday (August 19) a list of people allegedly killed during the Awami League-led government's crackdown on the Hefazat's rally on May 5-6, 2013, at Shapla Chattar in Dhaka. The list, originally published in 2013, had led to action against the organisation by the Awami League government.

Citing persecution by the latter government, Odhikar, according to the

report, urged the interim government to immediately form an independent inquiry commission headed by a Supreme Court judge and conduct an impartial investigation into the extrajudicial killings committed on May 5 and 6 of 2013 and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Dhaka Tribune report did not mention whether Odhikar had named the perpetrators. As seen above, Hefazat's complaint was filed on August 20, 2024, the day after Odhikar's post. Three questions arise here. What was the number of people killed? Was the rally peaceful?

What was the context in which it was held and what were the Hefazat's demands? Against the Odhikar's figures, a BBC report, datelined May 6, 2024, stated that at least 27 persons had been killed and dozens hurt in the clashes. It also said that at least two of the dead were policemen. Also, the fact that the police, according to the report, "used stun grenades and rubber bullets" to disperse the protestors indicates an effort to keep the casualties to minimum.

The rally was extremely violent. The report cites one witness as saying that the demonstrators "were very aggressive, some people were throwing stones and the situation quickly become violent... the police had no option but to respond". The witness further told the BBC, "Rioters vandalised markets and set fire to bookshops where the Holy Koran is sold. Thousands of Koran and religious books burned. They also attacked the ruling party's political office and national mosque."

The Hefazat's 13-point programme includes the enactment of an anti-blasphemy law with provision for death penalty, exemplary punishment to all bloggers and others who "insult Islam," cancellation of

Bangladesh's policy for women's development, bans on the erection of sculptures in public places, the mixing of men and women in public, candlelight vigils, and "shameless behaviour and dresses," besides declaring Ahmadiyas as "non-Muslims." Nadia Sarmin, covering its rally for ETV, was mercilessly beaten for daring to be a woman "in a men only" event. Grievously injured, she was rescued by other journalists.

It is not surprising if all this reminds one of the Taliban's agenda, A DW report (May 9, 2013) by Graham Lucas under the heading "Bangladesh Chaos," cited Maulana Habibur Rahman, one of the Hefazat leaders, as boasting of his role in the 1980s Afghan war and his support to the former al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

The interim government has close and warm relations with the Hefazat. It has lifted the ban on the organisation. The advisor for religious affairs, AFM Khalid Hossain, is the latter's Naye-e-Amir. Chief Advisor Mohammad Yunus had a long and cordial meeting on August 31, 2024, with Mamunul Haque, the organisations head. The Hefazat is holding rallies and processions all over the country.

It is in this context that one has to see Shahriar Kabir's arrest and continued detention, in the teeth of demands for his release by international human rights activists and organisations.

The idea is to send a clear message to people in Bangladesh: do not champion secular democracy and humanism and oppose Islamic fundamentalism. If we can send Shahriar Kabir to jail, we can also send you there.

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

Legal tussles over EWS quota violations undermine RTE Act in Delhi

The violation of the Economically Weaker Section quota under the Right to Education Act continues to plague India's education system

The consistent violation of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota under the Right to Education (RTE) Act has become a troubling issue across India, particularly in major cities like Delhi. Despite clear legal mandates, several private schools continue to deny admissions to children who rightfully qualify under this provision, creating a barrier to equal educational opportunities for underprivileged communities.

Recent legal proceedings in the Delhi High Court have once again brought this issue to the forefront, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement of the law to safeguard the rights of EWS students. A case in point is Master Ayan



B K JHA

Saifi, a 4-year-old son of Shahid who had been allotted a seat through a computerised draw of lots conducted by Delhi's Directorate of Education (DoE) for the academic year 2024-25. But, a leading private Senior Secondary School in Rohini denied the admission and that ensued a legal tussle. Shahid approached to Delhi

High Court with his plight and sought justice. It is misconception that lawyers are reluctant to take up such cases especially for people coming from lower strata of society. Credit goes to a young Delhi lawyer Aman Sharma who took up the case for the kid and secured provisional admission for Ayan Saifi to the school. The Delhi High Court, under the guidance of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, acknowledged the violation of the RTE Act and in an interim order granted provisional admission to the child, emphasising the school's legal obligation to comply with the EWS quota. The RTE Act 2009 is a landmark legislation that ensures free and compulso-

ry education for all children aged 6 to 14. One of its key provisions mandates that 25 per cent of seats in private unaided schools be reserved for children from EWS and disadvantaged groups (DG). This quota is intended to promote inclusive education and bridge the gap between socio-economic disparities. However, despite the importance of this provision, its implementation has been met with resistance from many private schools, not only in Delhi but schools across the country. The refusal of admission highlights the ongoing challenge in enforcing this law. It violates a child's fundamental right to education under Article 21-A of the Constitution. "Denying chil-



dren from economically weaker sections the education they are entitled to, despite a confirmed allotment, not only goes against the spirit of the Right to Education Act but also creates unnecessary hurdles for families already facing socio-economic challenges," argues advocate Sharma. A pattern of non-compliance

can easily be seen and unfortunately, it has become pervasive across private educational institutions. Ayan's case is not an isolated incident. Private schools in Delhi have repeatedly been found guilty of disregarding the EWS quota, prompting legal battles that seek to restore the rightful educational opportunities for

underprivileged children. In March 2024, the Delhi High Court revised the income threshold for EWS admissions, reinforced eligibility criteria and offered clearer guidance. However, schools have continued to evade their responsibilities. A similar ruling in 2022 in the case of Rameshwar Jha v. Principal Richmond Global School set a precedent for punitive action against schools that refuse EWS admissions.

The Delhi High Court had then warned that schools could face severe consequences under the Delhi School Education Act, 1973, for non-compliance with the RTE Act. Yet, schools still engage in tactics that delay or deny admission to EWS

students, forcing families to take the matter to court.

The larger issue at hand is the erosion of trust in educational institutions and the judiciary's role in upholding constitutional rights. Advocate Sharma urges the Directorate of Education (DoE) and the judiciary to take stringent actions against schools that defy the RTE Act, calling for penalties and stricter enforcement measures.

It becomes imperative for policymakers, educators, and civil society to collaborate in upholding the principles of the RTE Act and to work towards a more inclusive education system.

(Author is a senior journalist; Views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



Forex kitty jumps \$12.588 bln to hit record high

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 12.588 billion to a new all-time high of USD 704.885 billion for the week ended September 27, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. The overall kitty had swelled by USD 2.838 billion to USD 692.296 billion in the previous reporting week. The USD 12.588 billion would be one of the highest weekly rises ever and this is the first time the reserves have crossed the USD 700 billion mark. For the week ended September 27, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 10.468 billion to USD 616.154 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 2.184 billion to USD 65.796 billion during the week, the central bank said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 8 million to USD 18.547 billion, it said.



Gold hits fresh all-time high of Rs 78,450 per 10 gm

Gold prices rose by Rs 150 to hit a fresh all-time high of Rs 78,450 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday on increased demand from jewellers and retailers driven by the ongoing festive season. The precious metal closed at Rs 78,300 per 10 grams on Thursday. Silver surged Rs 1,035 to Rs 94,200 per kg from Rs 93,165 per kg in the previous session, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 200 to reach an all-time high level of Rs 78,100 per 10 grams. Bullion traders attributed the rise in precious metal prices to the emergence of buying by jewellers and retailers driven by the ongoing 'Navratri' festival. In futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery rose Rs 131 or 0.17 per cent to Rs 76,375 per 10 grams, hovering near an all-time high.



Piramal Capital raises USD 150 mln from bond sale

Piramal Capital and Housing Finance on Friday said it has raised USD 150 million through a global bond sale. The bonds will be issued at a yield of 7.078 per cent and will have to be repaid in 3.32 years, according to a company statement. The company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises, had raised USD 300 million from a sustainability bond issuance in July this year. In the latest issue, it achieved a 0.87 per cent improvement in pricing as against the 7.950 for the bonds issued in July 2024, the statement said. The issue saw subscriptions of USD 520 million or an oversubscription of 3.5 times, the statement said, adding that a total of 40 investors participated in the final issuance. From a geographical spread perspective, 92 per cent of the funds were raised from Asia, while the rest was from Europe, Middle East and Africa, it said, adding that 95 per cent of the money raised was from asset managers and 5 per cent was from banks.

US-China trade war may help India to attract investments: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The escalation in the US-China trade war is expected to help India increase its exports and attract investments from American companies, think tank GTRI said on Friday.

He said that last month, the US Senate introduced two bills that could intensify the trade war and have major global economic impacts if passed.

The 'Neither Permanent Nor Normal Trade Relations Act' (PNTR Act) and the 'Axing Non-Market Tariff Evasion Act' (ANTE Act) aim to counter China's trade practices by raising tariffs and imposing new trade barriers.

The PNTR Act seeks to phase out China's favourable trade status, while the ANTE Act targets non-market economies like China and Russia with tougher measures. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said, "While these bills aim to protect US industries, they also create opportunities for countries like India to grow their manufacturing sectors."

"As US companies look for alternatives to China, India could see increased investment in electronics, textiles, and manufacturing, enhancing its position in global supply chains," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

In this background, he said, India should reconsider its proposals to invite Chinese firms and investment aimed at boosting exports.

The higher tariffs on Chinese products present an opportunity for India to strengthen its manufacturing sector, he added.

He also said that both bills create a potential for growth in local industries.

"As US companies reduce their reliance on China, India's expanding manufacturing sector, especially in electronics, textiles, and other industries, could attract more investment," he said.

The GTRI suggested to the government that India should actively work to attract investment from multinational companies seeking alternatives to China.

Goyal: No change in policy on multi-brand retailing

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Thursday categorically ruled out the entry of multi-brand retailing in India as such a move would destroy pop-and-mom stores like that of the US. Except for this, he said, India is open to all kinds of economic reforms necessary to take the country on an accelerated growth.

"If the need arises, we can re-look at any of these (policies) or the government has the authority through cabinet approval to allow greater percentages (of foreign stakes in various sectors). Or we can go to Parliament and change it also, not a problem, though I do not think any of these requires parliamentary changes," Goyal said in response to a question at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies think-tank here.

"The important area where sometimes, and particularly in countries like the US, I hear voices is about multi-brand retail. And that is a no-no. I want to make it loud and



clear that there will be no change in our policy on multi-brand retail. America has suffered the consequences of big tech and large retail and the interplay of the two leading to almost the annihilation of mom-and-pop stores across the length and breadth of the country," he said.

Goyal said the United States can afford it because its population is much smaller compared to India and there are alternative avenues for people to do jobs in.

"And probably, you are satisfied that the rest of the youngsters are now just left to

We want them to be integrated with technology. We are happy if they get integrated with e-commerce or get a chance to withstand the business practices of the e-commerce companies. But we are not looking at changing the rules for e-commerce. Other than that, there is no sector left where we have any restrictions whatsoever," he said.

The senior leader from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said even in defence, 100 per cent foreign ownership is allowed in India.

"Space has been opened up to foreign ownership. It is a very open country. Money can move in and out pretty much easily with no stoppages, but there could be a process required just to make sure there is no money laundering or there is no round-tripping of money going out of India and coming back into the country as a tax arbitrage. A few safeguards are there," he said, adding that today, nobody is telling him that they are not investing in India due to any of the government policies.

Lupin subsidiary acquires 9 brands South African firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Lupin on Friday said its subsidiary has acquired nine brands from the Medical Nutritional Institute SA (MNI) in South Africa, through a partnership deal with ImpiloVest.

Pharma Dynamics has acquired the nine brands along with their associated trademarks through a partnership deal with ImpiloVest, a South African investment firm, Lupin said in a statement. The acquired brands include AntaGolin, RyChol, NeuroVance, SkinVance, FlamLeve, Rheumalin, SleepVance, ImmunoVance, and OviVance, it added.

These products cater to a range of health issues such as metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, cognitive function, skin health, inflammation and more.



SpiceJet says cleared salary, GST dues; deposited 10-month PF dues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Crisis-hit SpiceJet, which has recently raised Rs 3,000 crore, on Friday said it has cleared all pending salary and GST dues as well as deposited ten months' dues of provident fund.

On September 23, the airline announced raising Rs 3,000 crore through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) of shares.

An airline spokesperson said that within the first week of raising fresh funds, it has cleared all pending salary and

GST dues and has made significant progress by depositing ten months' dues of PF. The process of clearing other outstanding dues is ongoing, he said in a statement.

Among other efforts, the airline has reached settlement with various aircraft lessors.

SpiceJet has been facing multiple headwinds, including financial problems and legal woes. It is also operating with a reduced fleet.

On Friday, shares of SpiceJet fell 4.25 per cent to close at Rs 62.79 apiece on BSE.

SENSEX TUMBLES 5 PC IN FIVE DAYS

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 16 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Market investors became poorer by Rs 16.26 lakh crore in five days of heavy correction in equities amid worsening tensions in the Middle East and foreign fund outflows.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped Rs 16,26,691.48 crore to Rs 4,60,89,598.54 crore (USD 5.49 trillion) in five days of the market crash.

Since Friday last, the BSE Sensex tumbled 4,147.67 points or 4.83 per cent.

"Negative bias continued for 5th straight session amid rising fears of a surge in crude oil prices due to the ongoing west Asia war," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

Falling for the fifth day running on Friday, the BSE Sensex tumbled 808.65 points or 0.98 per cent to settle at 81,688.45. The benchmark hit a low of 81,532.68 and a



high of 83,368.32 during the day, reflecting a wild swing of 1,835.64 points.

"The bearish sentiment continued as investors are monitoring the escalating conflict in the Middle East and have adopted a sell-on-recovery strategy.

"Crude prices have moved up sharply but may be restricted due to an increase in production from OPEC+. The drag was across sectors led by realty, auto, and FMCG except IT stocks, which gained due to expected benefits from US rate cuts and defensive nature.

The pessimism on the market is expected to continue in the near term amidst rising crude prices and fund flows to cheaper markets like China," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, Nestle, Bharti Airtel, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, and HDFC Bank were the major laggards.

Amazon, India Post ink pact to enhance delivery capabilities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon Transportation Services and the Department of Posts (India Post) on Friday announced a strategic partnership to boost nationwide delivery capabilities.

Both the entities have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect.

The collaboration will work towards maximising efficiencies, optimising resource utilisation, and exploring capacity sharing across their respective logistics networks, a company statement said.

"India Post, with its extensive network of about 1,65,000 post offices, is uniquely equipped to democratise e-commerce across the nation. Our partnership with Amazon



represents a significant leap forward in our efforts to bridge the digital divide, enhancing e-commerce across for all citizens," Vandita Kaul, Secretary (Posts), Department of Post, said.

The alliance is in line with the government's vision to modernise and augment India Post's services and reach using cutting-edge technology and processes, the statement said.

The partnership dates back to 2013, when Amazon

became the first e-commerce company to collaborate with India Post to deliver consumer electronics nationwide.

In 2023, the two entities signed an MoU to create an integrated cross border logistics solution that will expand the e-commerce exports opportunity to lakhs of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across the country.

In the last 2-3 years, India Post's footprint across Amazon logistics network has more than doubled with pickup points growing from 6 locations to 13 locations across the country, the statement said.

This along with overall improvements has resulted in a near 3-fold increase in the volume of Amazon parcels being delivered via India Post in the past 18 months, it said.

BMW, MINI sales rise by 10pc; SUV models drive demand

PNS ■ MUMBAI

German luxury carmaker BMW Group on Friday said its BMW and MINI brands recorded a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in sales at 10,556 units in India during the January-September period of 2024, which are the highest-ever numbers in 17 years for the company in a nine-month period.

The number of cars (BMW and MINI) sold in the first nine months of 2023 was 9,580 units.

Besides, the group also sold 5,638 units of Motorrad brand of motorcycles, the group announced here on Friday.

STATES' POWER TO TAX MINERAL RIGHTS

SC rejects pleas for review of its verdict

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has dismissed pleas seeking review of its July 25 verdict that ruled legislative power to tax mineral rights vests with the states.

The eight judges led by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud who perused the review petitions in chamber did not find merit in them.

Besides the CJ, the review order was signed by Justices Hrishikesh Roy, Abhay S Oka, JB Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Ujjal Bhuyan, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih.

"Having perused the review petitions, there is no error apparent on the face of the record. No case for review under Order XLVII Rule 1 of the Supreme Court Rules 2013 has been established. The review petitions are, therefore, dismissed," the eight judges said in the order passed on September 24 but uploaded recently.

Justice BV Nagarathna, who had dissented from the majority in the July 25 verdict by holding that only the Centre has the power to levy tax on mineral rights, passed a separate order in the review petitions also.

"Having perused the review petitions, a case for review

under Order XLVII Rule 1 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013 is made out," she ordered while issuing notice to the Centre and the states.

The eight judges led by the CJ rejected the prayer for open court hearing of the review petitions while Justice Nagarathna allowed the prayer for open court hearing.

On July 25, in 8:1 majority verdict, the top court in a landmark decision held that the legislative power to tax mineral rights vests with the states and the royalty paid on minerals was not a tax.

The majority verdict, which gave a huge revenue boost to mineral-rich states, said Parliament does not have the legislative competence to tax mineral rights under Entry 54 of List I of the Constitution which pertains to regulation of mines and mineral development by the Centre.

The top court, however, said that Parliament can still legislate to impose "any limitations" on states' power to levy tax on mineral rights.

It had referred to the term "any limitations" under Entry 50 of List II and said its scope is wide enough to include imposition of "restrictions, conditions, principles, as well as a prohibition".

RE sector makes 'notable contribution' to global workforce: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic renewable energy has made a 'notable contribution' to the global renewable energy workforce which has grown to 16.2 million, a report has said.

According to the 2024 Annual Review by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the total number of jobs in India's renewable energy sector reached an estimated 1.02 million mark in 2023.

"The global renewable energy workforce grew to 16.2 million, up from 13.7 million in 2022, with India making a notable contribution to this



rise," the report developed in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), said.

Hydropower was the largest employer in the renewable sector in India, providing around 4,53,000 jobs, and accounting for 20 per cent of

the global total, second only to China. The solar PV sector in India employed about 3,18,600 people in both on-grid and off-grid systems.

The study examines the global landscape of renewable energy technologies and analyzes employment across dif-

ferent countries, including India.

The Indian wind sector provided employment to approximately 52,200 people in 2023, the report said.

It assesses public and private sector policies influencing job creation, such as those related to renewable energy deployment, industrial growth, skill development, and labour market initiatives.

Although detailed information on education, skill requirements, and workforce attributes in renewable energy remains limited, the series emphasizes the need for decent work to ensure a fair and inclusive energy transition.



Kick 2 confirmed!

Sajid Nadiadwala has consistently redefined the cinematic landscape with his films. As a producer, he has delivered some of the biggest hits featuring the industry's top superstars. Among his most successful collaborations is with Salman Khan, with whom he has created record-breaking films over the years.

Now, after almost a decade, this duo is set to reunite for *Sikandar*, and everyone is eagerly looking forward to it. But there's even bigger news—Sajid Nadiadwala has shared a glimpse of a photoshoot done for *Kick 2*, leaving fans stunned.

Nadiadwala Grandson took to social media, sharing a stunning picture of Salman Khan and announcing *Kick 2*, along with the caption:

"It was a great *Kick 2* photo shoot *Sikandar*....!!!"

From Grand Sajid Nadiadwala" Sajid Nadiadwala and Salman Khan made waves with *Kick* in 2014, which marked Sajid's directorial debut. *Kick* was a massive success, not only winning the hearts of the masses but also giving Salman Khan his first film to enter the 200-crore club, making it one of the biggest blockbusters of 2014. Additionally, they are set to dominate EID 2025 with *Sikandar*.



Neelam Kothari on personal and professional growth post *Fabulous Lives*

Netflix's hit reality series, *Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives*, is back for an exciting third season and fans are already buzzing with anticipation! A fan favorite since Season 1, Neelam Kothari, opens up on her experience working with the OG and new cast members, the real, unscripted nature of the show and the impact of Bollywood wives on her personal and professional growth.

After winning hearts in the first two seasons, Neelam is once again joining her friends along with the fresh faces of Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, Shalini Passi and Kalyani Chawla, to offer a glimpse into the fabulous (and sometimes dramatic) lives of Bollywood's most beloved wives.

Reflecting on her experience, Neelam shared how wonderful it was to work alongside her longtime friends and the new additions to the cast. "My comfort level with Bhavna, Seema and Maheep is another level. It was great having new cast members on the show. It's made the experience a little different and I think the audience is going to love seeing that change."

When asked about which aspects of her personality resonate with the audience, Neelam highlighted the real, unscripted nature of the show. "*Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives* is a reality show and I think the reason why people identify with it is because it's a group of friends. Because it's non-scripted and all real, each one's personality stands out in its own way. I think that's why the show has done so well—

it's our authenticity that resonates with the audience."

For Neelam, *Fabulous Lives* has been more than just a show—it's been a transformative experience, both professionally and personally. "*Fabulous Lives* has

changed my life completely. It's opened up so many doors for me. My jewellery business has picked up and my interior design work has grown. I also did a small cameo in *Made in Heaven*. It's really been a game-changer. People who used to watch my films are now seeing me on-screen again and even their kids have become my fans. It's all thanks to Karan Johar—this is his brainchild. I'm grateful he gave me that little push to be a part of it."



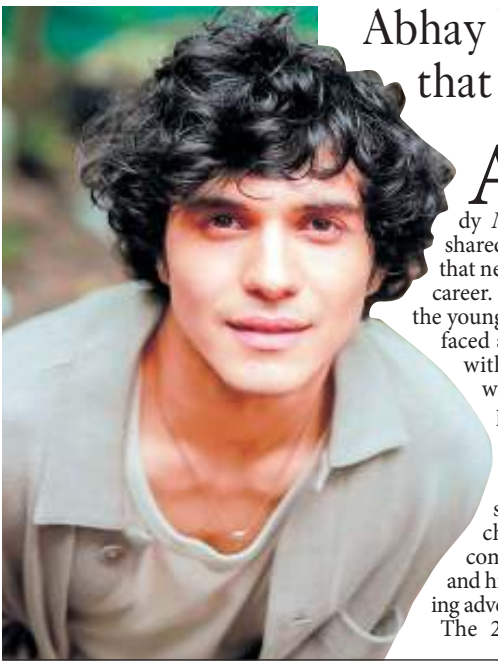
Abhay Verma's traumatic encounter that drove him to leave B'wood

After gaining recognition for his lead role in the horror comedy *Munjya*, Abhay Verma shared a personal struggle that nearly derailed his acting career. In a candid interview, the young actor revealed that he faced a traumatic experience with the casting couch, which led him to temporarily leave the film industry and return to his hometown. Verma's bravery in sharing his story highlights the challenges many newcomers face in Bollywood and his resilience in overcoming adversity to achieve success. The 26-year-old recounted,

"A boy coming with all his dreams, all his passion, his naivety, I would like to say that. And imagine a person in the first meeting itself, you get the feeling that this person is not interested in your work but is interested in taking something out of you or is putting you in a compromising position."

Abhay Verma revealed that a disturbing encounter with a Bollywood bigwig left him deeply unsettled, prompting him to abandon his Mumbai aspirations and return to Panipat!

"The first meeting was a major setback, which made me go back to my hometown. The principles and rules that you have, the identity that you have, you shouldn't compromise any of those things for anyone, nobody in the world," he added.



Ben Affleck feels vilified by JLo portraying him the 'bad guy'



Affleck, who she previously described as the love of her life. After four divorces, Jennifer Lopez is reinventing herself and looking to begin a fresh chapter in her life.

Numerous reports from both parties in the relationship have initiated campaigns against each other.



However, this recent discussion has once again reinforced JLo's admiration for the *Air* actor-director. "She was all in. She thought Ben was, too," the insider claimed.

Significantly, Lopez's deteriorating marriage coincided with the unfortunate timing of her career crisis. All three projects, including *This is Me... Now* (movie), the self-titled album and *The Greatest Love Story Never Told* (documentary), which were promoted as her passion projects, did not resonate with the intended audience despite being released this year. The JLo documentary reached its highest returns once the poorly timed separation rumours began circulating!

Akki is a director's delight, as dedicated as Big B: Priyadarshan

Akshay Kumar has been exploring different film genres off late. With so much work underway, Akshay Kumar is also lauded for the bonds he forges with his directors.

Recently, director Priyadarshan also spoke quite highly of Akshay Kumar. "Akshay Kumar is a disciplined actor. After Amit ji (Amitabh Bachchan), he is one of the most dedicated actors and he

comes on time. He listens to the director and is a director's delight."

In September, Akshay Kumar announced his collaboration with Priyadarshan after 14 years with the horror comedy *Bhoot Bangla*. Akshay shared the first look of the film on his birthday.

Other than this, he also has *Housefull 5*, *Welcome to the Jungle*, and *Jolly LLB 3* in the pipeline.

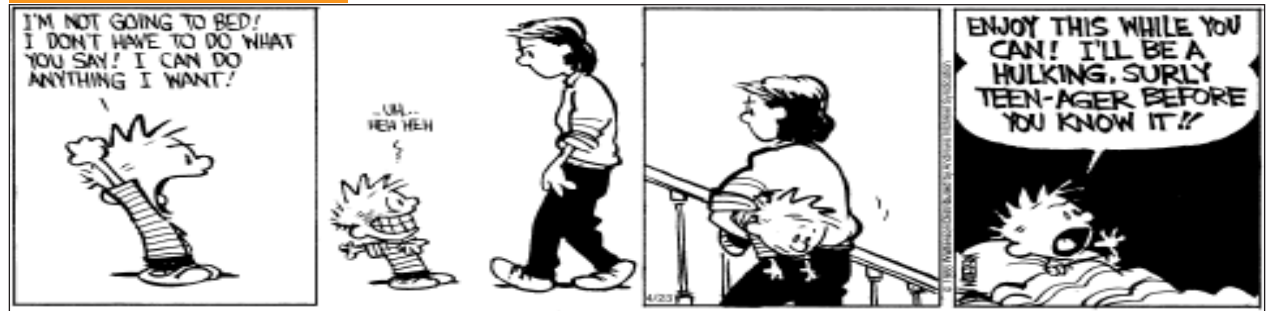


FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



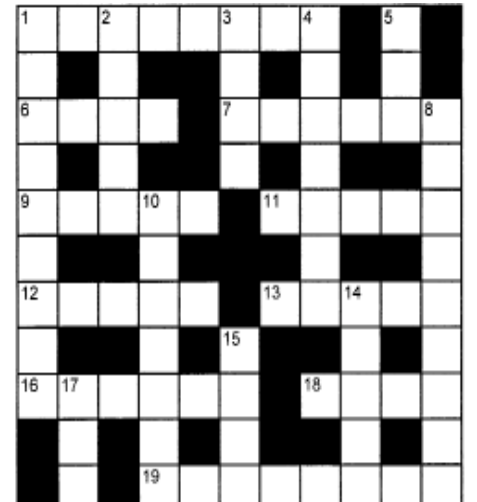
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 6 3 7 8 9 1 2 4 5
 9 4 8 3 2 5 7 1 6
 2 5 1 7 4 6 9 8 3
 8 7 5 9 6 4 1 3 2
 1 9 3 5 7 2 8 6 4
 4 6 2 1 3 8 5 9 7
 7 1 4 2 8 3 6 5 9
 5 2 6 4 1 9 3 7 8
 3 8 9 6 5 7 4 2 1

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

- 1 Beaten in battle
- 6 Following immediately after
- 7 Film theatre
- 9 A student's written composition
- 11 Money paid for doing a job
- 12 A stage drama performed in song
- 13 Jumps a spinning rope
- 16 A digging tool
- 18 Molten rock coming out of a volcano
- 19 Least heavy

DOWN

- 1 Very unsafe
- 2 Repairs
- 3 A small sharp nail
- 4 Where Danes live
- 5 A wall across a river
- 8 Helper
- 10 Opposite of departure
- 14 A mirror reflection
- 15 A stopper for a bath
- 17 Very warm



GINGER MEGGS



DJ prodigy who started spinning beats at 16

In this exclusive interview, Piyush Bajaj—the pioneer of Hyderabad's DJ scene, discusses his career, genre-bending sets and engaging approach. He also shares the inspiration behind his inventiveness and his love of the city



AARTI SREENATH
 aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

Piyush Bajaj found his rhythm at the age of as early as 16, diving head-first into DJing with an insatiable passion for music. What began as pure fascination evolved into a sophisticated mastery of electronic beats, transforming his passion into an art form that pulses through every track he spins. His unique ability to weave the rhythm of his music with the very soul of his audience has made him a go-to favourite for exclusive clubs across the country.

He carved his niche by fearlessly venturing into the less explored realms of club and house music, adding his own flair to every genre he touches. His sets are a spectacle; his interactive mixing, on-the-

spot remixes and spontaneous energy at the console create an electrifying connection with the crowd, making him a beloved figure behind the turntables. Born and brought up in Hyderabad, DJ Piyush had some interesting stories for the city. With an impressive career spanning 28 years as a DJ, remixer, producer and entrepreneur, he stands as the most awarded DJ of South India. Hyderabad, for him, is not just a city; it's home. It has shaped who he is and even though he has travelled and performed all over the world, he insists there is no place quite like Hyderabad. "Hyderabad is home," he says, with pride that stems from the warmth and hospitality of the city. "It's official now that Hyderabad is the best city to live in." For him, Hyderabad stands out for its communal

harmony, which he compares to the confluence of rivers—"Ganga, Jamuna, Saraswati"—where everyone lives in peace and unity. He appreciates how newcomers always receive a warm welcome, noting how, unlike many other cities, Hyderabad does not impose barriers of language or culture, making it an easy place to live and connect. Among his fondest memories, one stands out vividly: the year was 2005, when he won the national championship of the Times War of DJs. Coming back from Bombay, he expected his family to pick him up from Begumpet Airport, which was the city's main airport back then. But to his surprise, he was greeted by hundreds of people, along with press

and media, all ready to celebrate his victory. He describes the scene with a sense of nostalgia—the dhols playing, garlands being placed around his neck; it was a welcome fit for a local hero, an unforgettable moment that he cherishes deeply. That victory was a turning point in his career, propelling him onto the national stage with album releases, international tours, and opportunities he had never dreamed of.

He speaks highly of the music scene in Hyderabad, emphasising that it has always been in tune with the latest trends, not just locally but internationally. According to him, Hyderabad is a hub for artists, known for hosting some of the biggest events in the country. He is proud of the discerning audience here, who, in his words, "know what they are listening to and whether they like it or not."

Though he has played countless concerts and music festivals, it's the annual event organised by Youngistaan, a charitable organisation that supports underprivileged children, that remains closest to his heart and that is something he cherishes the most in the city. For him, there's nothing quite like the energy and love of those children. "The vibe and the energy there, you don't get to see it anywhere," he says, adding that seeing those children dance and enjoy the music is a feeling unlike any other.

Being an adventurous foodie, Hyderabad's food culture is a significant part of his life. He doesn't drink or smoke, but food is what excites him and he loves exploring new



places to eat in the city. He has his go-to spots for different cuisines: Nanking for Chinese, Reshmi Dhaba for North Indian, and, of course, Sarvi for Biryani, a staple in every Hyderabad's diet. Despite the booming culinary scene, there is one downside he feels about the city: traffic. He laments the lack of discipline on the roads, especially pointing out how people drive on the wrong side without fear, even in four-wheelers. "Zero traffic sense and zero value for life," he says, wishing for more awareness and responsibility on the streets.

But aside from that, he can't help but admire the transformation the city has undergone over the years. Every time friends or relatives from abroad visit Hyderabad, they are left astonished by the pace of its development. Especially areas like Hi-Tech City have evolved so much that "it doesn't feel like you're in India anymore," he jokes.

When guests visit, he makes sure they experience the true essence of Hyderabad. Whether it's the grandeur of Ramoji Film City, the iconic Charminar, the historical Qutb Shahi Tombs, or the beautiful Birla Mandir, Gandipet Lake and the Tank Bund, he ensures that the charm of

the city leaves a lasting impression on them. He mentions how visitors are always eager to take back a piece of Hyderabad with them, usually Biryani or pearls, which are two of the city's most beloved symbols.

As a music professional, the cultural shift towards the popularity of South Indian cinema has significantly influenced his work. The success of films like *Pushpa* and *RRR* has brought regional tracks into mainstream clubs, turning them into anthems not just in Hyderabad but nationwide. He acknowledges how these movies and their music have transcended boundaries, with tracks like *Naatu Naatu* and *Oo Antava* now dominating dance floors everywhere.

The DJ takes pride in his friendships with talented artists from Hyderabad, such as Sriram Chandra, who made the city proud by winning *Indian Idol*. He cherishes how the people of Hyderabad are always warm and welcoming, a sentiment that he feels every day. "Just the city is so comfortable. It's the warmest, the most hospitable city to live in," he says, summing up what Hyderabad means to him—a city that not only shaped his career but also holds his heart.

Sustainable tourism for greener tomorrow

Understanding sustainable tourism:

Sustainable tourism focuses on minimising the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and local communities while maximising the positive contributions. At its core are principles such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving natural resources, supporting local economies and respecting cultural diversity. These principles guide the development and management of tourism activities to ensure they contribute to sustainable development goals.

Conservation and environmental responsibility:

Central to sustainable tourism is the conservation of natural ecosystems and resources. Efforts in this area include promoting energy efficiency and sustainable practices in accommodations, transportation and tourist activities. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism accounts for about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with transportation, including air travel, being the largest contributor. Implementing measures such as using renewable energy sources, promoting public transportation and encouraging eco-friendly tourist activities can significantly reduce this footprint.

Protected areas and natural reserves are also critical to conservation efforts. Currently, about 15% of the world's land and 7% of the oceans are under some form of protection. Sustainable tourism practices ensure these areas are preserved, maintaining biodiversity and natural beauty.

Community engagement and economic development:

Inclusive tourism development involves local communities in decision-making processes and ensures they benefit from tourism economically and socially. Community-based tourism initiatives empower locals to participate in tourism-related activities, preserving cultural traditions and heritage. Economic benefits are distributed more equitably, enhancing local livelihoods and reducing poverty in destination communities.

Responsible travel practices:

Individual travellers play a crucial role in sustainable tourism by making responsible choices during their journeys. This includes respecting local customs and traditions, conserving resources such as water and energy and supporting businesses that prioritise



Tourism, a vital contributor to global economies, holds the promise of economic growth, cultural exchange and mutual understanding among nations. However, its rapid expansion has also raised concerns about environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and social inequality in destination communities. Sustainable tourism practices have emerged as a response to these challenges, aiming to ensure that tourism development is not only economically beneficial but also environmentally and socially responsible.

sustainability. Responsible travel behavior not only minimises environmental impact but also promotes cultural sensitivity and mutual respect between tourists and host communities.

Travellers are increasingly seeking sustainable options, with a 2019 Booking.com survey revealing that 55% of global travelers are more determined to make sustainable travel choices than they were a year before. This shift in traveler behavior drives demand for eco-friendly accommodations, sustainable tours, and responsible travel practices, encouraging the industry to adopt greener practices.

Innovations and technological advancements:

Technological innovations are transforming sustainable tourism practices, offering solutions to reduce environmental impact and enhance visitor experiences. Eco-friendly accommodations powered by renewable energy sources, digital platforms promoting virtual tourism experiences and smart transportation systems are examples of innovations driving sustainability within the tourism industry. These advancements improve efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and offer sustainable alternatives to traditional tourism practices.

For example, the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in tourism can significantly cut down emissions. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that by 2030, there will be over 145 million EVs on the road, contributing to lower emissions in tourist destinations. Additionally, advancements in digital technology, such as virtual reality (VR) tours, provide alternative ways to experience destinations without physical travel, further reducing the environmental impact.

Challenges and future directions:

Despite progress, sustainable tourism faces several challenges that require collaborative efforts from governments, businesses and communities. Over tourism in popular destinations strains local infrastructure and ecosystems, while climate change threatens natural resources and biodiversity. Balancing tourism growth with environmental conservation and social responsibility remains a complex endeavour, requiring innovative solutions and proactive management strategies.

Sustainable tourism represents a paradigm shift towards responsible tourism development that balances economic growth with environmental and social considerations. By adopting sustainable practices, stakeholders across the tourism industry contribute to preserving natural and cultural heritage while promoting inclusive economic growth. As awareness of sustainability issues grows and technology advances, opportunities arise to create a more resilient and equitable tourism sector that benefits both present and future generations.

In conclusion, sustainable tourism practices are essential for addressing the environmental and social impacts of tourism while harnessing its economic potential. By integrating principles of sustainability into tourism planning and management, destinations can enhance their attractiveness to conscientious travelers while safeguarding natural resources and supporting local communities. Embracing innovation and collaboration, the tourism industry can pave the way towards a more sustainable future where tourism serves as a force for positive change globally.

(The author, Prady, is the CEO and Managing Partner of NP Digital India.)

Where quaint streets lead to dark deeds...

PNS| HYDERABAD

PLOT:

Based on real-life events from Maharashtra between 1972 and 1976, *Manvat Murders* unravels the gruesome killings of seven girls and women. Directed by Ashish Avinash Bende, the series follows police officer Ramakant S. Kulkarni, played by Ashutosh Gowariker, as he investigates these horrific crimes. The show draws inspiration from Kulkarni's memoir *Footprints on the Sands of Crime* and highlights the disturbing fusion of superstition, human sacrifice and greed that fueled the murders. As the seasoned detective dives into the investigation, he battles unreliable witnesses, corruption and the powerful landlord Uttamrao (played by Makarand Anaspure), whose influence looms large over the case.

HIGHLIGHTS

The series thrives on the old-school investigative approach of Ramakant, who relies on psychology and deduction rather than force. Ashutosh Gowariker's portrayal of a patient and methodical officer lends depth to the procedural elements. His dynamic with his inexperienced team adds subtle humor to the grim narrative. The show's attention to police casework and the inner workings of small-town law enforcement shines throughout, with characters like Constable Nawathe (played by Purnanand Wankhede) adding to the layered storytelling.

DRAWBACKS

While the series builds suspense through methodical investigation, it falters in fully exploring the social and cultural intricacies of the case. The occult aspects and the chilling nature of the human sacrifices are underplayed, leaving the viewer wanting a deeper dive into the grotesque motivations behind the murders. Additionally, the narrative emphasis on Samindri (played by Sai Tamhankar) over Rukmini (played by Sonali Kulkarni) dilutes some of the emotional and psychological complexity.

PERFORMANCES

The performances in *Manvat Murders* are central to the show's ability to evoke the intensity and suspense of a dark, true-crime story. Leading the cast is Ashutosh Gowariker, who plays Ramakant S. Kulkarni, a seasoned detective with a reputation for meticulous investigation. He skillfully brings to life the slow-burn tension of his character, portraying a man who believes in thorough, methodical detective work rather than dramatic heroics. Sai Tamhankar delivers a layered performance as Samindri, one of the pivotal figures

DIRECTED BY: Ashish Avinash Bende
PRODUCED BY: Sony LIV
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Satyajee Shobha Shiram
CAST: Ashutosh Gowariker, Sai Tamhankar, Sonali Kulkarni, Makarand Anaspure, Kishor Kadam
STREAMING ON: Sony LIV
RATING: 3/5



in the investigation. Her portrayal balances fragility and resilience, giving the character a mysterious aura. Tamhankar's ability to transition between emotions—showing vulnerability in some scenes while exuding strength and defiance in others—makes her arc one of the most engaging in the series. Sonali Kulkarni brings a conflicted, nuanced portrayal to Rukmini, subtly depicting her internal battles and moments of realisation, though her character is somewhat overshadowed by the focus on Tamhankar's Samindri. Supporting roles are executed with notable attention to detail, particularly Kishor Kadam, who brings depth to a character caught in his own moral dilemmas, and Shardul Saraf, whose overzealous officer Shukla adds a touch of dark humour to the show. While some casting choices don't quite land, the ensemble as a whole manages to convey the gravity of the investigation.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The cinematography captures the eerie stillness of rural Maharashtra, creating an atmosphere that's both haunting and beautiful. The use of flashbacks to the murders keeps the audience grounded in the horror of the past without overwhelming the senses. However, the pacing suffers in parts, and the transitions between past and present investigations could have been sharper. The sound design adds to the show's chilling atmosphere but sometimes feels repetitive.

The colour psychology and camerawork in *Manvat Murders* play an integral role in creating the eerie and unsettling atmosphere required for a crime thriller set in rural Maharashtra. The series uses muted, earthy tones, reflecting the stark, desolate landscapes of the region. This colour palette, con-

sisting of dusty browns, greys and dark greens, amplifies the foreboding sense of dread that lingers throughout the investigation. The juxtaposition of dull, washed-out colours with sudden bursts of red or other sharp tones during violent flashbacks adds to the unsettling nature of the crimes, symbolising the bloodshed and the brutal rituals behind the murders.

The camerawork, particularly the use of wide-angle shots and slow panning, captures the vast emptiness of the rural setting, enhancing the isolation and vulnerability of the victims. Close-up shots of characters, especially during interrogations, emphasise their psychological strain and nervousness, building tension between the viewer and the characters. Furthermore, handheld camera movements during intense moments add a sense of urgency and discomfort, making the audience feel as though they are part of the investigation. This careful balance of cinematography and colour design contributes significantly to the overall mood of the series, anchoring it in both realism and psychological horror.

Manvat Murders offers a solid whodunit that pays homage to traditional police procedurals while tackling a disturbing real-life case. However, it lacks the narrative depth to fully explore the sinister motives behind the killings. Strong performances by the cast, especially Ashutosh Gowariker, keep the show engaging. It's worth watching for its atmospheric storytelling and compelling investigation, but it misses the mark in fully delivering on the horror it promises.

VERDICT



REVIEW

WE CAN SENSE EACH OTHER'S FEELINGS JUST BY OUR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS: SHAFALI ON MANDHANA

PTI ■ DUBAI

Shafali Verma, the significant other of the blockbuster Indian opening pair, says her no-holds-barred approach goes well with Smriti Mandhana's elegance and both can "sense each other's feelings just by our facial expressions" while batting.

One of the factors behind the Indian women's cricket team's dominance in recent times has been the success of its openers, and Shafali admits they know how "important" they are to the team's fortunes.

"I've been opening with Smriti for the past two-three years, and now we can sense each other's feelings just by our facial expressions while batting. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses, and we give each other positive vibes," Shafali told Star Sports when asked about her on-field



relationship with Mandhana. "We understand how important we both are to the team, especially during the

powerplay, so we try to perform well for ourselves, our teammates, and the country." The younger partner added,

"Smriti di is an exceptional timer of the ball, and she knows how to build an innings. These are the two

things I admire most about her batting -- her timing and her ability to construct a big innings."

India will begin their campaign in the ongoing Women's T20 World Cup with a game against New Zealand on Friday, and Shafali said it has been a dream of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur to win the tournament, in which they finished runners-up in the 2020 edition.

"Harmanpreet di is very passionate about the game. Winning the World Cup has always been a dream for her, and I hope we can make that dream come true. She's a great player, a great teammate, and a fantastic captain who inspires and motivates us all the time," Shafali said of the skipper.

Shafali made her World Cup debut as a 16-year-old and having missed the trophy by a whisker then, she is hoping to change that this time around.

"It was a big deal for me to debut at 16, and I loved being in Australia. It wasn't just the cricket; I also enjoyed exploring the country.

"The tournament was special, and I performed well for the team. Thinking back to that World Cup always brings a smile to my face. We were so close to winning, but hopefully, we can change that this time around."

Playing the final against home team Australia, in front of a packed crowd at the iconic MCG, is an experience that has helped her in learning to handle pressure better.

"I couldn't hear anything because of the massive crowd. It was a completely new experience for me to play in front of such a big audience.

"I was lost in the atmosphere and the noise, but I've learned to focus more now. I wouldn't feel the same pressure if I were in that situation again."



No. 1 Iga Swiatek parts ways with coach Tomasz Wiktorowski

AP ■ WARSAW

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek is separating from her coach Tomasz Wiktorowski. The Polish tennis player announced the split Friday, saying the decision was taken together.

During the three years Swiatek worked with Wiktorowski, the Polish player won four of her five Grand Slam titles and rose to the top of the women's rankings.

"After 3 years of the greatest achievements in my career, together with my coach Tomasz Wiktorowski we decided to part way," Swiatek wrote in a post on Instagram. "I want to start with a big thank you and appreciating our work together."

Swiatek appointed Wiktorowski as coach at the end of the 2021 season. He helped her capture 19 of her 22 career titles and an Olympic bronze medal in Paris in August.

"Coach Wiktorowski joined my team for three seasons, when I strongly needed changes and a fresh approach to my game," Swiatek continued.

"His experience, analytical and strategic attitude and enormous knowledge about tennis helped us to achieve

things I've never dreamed of only a few months after we started working together.

"Our main goal was to become No. 1 player in the world and coach Wiktorowski was the one who said it first."

Swiatek hasn't competed since losing to Jessica Pegula in the quarterfinals of the U.S. Open. She withdrew from this week's China Open in Beijing - where she would have been defending champion - citing personal reasons. The 23-year-old Swiatek also pulled out of the recent Korea Open in Seoul, citing fatigue.

"Due to this important change on my team, I give myself a couple of weeks to start a cooperation with a new coach," Swiatek wrote.

"I'm in the middle of first talks with coaches from abroad (non-Polish) because I'm ready to take the next step of my career. I will let you know when I make a decision."

Wiktorowski was voted the WTA's Coach of the Year by his peers last year.

"Coach, THANK YOU, I wish you all the best," Swiatek wrote. "I know that you would like to rest after these 3 years of hard work and traveling a lot and spending some well deserved time with your loved ones and I hope you'll get what you need."

Buoyant Mohammedan Sporting gear up for Mohun Bagan challenge



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Fresh off their maiden ISL victory in an away match against Chennaiyin FC, debutants Mohammedan Sporting will aim to carry the same momentum when they square off with heavyweights Mohun Bagan in a lesser known 'Kolkata Derby' this Saturday.

With bragging rights as well as points on the line, Mohammedan Sporting will be eager to prove themselves against one of Indian football's most dominant forces and resume their rivalry in the ISL.

The black and white brigade secured their maiden win in the ISL by defeating Chennaiyin FC 1-0 last week with Lalremnunga Fani scoring the decisive goal.

Despite Chennaiyin's attempts to fight back in the second-half, Mohammedan's defence led by Joseph Adjei and Vanlaluzidika Chhakchhuak remained resolute to take home full three points that has kept them ahead of the city rivals on goal difference.

Mohun Bagan, who are the League Shield Winners, on

the other hand are coming on the back of a 0-3 loss to Bengaluru FC as they will be looking to regroup and infuse fresh energy to their attacking duo of Dimitri Petratos and Jason Cummings.

Petratos is on the brink of his 50th ISL appearance for the Mariners, and his experience will be vital in guiding the team through in pressure cooker scenario.

The key for the midfield marshalled by Greg Stewart and Manvir Singh will be to dominate possession, pressing high up the pitch and using their full-backs to provide width.

Lalengmawia Ralte has been flawless defensively, winning all 14 of his attempted tackles this season, which will be crucial in stopping Mohammedan's attacks.

Despite their attacking prowess, Mohun Bagan head coach Jose Molina has expressed concern about his team's defensive frailties.

The Mariners have conceded seven goals in their three matches so far, which has put pressure on their ability to secure results.

Molina has identified that many of their defensive issues stem from mistakes in attack, emphasising that improving their offensive play will help tighten the defense.

"We're conceding too many goals, and some of them are due to mistakes at the back, but most are because of errors in attack. To improve defensively, we need to attack better," Molina said.

Mohammedan Sporting, however, may opt for a more cautious approach as they are likely to sit back, absorb pressure, and hit on the counter using the pace of Alexis Gomez and Franca up front.

Retired IPS Sharad Kumar appointed new head of BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retired IPS officer Sharad Kumar, who headed anti-terror organisation NIA for four years, has been appointed as the new chief of the BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit, bringing extensive experience to the role.

Hailing from Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, the appointment of 68-year-old Kumar was done on October 1 in the cricketing body. BCCI's ACU head is appointed for a three-year term.

His name was finalised in the BCCI's Annual General Meeting on September 29, a Board source told PTI.

He is a 1979 batch IPS officer from the Haryana cadre and has had a distinguished career especially as the chief of the National Investigation Agency from 2013 to 2017.

He will take over from KK Mishra, also a former Haryana cadre IPS officer, who was appointed last year but did not complete his term due to unspecified



reasons.

After serving in the NIA, Kumar was appointed as the Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission from June 2018 to April 2020, where he

also held the interim position of Central Vigilance Commissioner.

In his new role, Kumar will play a crucial part in addressing corruption issues, including match-fixing and betting scandals, thereby reinforcing the BCCI's commitment to maintaining integrity of the game.

During his tenure as NIA Director General, Kumar oversaw several high-profile investigations and operations. Kumar played a pivotal role in enhancing the NIA's capabilities and infrastructure. During his tenure, the NIA investigated several major terror attacks in India, including the Pathankot airbase attack by terrorists of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Kumar's efforts were instrumental in disrupting terror financing networks. His contribution to law enforcement has been recognised with the President's Police Medal for Meritorious Services in 1996 and the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Services in 2004.



Bopanna-Dodig pair advances to second round of Shanghai Masters

PTI ■ SHANGHAI

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Ivan Dodig cherished their first win after joining forces, moving to the second round of the ATP Shanghai Masters with a straight-set victory over Pablo Carrero Busta and Pedro

Martinez, here Friday. The fifth-seed Indo-Croatian pair won 6-4 6-3 in the opening round match that lasted 63 minutes. Bopanna and Dodig fired five aces to none of their rivals, and converted three of the eight break points they faced.

They also saved four break chances on their service games,

dropping serve only once in the match. India's singles challenge has already ended with both Sumit Nagal and Ramkumar Ramanathan making first round exits.

Ramkumar had made it to the main draw through qualifying round while Nagal had earned a direct entry.

EU's top court says some FIFA rules on international transfers are contrary to the bloc's law

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The European Union's top court said Friday that some FIFA rules on player transfers are contrary to European Union legislation relating to competition and freedom of movement, in a ruling that will likely lead to a shakeup of the soccer market's regulations and change the sport's economy.

The court's ruling came after former France international Lassana Diarra legally challenged FIFA rules following a dispute with a club dating back to a decade ago. Diarra argued that FIFA's restrictions meant he was unable to find a new club after his contract with Russian club Lokomotiv Moscow was terminated in 2014.

FIFA's rules state that if a player terminates his contract without "just cause," the player and any club wishing to sign him are jointly liable for paying compensation to the previous club.

"Those rules hinder the free movement of players and competition between clubs," the court said in a statement.

"The rules in question are such as to impede the free movement of professional footballers wishing to develop their activity by going to work for a new club."

The court added that current rules "impose considerable legal risks, unforeseeable and potentially very high financial risks as well as major sporting risks on those players and clubs wishing to employ them which, taken together, are such as to impede international transfers of those players."

Diarra had signed a four-year contract with Lokomotiv Moscow in 2013. The deal was terminated a year later after Diarra was unhappy with alleged pay cuts.

Lokomotiv Moscow applied to the FIFA dispute resolution chamber for compensation and the player submitted a counterclaim



seeking compensation for unpaid wages. The Court of Arbitration for Sport found the Russian club terminated the contract with Diarra "with just cause" and the player was ordered to pay 10.5 million euros (\$11.2 million).

Diarra claimed his search for a new club was hampered by FIFA's rules stipulating that any new side would be jointly responsible with him for paying compensation to Lokomotiv.

The former Real Madrid player also argued that a potential deal with Belgian club Charleroi fell through because of the FIFA rules, and sued FIFA and the Belgian federation at a Belgian court for damages and loss of earnings of six million euros (\$7 million).

With the lawsuit still going through Belgian courts, the case was referred to the European Court of Justice for a ruling.

Although the court said FIFA transfer regulations can help maintain a form of stability within professional squads and help guarantee the regularity of competitions, it

insisted that in Diarra's case "the rules in question nevertheless seem, subject to verification (by the Belgian court) in a number of respects, to go beyond what is necessary to pursue that objective."

The Diarra case, which is supported by the global players' union FIFPro, went through FIFA judicial bodies before the 2016 election of FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who has made it a priority to modernize transfer market rules.

Concerning competition rules, the court slammed FIFA's rulings for restricting and preventing cross-border competition between European clubs.

"The Court recalls that the possibility of competing by recruiting trained players plays an essential role in the professional football sector and that rules which place a general restriction on that form of competition, by immutably fixing the distribution of workers between the employers and in cloistering the markets, are similar to a no-poach agreement," it said.

Man United has been revamped by Ratcliffe but it's the same old story for Ten Hag

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

It feels like Groundhog Day for Manchester United and Erik ten Hag.

Another season has hit crisis point after only a few games. Perhaps that's why the United manager was so dismissive of the renewed pressure on him after last week's humbling 3-0 loss to Tottenham.

"Nothing is easy, but this is nothing for me to panic about because I experienced it so often with my teams during seasons that you are facing those problems," he said this week.

He is right.

United's record of three losses after six English Premier League games is in keeping with his two previous campaigns at Old Trafford.

In 2022, he lost his opening two and three of the first seven.

In 2023 it was even worse, as United lost three of five at the start.

Both of those seasons ended



with a trophy, but the feel-good factor provided by the most recent silverware - May's FA Cup triumph against Manchester City - has long evaporated in the face of the likelihood that United's 11-year wait for the league title is

set to go on. There is little sign of progress in the league despite spending around \$750 million on transfers.

On Sunday, United travels to Aston Villa, which has been transformed by manager Unai Emery, who has worked on a

fraction of that budget. The Spaniard has spent around \$270 million to turn Villa from a team that was battling relegation when he took over in October 2022 to one that beat Bayern Munich in the Champions League on

Wednesday.

In contrast United needed a stoppage time goal from Harry Maguire to salvage a 3-3 draw with Porto in the Europa League on Thursday, having led 2-0 after 20 minutes.

Defeat against Villa would intensify questions about Ten Hag's position ahead of the October international break, which has traditionally been a time when clubs look to make managerial changes.

Emery's success at Villa is evidence of what can be achieved in a short period of time. Villa was three points above the relegation zone when he was hired. In his first full season, he led the Midlands club to fourth, eight points ahead of United and qualified for the Champions League.

He is yet to deliver silverware, but the trajectory is clearly upward.

United is 13th heading into the weekend, having finished last season in eighth and the previous year third.

SWAG is not so SWAG after all!

SURESH KAVIRAYANI

Sree Vishnu, a talented actor, is trying out different genres. After his two back-to-back hit films *Samajavaragamana* and *Om Bheem Bhush*, Sree Vishnu came up with this *Swag* film. He plays four characters in this film, directed by Hasith Goli. The director previously worked with Sree Vishnu for a successful film, *Raja Raja Chola*, which is why there was curiosity around this new movie of his. People Media Factory, produced this film. Ritu Varma takes on the role of the female protagonist.

Plot:

The story begins in the 15th century with Queen Rukmini Devi (played by Ritu Varma) ruling, and her husband (played by Sree Vishnu) aspiring to be the king. Somehow, he manages to become king and wants to ensure that his sons continue the Swaganika Vamsham legacy. There is a huge treasure that includes gold, ornaments, silver and many other things belonging to the Swaganika Vamsham. Pundits are searching for the

Swaganika Vamsham heir to hand over the treasure. Bhavabhuti (played by Sree Vishnu), a sub-inspector, Anubhoothi (played by Ritu Varma), Singa (played by Sree Vishnu), a social media influencer, all claim to be related to the Swaganika Vamsam. There is also a surprising character named Vibhoothi—but who is he? The crux of the story is who actually claims the entire treasure in the end.

Analysis:

Director Hasith Goli starts the movie by showcasing the 15th-century Swaganika Vamsam and tries to connect it to the modern era. The first few minutes of the film's narration are interesting with good visuals. But after some time, the director loses the story's focus, confusing viewers with too many characters and too much informa-

Performances

When it comes to the performances, Sree Vishnu did a commendable job in portraying different characters, but without a solid story and narration, it doesn't help the film succeed. However, Bhavabhuti's diction is irritating at points, leading viewers to disconnect from the character. Vishnu appears in numerous roles, seemingly only to showcase his versatility, which was unnecessary. Ritu Varma appears both as the queen and in the present-day setting, but her character lacks depth. Meera Jasmine makes a welcome return to the screen, delivering a very good performance and fitting well into her role. Allari Ravi Babu gets a significant role after a long time, while Sunil, Goparaju Ramana, Daksha Nagarkar, Saranya Pradeep and Getup Seenu play routine roles. The music is average, the cinematography is good and the dialogues shine in parts.

had a lot of emotional potential, he couldn't handle the story well, leading to a confusing narration. As a result, when viewers leave the theater, they might struggle to remember the characters. Another flaw is the recurring characters from the 15th century, which added to the confusion.

It seems that the director and Sree Vishnu wanted to attempt a Kamal Haasan-like film, with Vishnu appearing in multiple avatars. However, Kamal Haasan's approach is different; his avatars are always interesting and interconnected. Unfortunately, attempting to imitate Kamal Haasan

Cast: Sree Vishnu, Ritu Varma, Meera Jasmine, Daksha Nagarkar, Saranya Pradeep, Allari Ravi Babu, Sunil, Goparaju, Getup Seenu, and others.

Cinematographer:

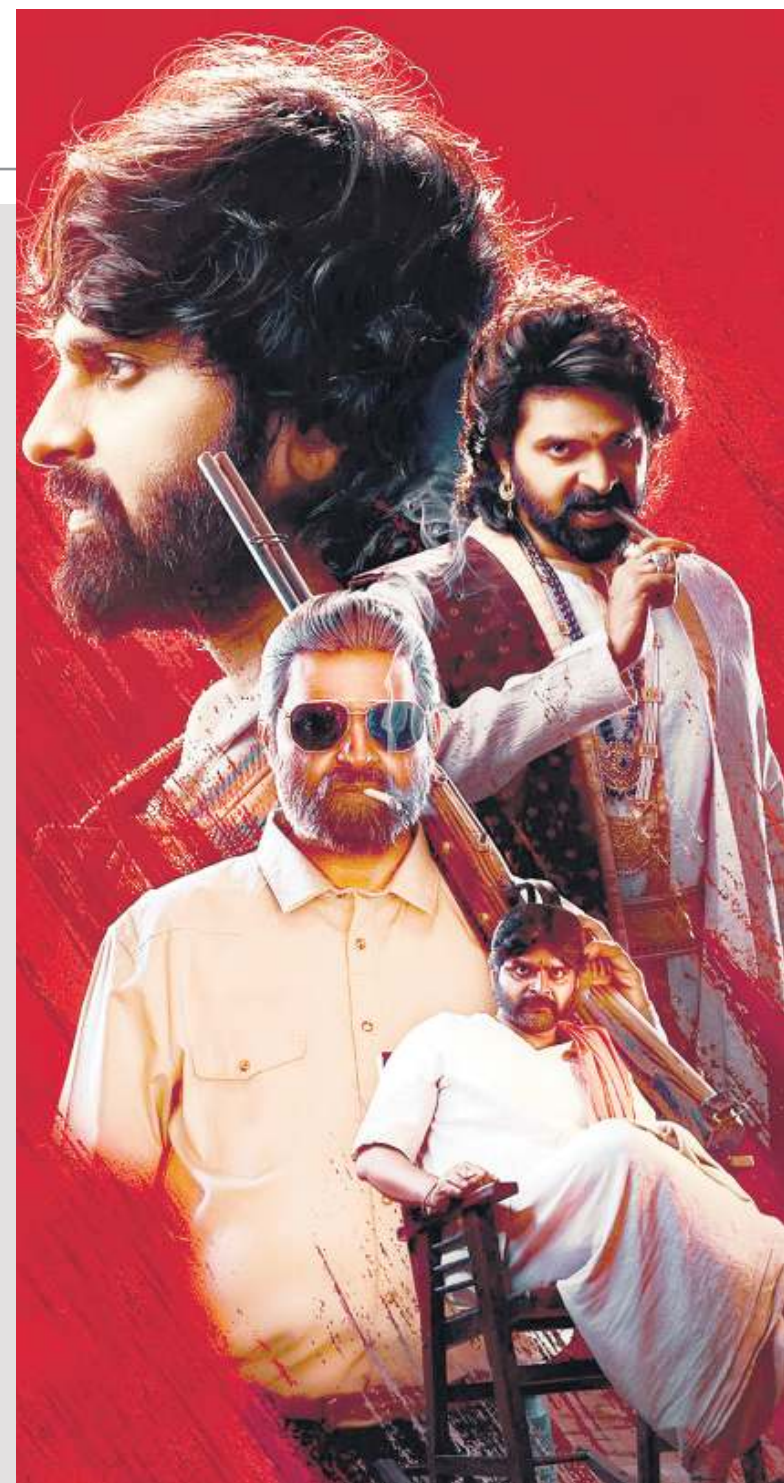
Vedaraman Shankaran

Music: Vivek Sagar

Producers: T G Vishwaprasad

Writer and Director: Hasith Goli

Rating: 1.5/5



REVIEW

When dealing with a complicated story, the director must narrate it clearly for the audience and screenplay plays a significant role in achieving that. Although Director Hasith's concept

Verdict

Finally, *Swag* is a confusing story where the director fails to narrate it properly. Many scenes are dragged out and test the viewer's patience. Sree Vishnu portrays

multiple characters, but the interesting part only comes in the second half. With no strong emotions or entertainment value, this film can be skipped.

Davudi added for audience's appeal?



ed in the film, now being shown in theatres. Fans have quickly taken to social media to share their reactions to the updated footage.

The song, composed by Anirudh Ravichander and performed by Nakash Aziz and Akasa, features Telugu lyrics by Ramajogayya Sastry. Even before the film's release, the track received considerable praise due to the dynamic dance performance by Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor.

Devvara Part 1, directed by Koratala Siva, is an action drama that revolves around the main character, a figure notorious for his daring smuggling ventures across the sea, who gets caught in a complicated situation when he realizes the true nature of the goods he's handling. The story follows his battles with enemies and his rise to becoming a feared urban legend. It also explores the contrasting life of his son, played by Jr NTR as well, whose character and path are very different from his father's.

Besides the *RRR* star, the film also features Janhvi Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan, Prakash Raj, Srikanth, Shine Tom Chacko, Narain, Kalaiyarasan and many more in key roles. *Devvara* initially released on September 27, 2024 and a sequel is already planned for the future.

The makers of *Devvara* have officially announced the addition of the song *Daavudi* to the Jr NTR-led film, along with an extra lead scene. A week after its release, the creators of *Devvara* starring Jr NTR decided to include the song *Daavudi*, which was initially left out of the movie's release. The official confirmation came through a post on X (formerly known as Twitter), accompanied by the caption, "To all the fans who have been waiting to get into the KILI KILIYE mood."

Along with the newly added song, an additional scene leading up to the track has also been includ-



Nikhil Siddhartha backs Madhav's Mr Idiot

Ravi Teja's talented nephew Maadhav is ready for his film debut in *Mr Idiot*. In fact, the movie is among the top films in Ravi Teja's career and now his nephew aims to create a similar title. Maadhav is the son of Ravi Teja's younger brother, Raghu. The trailer was recently released and the producers are pleased with the feedback it has received. Presently, a different young actor, Nikhil Siddhartha, is endorsing this independent film by releasing the lyrical song from the film.

The female lead in the movie is Simran Sharma, and it is produced by JJR Ravichand. Gowri Ronamki, who previously directed *Pelli SandaD*, is now the director of her second film.

"Our film is gearing up for a theatrical release soon and we are very happy that we get a positive response from everywhere for the trailer, which we released recently," said the producer. The producer thanked Nikhil for releasing the lyrical song *Kantara Kantara* from the film. Nikhil extended his wishes for great success to the entire team as well. The music for the song was composed by Anup Rubens and the lyrics were written by Kasarla Shyam, with Rahul Sipliganj performing as the playback singer.

Thalaiva discharged

thanks well-wishers



Tamil superstar Rajinikanth was discharged from the hospital on Thursday night. According to the reports, the doctors advised him to rest for a week. The actor was admitted to the hospital on September 30 due to stomach pain and underwent a successful surgery by the doctors. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers from several states inquired about his well-being and sent him their best wishes for a quick recovery.

After reaching home, the Superstar thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for showing his concern about his health. "My dear honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji ... my heartfelt thanks to you for your care and concern regarding my health and checking on me personally," said Rajinikanth on his social media.

He further went on to express his gratitude to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Amitabh Bachchan, among many other dignitaries, showing their concern for the actor.

Both Rajinikanth and Amitabh Bachchan will next be seen in the upcoming film *Vettaian*, which will be releasing on October 10 during the Dasara holidays. The film is directed by the *Jai Bheem* fame Gnanavel, which also had its trailer released a few days ago. The story centers around an encounter, where Rajinikanth will be seen playing an encounter specialist in this film.

Dil Raju, the new FDC chairman?

Dil Raju, a renowned producer in Telugu cinema, is all set to be nominated as the Chairman of the Telangana Film Development Corporation (FDC), according to a highly reliable source. This move is driven by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's desire to appoint a film industry personality to bridge the gap between the government and the Telugu Film Industry (TFI). The relationship between the TFI and the government has been strained lately and the FDC has been inactive for over a year. To revive it, the Chief Minister wants a well-respected

figure from the film industry to lead the corporation. Dil Raju, with his impressive credentials and experience, fits the bill perfectly.

"Few days back, Revanth Reddy asked Dil Raju to take over as the chairman of FDC. However, Dil Raju was reluctant to do so, yet the chief minister persuaded him," said the source. The source had also revealed that his CPRO, Ayodhya Reddy, had also called Dil Raju and told him to take over the position.

As per the details shared by the source, the government is soon going to release a GO regarding his appointment.

The Revanth Reddy Government planned to institute film awards in honour of Gaddar, the legendary Telangana folk singer and balladeer. To this end, a committee comprising film personalities was formed, but its efforts have stalled due to the absence of a suitable chairman for the Telangana Film Development Corporation (FDC). Chief Minister Revanth Reddy aims to appoint a film industry stalwart like Dil Raju, known for his strong connections with both the government and the industry, to helm the FDC," the source revealed.



Thalapathy Vijay's last film launched in a grand manner

Thalapathy 69, which was highly anticipated, was officially launched with a traditional puja ceremony in Chennai. KVN Productions has already revealed the cast and crew for the esteemed film, with a majority of them present at the launch event. All present alongside Thalapathy Vijay are

Bollywood actor Bobby Deol, leading actress Pooja Hegde and Malayalam actress Mamitha Baiju, who rose to fame with *Manjummal Boys*.

Thalapathy 69 is important since it signifies Vijay's last appearance in cinema, creating an emotional and historic project for his supporters. According to the makers, the

movie will start filming shortly. Besides the main actors, the film also features prominent actors such as Gautham Vasudev Menon, National Award-winning actress Priyamani and veteran actor Prakash Raj.

Thalapathy 69, produced by Venkat K Narayana for KVN Productions and directed by

H Vinoth, is expected to be a groundbreaking film, highlighting Vijay's impressive career spanning three decades. Anirudh will compose the music, increasing anticipation among fans even more. Planned to be launched in October 2025, the creators intend to distribute it in Telugu, Hindi and Tamil.

