



the pioneer

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

UN like 'old company', not entirely keeping up with market:

Jaishankar



RAJEEV

SIDDHARTHA SPICED UP HIS COOKING DRILL AT FARZI CAFE FOR LOVE, SITARA

Kavya Eyes Action-Packed Role in Next

PROJECT



QUOTE OF THE DAY

Engineers should take Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya as their role model and not the engineers who built the Kaleshwaram Project. KCR said everything was mine before the construction of the Kaleshwaram Project. But after its collapse, KCR said it was an act of treason. If it was treason, it should be raised. But how did it go down? When his fraud came to light KCR tried to deceive the public

- Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, R&B Minister P4



DON'T MISS...

Do not politicise murder of girl...

Home Minister V Anitha urged opposition leaders not to politicise the tragic murder of a seven-year-old girl in Punganur, cautioning them against attempting to gain political mileage from the heinous incident. Home Minister Anitha, along with Transport Minister M Ramprasad Reddy and Minority Welfare Minister NM Farook, visited Punganur on Sunday to console the grieving family of the deceased girl. The young victim was murdered, and her body was found dumped in a summer storage tank on September 29. Speaking to the...

-PAGE: 4

Should not be treated lightly...

Removal of an elected public representative should not be treated lightly, especially when it concerns women belonging to rural areas, the Supreme Court has said as it set aside an order for removal of a woman sarpanch in a Maharashtra village. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan termed the matter as a classic case where the residents of the village could not reconcile with the fact that a woman was elected to the office of the sarpanch. The top court...

-PAGE: 5

Anil Group's fundraise to drive...

Equipped with Rs 17,600 crore fundraising and a zero-debt status, Anil Ambani's Reliance Group companies - Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and Reliance Power Ltd - are poised to execute their growth strategies, according to officials. In the past two weeks, both companies have announced raising Rs 4,500 crore through preferential issues of equity shares and Rs 7,100 crore from renowned global investment fund Varde Partners through equity-linked long-term FCCBs, having a long maturity period...

-PAGE: 8

England aims to challenge...

England is aiming to challenge struggling Pakistan with a new-look pace attack in the opening test of a three-match series, starting in the searing heat of Multan on Monday. Fast bowler Brydon Carse will make his test debut with Gus Atkinson set to play his first overseas test after his impressive home season against the West Indies and Sri Lanka. All-rounder Chris Woakes was penciled in to the starting XI after Ben Stokes was ruled out for the fourth successive test match due to ongoing rehabilitation...

-SPORTS

Naidu's 2-day visit to Delhi from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The two-day visit of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to Delhi has been confirmed. The CM will arrive in Delhi on Monday afternoon and is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Modi at 4:30 PM. Following the meeting with the Prime Minister, he will meet Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav.

According to the tour schedule, CM Chandrababu will also meet Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, and Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday.

This will be CM Chandrababu Naidu's first meeting with the Prime Minister since submitting a detailed report to the Centre regarding the losses caused by heavy rains, the Budameru breach, and the resulting floods. The CM is expected to discuss several key issues, including the railway zone project, the merger of Vizag Steel with SAIL, and flood assistance funds. Reports indicate that CM Chandrababu will urge the Centre to ensure that the World Bank releases funds for the construction of Amaravati without



◆ **SCHEDULE:** CM will meet Prime Minister Modi at 4:30 PM, followed by a meeting with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav.

◆ **MEETS WITH UNION MINISTERS:** He is set to meet Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, and Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday.

◆ **FIRST MEETING POST-REPORT:** This is his first meeting with the Prime Minister since submitting a report on losses from heavy rains and floods.

delay. Additionally, he is likely to address funding for the Polavaram project and other important matters concerning Andhra Pradesh during his visit to Delhi.

3 held in 7-yr-old girl's murder case

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

The police have solved the mystery behind the brutal murder of a seven-year-old girl, with the arrest of three individuals, including two women and a minor boy.

Chittoor district Superintendent of Police, Manikantha, informed the media on Sunday that the girl, Aaspiya, had gone missing on September 29 from Punganur village. Her body was discovered floating in a summer storage tank three days later.

The SP stated that financial disputes were the motive behind the crime. The girl's father, Ahmatullah, who is involved in the finance business, had borrowed Rs 3.5 lakh from a woman named Hasheena but failed to repay the amount. This led to the tragic murder of the young girl. The police have arrested Hasheena,



Reshma, and a minor boy in connection with the case.

Clarifying the details of the crime, the SP confirmed that the girl was not sexually assaulted before being murdered.

"The post-mortem report revealed that the girl was not raped. On September 29, a woman in a 'burqa' (veil) lured Aaspiya with chocolates and took her to her house, where the three accused strangled her to death.

Minister Durgesh calls for fast-tracking tourism projects

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Tourism, Culture, and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh has stressed the need to maintain high standards in tourism facilities as Andhra Pradesh prepares for the busy Dasara season. During his visit to several AP Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) resorts and hotels on

Sunday, he said, "The development works must be finished quickly without compromising on quality."

While inspecting modernisation works at Yatri Nivas, Punnami, and Haritha Resorts, Durgesh emphasised that these projects are vital to attracting more tourists and increasing revenue. He added, "These upgrades are important for giving



visitors a world-class experience." The Minister also visited Tenneti

Park, where he launched a brochure promoting tourism in the state. Durgesh criticised delays in the projects, blaming the previous YSRC government for "poor planning," which has increased costs and caused setbacks. He noted that 90% of the modernization works, costing Rs 8.60 crore, are done, but Rs 4 crore more is needed to complete the rest. **Continued on Page 2**

PAWAN'S SNIPE AT UDAYANIDHI

None can wipe out 'Sanatana Dharma'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Continuing his 'Sanatana Dharma' pitch, Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Sunday said that Tamil Nadu is a land of 'siddhars and saints'.

In a social media post, he said, "For culture and bhakti traditions, Tamil Nadu, truly stands out and the land is abundantly blessed by many siddhars and saints."

The actor-politician said his

late father was an ardent devotee of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Saradha Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

He further said that his father, who took kriya yoga Deeksha from Ranchi, initiated all his children into practising the ancient meditation technique. During the 1980s and 90s, his father used to visit Mahavatar Babaji ashram in Santhome, Chennai and do service to 'Yogi Ram Surat Kumar' at regular



intervals in Tiruvannamalai, he said.

Declaring himself an "unapologetic Sanatani Hindu", Kalyan on October 3, indirectly referring to the comments made by his Tamil Nadu counterpart Udhayanidhi Stalin, said, "If anyone tries to wipe out Sanatana Dharma, let me tell you from the feet of Lord Balaji you will be wiped out."

Reacting to the Jana Sena chief's comments, Udhayanidhi on Friday retorted with a cryptic comment "Let's wait and see".

India beat Bangladesh by seven wickets in first T20I

PNS ■ GWALIOR

India registered a comfortable seven-wicket win over Bangladesh in the first T20I of the three-match series here on Sunday.

India bowled out Bangladesh for 127 and then chased down the target of 128 with 49 balls to spare.

Asked to bat first, Bangladesh were in early trouble at 14 for two with left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh (3/14) removing both openers Litton Das and Parvez Hossain Emon cheaply.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto made 27 off 25 balls and Mehidy Hasan Miraz contributed 35 in 32 deliveries. **Continued on Page 2**

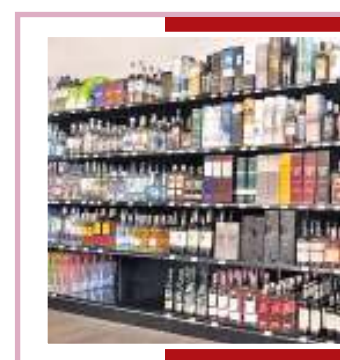
No restriction on number of applications for liquor shops: Govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The new liquor policy for Andhra Pradesh (2024-26) allows people to submit multiple applications for liquor shop licenses. This initiative aims to streamline the licensing process and encourage greater participation in the liquor business. By permitting a single individual to file several applications, the government hopes to enhance competition and boost revenue generation.

State Excise and Prohibition Director Nishant Kumar stated that under the Liquor Policy 2024-26, there are no restrictions on the number of applications a person can file for participation in the lottery process for shops. Additionally, there are no limits on the number of shops one individual can hold at any given time.

Kumar emphasised that, given these changes, it is essential to simplify the authorisation process to



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enable prospective applicants to file a number of applications and participate in the draw of lots through their representatives.

In this context, the department has released a proforma with ID-based authentication for self-verification, which simplifies the authorization process for applicants. Kumar explained that it is sufficient

to provide details such as the name of the applicant and the name of the authorized person in the prescribed format before submitting it to the authorities. He directed that Prohibition and Excise Officers and Deputy Commissioners across all districts in the state take these points into account and act accordingly.

Kanaka Durga appears as Lalitha Tripura Sundari P:3



Pemmasani outlines plans for AP's progress

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications, Pemmasani Chandrasekhar, has said that the State government led by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu is committed to development and welfare, fulfilling all its election promises.

Speaking at a gathering, 'Aatmiya Sammeelanam', held on the premises of Zilla Parishat High School in Kakumanu village in Guntur district on Sunday, Chandrasekhar expressed his gratitude to the villagers for their overwhelming support in electing the coalition government with a significant majority. Dr Chandrasekhar emphasised the need to address local issues such as the 'Nallamada Drain' and 'Guntur Canal'. He stressed that development efforts must be undertaken to improve these areas.

Addressing concerns related to loan approvals and funding collection, Chandrasekhar assured the public that despite certain challenges, development programmes in



the Guntur Parliament segment would move forward with the cooperation of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. He acknowledged that while matching funds from the central government are available, delays due to the unavailability of state funds must be resolved. "We will ensure that matching funds are ready, and projects will commence without fail," he affirmed. **Continued on Page 2**



Sacred bath offered to Tirumala deities

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

On the second day of Srapana Tirumanjanam, the deities were adorned with garlands and crowns made from a variety of exotic and indigenous fruits, including kiwi and pineapple, at the Ranganayakula Mandapam on Sunday.

After each sacred bath, the processional deities were beautifully decorated with a vibrant assortment of garlands and crowns crafted from

turmeric, 'kuru vettiveru', rose petals, yellow pavitrans, white pearls, golden grapes, sandalwood, and 'Tulasi,' along with the fruits. The sacred Srapanam offered a divine visual treat to devotees around the world.

In recognition of their dedicated service during the ongoing Srivari annual Brahmotsavam, the Vahanam bearers, sanitation workers, and 'melam' staff at the Srivari temple were honoured with 'vastra bahumanam' on Sunday.

All set for 'Maritime Exercise Malabar 2024'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The much-awaited Maritime Exercise Malabar 2024 is set to take place from October 8 to 18, 2024, in Visakhapatnam. Hosted by India, this year's exercise will witness the participation of Australia, Japan, and the United States, further reinforcing maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific regions. Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, highlighted the strategic significance of the event, stating, "Malabar 2024 will demonstrate the collective strength of these four maritime nations and reflects our commitment to ensuring stability and peace in the region."

Exercise Malabar, which began in 1992 as a bilateral drill between the Indian and US navies, has since evolved into a crucial multilateral exercise to enhance



inter mutual understanding, and address shared maritime challenges. This year's exercise will display various naval assets, including guided missile destroyers, multi-purpose frigates, submarines, and aircraft. Australia, Japan, and the United States will

bring in the HMAS Stuart, JS Ariake, and USS Dewey, respectively, along with their accompanying aircraft and helicopters. The main focus of Malabar 2024 will be on complex maritime operations such as anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, and air

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defence exercises. Commander Takahiro Kobayashi of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force emphasised the value of the exercise, stating, "Malabar allows us to share knowledge and enhance our tactical capabilities with like-minded partners. It is a key

step in ensuring the security of sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific."

A Distinguished Visitors' Day is scheduled for October 9, when dignitaries from the participating nations will be hosted by Vice Admiral Pendharkar in Visakhapatnam. A joint press conference will also be held, co-chaired by the heads of delegations. Captain Michael Donaldson of the Royal Australian Navy remarked, "Malabar 2024 promises to be the most comprehensive and ambitious iteration, integrating multiple operational aspects and pushing the boundaries of maritime cooperation."

The exercise will also include Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE), covering topics like special operations, surface, air, and anti-submarine warfare. Special Forces from all four nations will participate, showcasing collaborative efforts to ensure regional security and stability.

Monday Mirchi

JET-SETTING LIFESTYLE FOR SOME, HEARTBURN FOR OTHERS

The buzz in the corridors of power in Telangana is that only the highly privileged in a few departments seem to be in a position to realize their borderless dreams: mainly the Chief Minister's and the Deputy Chief Minister's wings. For, they are the ones always off on fancy trips, including foreign jaunts. And, guess who are tagging along? The evergreen probables: fiscal wizard A Ramakrishna Rao and IT czar Jayesh Ranjan. "It's again them," sighed one official, barely concealing the jealousy of those in his deprived lot. While the Chief Minister went on two trips abroad, the Dy CM went on one recently. "For those of us struggling to get budgets approved, these trips are nothing but a far-off fantasy," is their peeve. Seems like while some are busy catching flights, others are bearing slights!

TOP OFFICIALS SPEAK THEIR MIND ON MINISTER'S FAUX PAS

The whispers in administrative corridors are about the recent searing statements of Minister Konda Surekha that raised the hackles of film personalities and Bharat Rashtra Samithi brass. Normally the babudom takes it lying down even if a neta's faux pas happens to be highly offensive to their fraternal colleagues. But in Surekha's case, even top bureaucrats, despite not having the locus standi, could not resist weighing in with their *dil ki baath*. Smita Sabharwal, known for her candid takes on matters official, did not hold back this time either. Apparently, she was so taken aback by the Minister's comments that she took to X with a pointed post: "How do we eliminate unethical abuse of 'Freedom of Speech' from responsible sources?" If you ask insiders, it is hard to miss the target of her tweet. Some are even wondering whether this could be the start of a series of posts by officials who have suddenly been jolted to become more vocal because of the seriousness of the issue, which, of course is non-official. With the lead reactions popping on X, people are wondering 'What next? Rarely do officials fan the flames when a Minister is going through *agni pariksha* as a woman minister left to her own devices.

PROS THEN AND NOW: TEAM KTR VS TEAM REVANTH

It seems the battle of words in the ongo-

ing war on the political turf is not limited to politicians in or out of power these days. Politicos' PROs too have their trump cards to put down officials who punch beyond their weight. Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's PRO got unsolicited but quite illuminating advice from KTR's team. Recently, Ayodhya Reddy, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's PRO, shared a video in which the CM is shown warning "those trying to use social media for power would end up in jail". But that did not sit well with Mahesh Manikya, KTR's PRO, who could not resist putting things in perspective. Mahesh cheekily responded, recalling how, during a programme for Kaka Venkatswamy, the Chief Minister had similarly talked about his detractors having to "eat jail food". In a riposte, he advised the CM's team to "write some good speeches as we used to... Need a lot of professionalism in Revanth's speeches". For the unversed, Mahesh is not the only one harbouring such thoughts. Insiders still recall with glee the infamous Independence Day speech in which the 'Bakra Nangal Dam in Telangana' gaffe by the Chief Minister left him red-faced on hindsight. The rumour mill has it that BRS working president and former minister KT Rama Rao himself remarked that he would have fired the PRO responsible for such geographical dislocation. The CMO's speechwriters must be wary of the fact that it is not just Opposition bigwigs who are keenly listening to the CM's speeches but also behind-the-scenes teams which are jotting down notes for sending out timely missile-like missives.

HIGH-HANDED SENIOR IPS OFFICERS AWAIT RELIEF FROM HIGH COURT

When it comes to law enforcement, uniformed personnel who take law into their hands and break all canons of dealing with the common people cannot be put on a pedestal and treated differently. This is the beauty of a functioning democracy, however tattered it may be. In Andhra Pradesh, senior law enforcement officials who brazenly violated rules had to knock on the doors of the High Court seeking relief. The IPS officers, PSR Anjaneyulu, Kanti Rana Tata, and Vishal Gunni, accused in the Mumbai actress Kadambari Jatwani illegal detention case, have moved the court seeking anticipatory bail. However, the Court has not taken any decision on their plea for over a fortnight. But the Court meanwhile instructed the law enforcement authorities to refrain from taking any hasty step against the three senior IPS officers till October 15. This has triggered a debate among All India Service officers in the state. Looks like the law will take its course.

--Yours truly

EXPENDITURE ON MATCHBOXES & CANDLES

Special CS refutes false claims on social media

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has strongly refuted claims circulating on social media that ₹23 crore was spent on matchboxes and candles as part of flood relief efforts.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Special Chief Secretary for Revenue, RP Sisodia, condemned the false and baseless allegations. He clarified that such rumours are being spread to tarnish the image of the government and mislead the public.

Sisodia explained that during the recent floods, many areas faced severe power outages, and mobile generators were deployed to provide relief to the affected people at night. He dismissed the claims that ₹23 crore was spent solely on distributing candles and matchboxes, stating that the funds were primarily used for mobile generators. However, he acknowledged that candles and matchboxes were also provided to flood victims as



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part of the relief measures. He urged the public to remain cautious and not fall for such rumours being spread by certain individuals on social media.

PROPOSED MERGER OF SAIL, RINL & NSL

'A strategic move for India's steel industry'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Independent Director of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and a senior BJP leader, Sagi Kasi Viswanatha Raju, has proposed a strategic merger of SAIL, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), and NMDC Steel (NSL). This ambitious proposal aims to create a mega Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), potentially placing India among the top 10 steel producers globally.

In a detailed proposal submitted to the Prime Minister's Office and Niti Aayog, Raju urged for immediate action ahead of a key high-level meeting scheduled for October 8, 2024. The meeting is expected to address the critical issues facing RINL, including financial difficulties and a shortage of raw materials.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Raju highlighted the importance of the merger. "Union Minister for Steel, HD Kumar Swamy, has expressed support for SAIL's takeover of both RINL and NSL, which would



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Although current government policies restrict one public sector unit from acquiring another, Raju believes that relaxing these rules could open the door for the proposed merger. "The merger would not only increase SAIL's production capacity from 20 million tonnes per annum to 50 million tonnes but also help in utilising its raw material access and marketing networks effectively," he explained.

Raju also noted that the Union Government had

already approved SAIL's expansion plans, making the merger a more efficient and timely solution than building new plants. "If approved, this move would not only create substantial employment opportunities but also contribute significantly to the government's GST revenue," he added.

The proposed merger has gained support from BJP State President D Purandeswari and other party leaders, who have urged the Centre to pursue this strategic initiative to ensure RINL's future as a public sector enterprise.

Govt keen to encourage MSMEs: MP Sivanath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

More food business expos should be organised across the State to provide employment to the youth, said Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath. He stated that the government's main objective is to encourage entrepreneurs and MSMEs. The MP was speaking after visiting the Mega Food Business Expo-2024, organised at the SS Convention in Vijayawada on Sunday.

MP Sivanath inaugurated the expo by lighting the ceremonial lamp and inspecting the various food business stalls. He interacted with the stallholders to learn about their products.

The MP appreciated the efforts of 'Creators Event Organisers, who held the event in collaboration with the AP Hotel Associations, AP Caterers Associations, AP Federation of Commerce and Industry, and Vijayawada Chamber of Commerce. He suggested that similar mega food business expos be held across the state to create more employment opportunities for the youth. He emphasised that such expos offer a platform for innovations to reach the public and encourage young people to venture into the food business.

He expressed hope that both large and small business owners would adopt the latest



MP Sivanath emphasised that such expos offer a platform for innovations to reach the public and encourage young people to venture into the food business.

kitchen technologies, which are beneficial not only for hotel management but also for home cooking. MP Sivanath assured the participants that the government would extend full support to businesses facing any challenges.

Creators Event Organisers U Renukadevi, PS Sivakumar, AP Hotel Associations President RV Swamy, AP Caterers Associations President Varadarajulu, AP Federation of Commerce and Industry President V Bhaskara Rao, and Vijayawada Chamber of Commerce President Gaddam Ravi, among others, took part in the programme.

Pemmasani outlines...

Continued from Page 1

The Union Minister outlined plans for various developmental schemes, including improvements to burial grounds, schools, and sanitation facilities in educational institutions, stating that these initiatives are in the pipeline.

He also noted that the State government had to allocate Rs 1,700 crore to address damages caused by recent floods in the district. He expressed regret that had these funds been available earlier, several development projects could have been launched by the party.

Chandrasekhar pledged his funds to establish an RO plant in the Dalit colony, responding to requests from local residents.

Jana Sena Guntur District president Gade Venkateswara Rao, along with leaders from Telugu Desam and BJP, participated in the event alongside the locals.

Jagan consoles YSRCP follower attacked by TDP members

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy consoled party worker Challa Nagaraju over the phone after he was brutally attacked by supporters of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Telukutla village, Palnadu district.

Nagaraju, an active YSRCP member since the last Assembly elections, had served as a polling agent for the party. After the election results, local TDP leaders began threatening him due to political rivalry. Fearing for his safety, Nagaraju moved to Pulipadu.

However, on September 20, while returning from Telukutla after a personal errand,

Nagaraju was ambushed by 10 TDP members near 'Gadidala Vagu' on the village outskirts. Armed with rods and sticks, they assaulted him, breaking both his legs.

He was rushed to Gurazala Government Hospital and later shifted to GBR Hospital, Narasaraopet.

Doctors have indicated that Nagaraju's right leg may require amputation below the knee. Upon learning about the incident, YS Jagan called Nagaraju, enquired about his condition, and wished him a speedy recovery. He assured Nagaraju that the party would support him during his treatment. He also instructed former MLA Kasu Mahesh Reddy to ensure that all necessary medical care is provided to Nagaraju.



Minister Durgesh...

Continued from Page 1

"We were supposed to finish by 31st August, but delays have pushed us back," he said.

The Minister pointed out that "oral instructions" given by the previous government to the contractor led to unplanned changes, causing further delays and cost overruns. To address this, he announced the formation of a committee to investigate the issue and said he would brief Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and present an action plan for quick resolution. Durgesh also discussed the development of tourism along the state's beaches, mentioning that some projects need approvals from the Forest Department, Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), and other agencies. He plans to meet Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan to speed up these clearances.

In a positive development, Durgesh revealed that the Oberoi Group is interested in setting up a Five-Star Hotel near Bhogapuram. "We are working to fast-track this project to attract high-end tourists," he said. He also spoke about plans to use the PRASAD scheme, a central government initiative, to develop key temple tourism projects in Andhra Pradesh. "Our state has great natural beauty and resources. By moving forward with these plans, we can make Andhra Pradesh a top destination for both domestic and international tourists," Durgesh concluded.

India beat Bangladesh...

Continued from Page 1

Varun Chakravarthy (3/31), Mayank Yadav (1/21) and Washington Sundar (1/12) picked up wickets in the middle overs to keep India in total control of the game.

Hardik Pandya too chipped in with a wicket towards the end.

With the bat, Pandya blazed away to an unbeaten 16-ball 39, while Sanju Samson and skipper Suryakumar Yadav both got out after scoring 29.

BRIEF SCORES:

Bangladesh: 127 all out in 19.5 overs (Najmul Hossain Shanto 27, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 35 not out; Arshdeep Singh 3/14, Varun Chakravarthy 3/31).

India: 132/3 in 11.5 overs (Hardik Pandya not out 39, Sanju Samson 29, Suryakumar Yadav 29).

Two US states recognise Bathukamma festival

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two US states in the south-east and North Carolina cities have decided to recognise the Bathukamma festival as an official festival in October.

The states of North Carolina and Georgia and cities like Charlotte and Raleigh have formally declared a Bathukamma Festival Week and Telangana Heritage Week.

In a proclamation they recognized the cultural significance of Bathukamma, a vibrant nine-day floral festival celebrated in Telangana. Mayor Alexander Lyles proclaimed October 3-11, 2024, as "Bathukamma, A Flower Festival and Telangana Heritage Week," highlighting the contributions of the Telugu-speaking community



FILE PHOTO

to Charlotte's cultural diversity and North Carolina's progress.

The Telugu community in these regions has played a key role in enriching local

culture, with Bathukamma symbolising the deep connection between human beings and nature and is marked by dance, flowers and family reunions.

Georgia Governor Brian P. Kemp commended the celebration of Bathukamma and its importance to the cultural heritage of the state.

"The State of Telangana in India with its 5,000-year history is a symbol of cultural diversity and inclusiveness, showcasing India's arts, traditions and religions.

The Telugu-speaking community from Telangana has enriched Georgia's cultural diversity and contributed to its progress in fields like medicine, engineering, politics and community welfare," he said.

Bathukamma Panduga, celebrated from October 15 to 23, 2024, is a vibrant nine-day floral festival that honours the connection between human beings, the earth and water through joyful gatherings and dances.

Kanaka Durga appears as Lalitha Tripura Sundari

Authorities had a tough time providing basic amenities to senior citizens and differently-abled devotees on day 4

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the fourth day of Dasara Navaratri celebrations, goddess Kanaka Durga appeared as Sri Lalitha Tripura Sundari Devi. She is the Echa, Chaitanya Gnyana Shakthi Swaroopini. Lalita means she who plays, all creation, manifestation and dissolution. Lalitha Tripura Sundari means 'The Most Beautiful Girl in the three Worlds'.

She appears enthroned with her left foot upon the Sri Chakra, holding her traditional symbols like sugarcane, flower, noose (pasam), goad (amkusam), and right side with goddess Lakshmi Devi and left side with goddess Saraswathi Devi.

On the fourth day of Dasara Navaratri celebrations atop Indrakiladri hill, devotees in large numbers thronged the temple to have darshan of Sri Lalitha Tripura Sundari Devi. In view of Sunday, the rush was more than expected and the authorities had a tough time catering to the needs of the devotees.

Officials also took care to



Pics: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

arrange hassle-free darshan for VIPs and VVIPs. They acted swiftly using a special app for issuing passes. District Collector Dr G Srijana said that they have been issuing VIP passes in 21 categories. For the convenience of the devotees, the officials did not allow their vehicles on the hill. Those having VIP passes were advised to come to Punnami Ghat.

Meanwhile, scores of VIP devotees, including differently-abled persons, senior citizens and women, faced an

unexpected ordeal on Sunday during their visit to the temple. What should have been a privileged and smooth darshan experience quickly turned into a test of endurance as devotees found themselves stranded due to shortage of transport services.

They were left waiting for more than 30 minutes in the hot sun. Despite holding VIP passes, which are supposed to ensure a hassle-free darshan, these pilgrims were forced to endure harsh conditions, leaving many frustrated and

exhausted.

Temple authorities and police were quick to address the immediate concerns by providing water and buttermilk to help the devotees cope with the heat. Volunteers and police assisted the differently-abled and elderly devotees to reach the main deity in wheelchairs after they reached uphill in government-arranged vehicles. However, the lack of sufficient transportation for the elderly, differently-abled, and VIP devotees remains a critical issue.

AP Red Cross distributes relief aid to flood victims

Kits worth Rs. 10,000 each distributed to 1,100 families

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP Red Cross has distributed relief aid valued at Rs 1.1 crore to alleviate the suffering of flood victims in Vijayawada, the hardest-hit regions following recent devastating Budameru floods. Dr. Sridhar Reddy, chairman of the AP Red Cross, said that the catastrophic floods left lakhs of families stranded, causing severe damage to homes and personal belongings. In response, the AP Red Cross deployed 150 dedicated volunteers to assist in rescue and relief operations, offering basic necessities including water, biscuits, and food to those trapped in waterlogged areas.



Dr Sridhar Reddy explained that to facilitate the rehabilitation process, the organisation conducted a thorough door-to-door survey in New Rajiv Nagar, where they identified approximately 1,100 families, primarily daily labourers, who suffered significant losses. He further explained that on Sunday, relief kits valued at Rs. 10,000 each were distributed to these families at the Red Cross State office in Gandhinagar. Each kit included essential items such as steel utensils,

mosquito nets, and woolen blankets to help restore some semblance of normalcy.

Dr Sridhar Reddy emphasised the organisation's commitment to disaster relief efforts. "We will always be at the forefront of serving victims in times of disaster across the State," he said. He highlighted that, as part of the ongoing rehabilitation programme, aid worth around Rs 80 lakh is being distributed in New Rajiv

Nagar. Looking ahead, plans are in motion to provide tarpaulins and dry ration kits to 1,500 residents in slums and rural areas, many of whom have lost their roofs due to the flooding.

AK Farida, general secretary of AP Red Cross, expressed gratitude to the Indian Red Cross Society, national headquarters, New Delhi, for their rapid response and support in supplying relief materials. He also announced upcoming disaster preparedness awareness programmes, aimed at educating villagers on how to effectively face future calamities through the Youth Red Cross initiative.

Red Cross officials, including Dr C Venkateswara Reddy, treasurer, and district chairpersons Rama Rao, Balaji, Prakash, Shiva Nagendra Reddy, Dasthagiri, Bhadrari Raju, Ravi Prakash, and Ramesh Satyanarayan, were present.

Amaravati Drone Summit-2024 on Oct 22, 23

Spectacular show featuring 5,000 drones

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will inaugurate the highly-anticipated Amaravati Drone Summit-2024 scheduled on October 22 and 23, with the presence of nearly 1,000 delegates from across the country. K Ramamohan Naidu, Minister for Civil Aviation, as special guest, and BC Janardhan Reddy, Minister for Investments and Infrastructure, will also be present.

During a media briefing at the State FiberNet Office in the NTR Administrative Block at Vijayawada on Sunday, S Suresh Kumar, the Secretary of the Investments and Infrastructure Department, announced that the summit aims to position Andhra Pradesh as the 'drone capital of India'. He explained that the Chief Minister's vision is to transform the state into a hub for drone technology, which aligns with the objectives of this summit.

The event will be held at the CK Convention Centre in Mangalagiri, and will feature discussions on global drone technologies and their applications in everyday life and governance. "This summit will not only be a conference but will also aim to develop actionable plans in relation to drone applications," said Suresh Kumar. He highlighted the necessity for analytics related to drone-captured images,



They stated that the summit aims to not only showcase the potential of drone technology but also foster collaboration among universities and organisations engaged in the drone sector.

indicating that current capabilities require improvement, particularly in crisis management situations such as floods.

On the evening of October 22, a spectacular drone show featuring 5,000 drones will take place along the banks of River Krishna, with Suresh Kumar announcing that this will be the largest drone display of its kind in the country. The previous largest show involved just 2,500 drones, making this a landmark event. The public is invited to witness the display free of charge.

Additionally, an exciting Drone Hackathon will be hosted as part of the summit. K

Dinesh Kumar, Chairman and Managing Director of AP Drone Corporation, stated that enthusiasts can register online for participation in the hackathon until October 15. Winners will receive cash prizes of Rs 3 lakh for the first prize, Rs 2 lakh for the second, and Rs 1 lakh for the third prize, which will be awarded by the Chief Minister during the summit's opening ceremony.

The logos for the Amaravati Drone Summit and the Drone Hackathon were unveiled by Suresh Kumar and Dinesh Kumar. Further, the duo launched the website dedicated to the summit's activities, amaravatidronesummit.com.

They stated that the summit aims to not only showcase the potential of drone technology but also foster collaboration among universities and organisations engaged in the drone sector. They added that around 400 representatives from experienced companies in the drone industry expected to participate in the event.

11.5L people affected by floods: CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM leader Ch Baburao has criticised the coalition government for its failure to provide adequate relief to the flood victims. He stated that over 11.5 lakh people across the State have been severely affected by the floods. Baburao condemned Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's comments attributing the floods in Vijayawada to both natural causes and human error, thereby shifting the responsibility onto both the Central and State governments. He emphasised that CM Naidu must honour his promise to compensate all flood victims. Expressing disappointment, Baburao noted that many flood victims have yet to receive their compensation, even after the completion of the enumeration process. He questioned the util-

isation of the Rs 500 crore raised through donations for flood relief and criticised the lack of discussion on the assistance from the Centre.

Baburao further accused both the Central and State governments of neglecting their responsibility to provide justice to the victims and proposed increasing the compensation amount to Rs 50,000 for each flood victim. He called for immediate and long-term measures to address the ongoing hardships faced by those affected.

The CPM leader also remarked that the attention given to the 'Tirupati Laddu' could have been better directed towards assisting those impacted by the floods. He urged for enhanced flood aid, ensuring it reaches all victims, especially those residing in severely affected resettlement colonies.

Sudhakar Babu slams TDP for 'looting sand'

Sand being sold at four times the previous rates

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu came down heavily on TDP coalition parties for 'exploiting the sand resources in the State under the guise of free sand policy'. Speaking to the media at the central office here on Sunday, the former MLA highlighted that the coalition leaders have sold sand at four times the previous rates, filling their pockets while the State's revenue is heavily impacted. He revealed that despite the announcement of free sand, the actual price for a lorry load of sand has skyrocketed to Rs 54,000.

He pointed out that booking sand has become almost

impossible, with the website only functioning at midnight, and during the day, there is no proper service. The stock points across the State are empty, and the supply chain has come to a halt, leaving around 45 lakh construction workers jobless.

He stated that in the previous YSRCP government, Rs 765 crore per year was generated from sand sales, amounting to approximately Rs 3,825 crore in five years. However, since the TDP came to power, they have depleted 45 lakh tonnes of sand within just a month after the election results.

The former MLA also pointed out that the current situa-

tion has led to a severe shortage of sand, affecting not only construction workers but also 36 other professions that rely on the construction industry.

He criticised the government's policy, stating that sand, which used to cost Rs 475 per tonne, is now being sold at more than Rs 3,000 per tonne. Likewise, the price of a tractor load of sand, which used to be Rs 3,000, has risen to Rs 10,000-20,000, while 18 tonnes of sand now costs between Rs 30,000 and Rs 63,000. He also expressed displeasure over the government's actions against those who question the sand policy on social media, stating that fake cases are being filed to harass them.

Collector assures sufficient sand supply

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has assured residents of Visakhapatnam that there is a sufficient supply of sand to meet the daily demand in the district. Addressing the media, the Collector stated that the district requires 3,000 tonnes of sand daily, and arrangements have been made to supply it from various nearby districts.

To curb illegal sand activities, a special task force committee has been formed to monitor and prevent smuggling and unauthorized sales. The Collector also emphasized that sand has been regularly supplied to retail buyers within days of booking. As of now, over 400 tokens have been generated online, and over 300 deliveries have been completed. For bulk bookings, Harendhira Prasad assured

that any technical issues would be resolved promptly. "We are addressing technical glitches, and sand will be supplied within one or two days for bulk orders," he said.

To assist with inquiries and complaints, the Collector announced the establishment of a dedicated help desk and a toll-free number. "We have set up a help desk to resolve any issues. Citizens can contact us at 0891-2590100," he explained.

Starting October 15, the district will receive an additional supply of sand to meet its requirements fully.

"We are implementing special measures to facilitate 24/7 online sand booking, and our staff have been trained accordingly," the Collector said. The press meeting was also attended by Commissioner of Police Dr Shankabratu Bhagchi and Joint Collector K Mayur Ashok.

Cyber Crime unit arrests 18 people

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad City Cyber Crimes unit has conducted a special operation with six teams across various states, including Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan and arrested 18 cyber criminals, including three key masterminds. This operation led to the detection of 10 major cases by the Cyber Crime Police Station. The nature of the cases includes Investment frauds, digital frauds, sextortion frauds, OTP frauds and Insurance frauds.



Spiritual books released

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Every year, as a part of the promotion of Hindu Sanatana Dharma, TTD releases some religious books during Brahmotsavam vahanas. During the procession of Simha Vahanam held on Saturday morning, Bhagavatam - Prasnawali penned by Marella Venkata Sesha Reddy, Haindhava Samskruti-Vaigyanikata by Dr Kappagantula Ramakrishna, Tirumala

Tirupati Kshetra Mahatmyam (Hindi) by Dr Puttaparthi Nagapadmini, and Madontimitta Kodandarama Mahatmyam by Vavilikolanu Subbarao were released.

TTD EO J Syamala Rao and Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary released the books and felicitated the authors.

Annamacharya Project Director Dr Vibhishana Sharma, Sub-Editor Dr Narasimhacharyulu and others were present.

Demand for train from Sec-bad to Goa fulfilled: Min Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister of Coal and Mines, Government of India G Kishan Reddy flagged off the Secunderabad - Vasco - Da - Gama inaugural Express from Secunderabad station on Sunday. Kishan Reddy stated that in the last few years, Telangana has been witness to a host of infrastructural developments pertaining to Railways. He stated that there was a long-pending demand to run an exclusive train to Goa from the capital city region. In order to meet the aspirations of the people, one exclusive and direct express train to Vasco Da Gama from Secunderabad is being introduced for 2 days a week, he said.

He stated that the train provides direct facility to the people of major cities of Hyderabad, Shadnagar, Jadcherla, Mahbubnagar, Gadwal and important places of AP Kurnool, Dhone and Guntakal towards Goa.

NATURAL FARMING PRACTICES

Palnadu SHG women impress US team

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation from the USA, including Keith Agoada, CEO & co-founder of Producers Trust, and Craig Cogut from Pegasus Capital Advisors, visited Palnadu district on Sunday to observe the innovative natural farming practices adopted by Self-Help Group (SHG) women. The delegation expressed admiration for the principles and science behind Natural Farming and praised the significant role played by the women in promoting these sustainable methods.

The team was delighted to witness how farmers are adopting natural farming to generate profits while enhancing health benefits. They noted that farmers earn between Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 per month from just 20 cents of land while maintaining biodiversity and managing pests and diseases naturally. The delegation shared plans to introduce similar farming methods in the USA.



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District Project Manager K Amala Kumari provided an in-depth explanation of Natural Farming principles. The delegation was shown demonstrations of inputs like 'B e e j a m r u t h a m,' 'Dravajeevamrutham,' and 'Neemastram,' which benefit both farmers and the environ-

ment by improving soil health. K. Jyothi, a woman farmer, presented innovative models like Any Time Money (ATM) and Surya Mandala, which involve cultivating 27 different crops, including trap crops, border crops, and leafy vegetables, ensuring consistent income for farmers throughout the year.

The delegation also visited T. Madhavi's A-grade compact block model, which integrates crops such as banana, coconut, papaya, guava, marigold, and various vegetables planted on the bunds. This intercropping model helps paddy farmers earn additional income.

At the Natural Resource

Centre, T. Savitri, leading the SHG, introduced the delegation to the centre's activities. Executive Vice Chairman of RySS, T. Vijay Kumar, suggested establishing similar centres in every village to provide farmers with essential inputs like Jeevamrutham.

The team also toured an A-grade pigeon pea model farm where 5-10 types of intercrops are cultivated, enhancing soil fertility, reducing pest attacks, and improving farmers' livelihoods. In Nagireddypalem village, the delegation visited the Natural Farming Products Centre and interacted with SHG members. They also observed a multi-crop farming system in Brahmanapalli village, where farmer Gurralla Mallikarjuna showcased intercrops such as cluster beans, pearl millet, okra, and green gram. The delegation learned that this approach allows farmers to harvest up to five crops per acre, attracting beneficial insects and reducing pesticide usage.

Do not politicise murder of girl: Home Minister

Assures bereaved family of full support on behalf of govt

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

Home Minister V Anitha urged opposition leaders not to politicise the tragic murder of a seven-year-old girl in Punganur, cautioning them against attempting to gain political mileage from the heinous incident.

Home Minister Anitha, along with Transport Minister M Ramprasad Reddy and Minority Welfare Minister NM Farook, visited Punganur on Sunday to console the grieving family of the deceased girl. The young victim was murdered, and her body was found dumped in a summer storage tank on September 29.

Speaking to the media, Home Minister Anitha assured the bereaved family of full support from the government. She also confirmed that the accused in the case would be severely punished. The Minister noted that 12 special police teams were formed, sniffer dogs were deployed, and clue teams were engaged in the search after the girl was reported missing on September 29. "Sadly, the girl's body was found floating in the summer storage tank," she lamented.

The Home Minister announced the arrest of the



three accused and appreciated the police for resolving the case swiftly. She also shared that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had spoken to the parents of the deceased, offering his condolences and promising all necessary assistance.

Anitha criticised opposition leaders for attempting to politicise the incident. "Several heinous crimes occurred during the YSRCP regime, yet the then Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy did not console the bereaved families," she

remarked, accusing the YSRCP of exploiting the girl's murder for political gain. She clarified that the post-mortem report confirmed the girl was not raped, and no injuries were found on her body.

Transport Minister Ramprasad Reddy condemned the killing as unfortunate, assuring that strict action would be taken against the offenders. He urged the media not to frame the incident in a political light, criticising certain news channels for spreading false information about

rape. He also objected to revealing the victim's name.

Minority Welfare Minister Farook highlighted the support extended by both police and public representatives to the bereaved family, adding that steps were being taken to ensure the accused are rigorously punished. Collector Sumit Kumar, SP Manikantha Chandolu, MLA Shajahan Basha, and former Mayor Kathari Hemalatha were among those who accompanied the Ministers during the visit.

Sand not available in WG district: Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani clarified that sand is currently unavailable in the district.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, along with SP Adnan Nayeem Aashmi, the Collector stated that while there are three lakh tonnes of sand at five desiltation points and 4.20 lakh tonnes in six open reaches under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) in the district, restrictions imposed by the National Green Tribunal are in place. A letter has been sent to the State Government regarding the issue.

The Collector announced that from October 16, 108 open reaches, 28 desiltation points, and 48 semi-desiltation points across the State will start providing free sand. She urged those in need of sand to apply online through the 'https://www.sand.ap.gov.in'



portal. To address technical issues, six staff members have been stationed at the Facilitation Centre in the District Collectorate.

The public can also contact the helpline numbers 93914 45753, 86882 91997, 81869 39223, or 95501 75144 for assistance with booking.

Collector Nagarani clarified that while the sand is free, consumers will only need to pay maintenance and transportation charges.

For transporting 18 to 20 tonnes of sand from neighbouring districts via a 10-tyre lorry, the cost is Rs. 13,660. She urged consumers to report

any overcharging to the Facilitation Centre.

SP Adnan Nayeem Aashmi warned that strict action will be taken against illegal sand transporters. He encouraged consumers to report any exorbitant pricing to the police for immediate action.

Joint Collector Rahul Kumar Reddy assured that steps are in place to ensure sand delivery to homes after online booking. If any issues arise, the toll-free number will provide prompt resolution. DRO J Uday Bhaskar Rao, ASP V Bhima Rao, Mines AD D Ravi Prasad, and other officials were present at the press meet.

20 injured as private bus overturns

PNS ■ NALGONDA

A private bus carrying 35 passengers overturned on Saturday night in Nalgonda, resulting in injuries to 20 people. The condition of the two of the injured is stated to be critical.

The accident occurred when the bus driver attempted to go around a barricade at a construction site on Marriguda bypass, leading to the driver losing control of steering. Local residents quickly came to the rescue of the passengers trapped in the bus. The local people helped the people extricated themselves from the ill-fate bus and called an ambulance to ferry them to hospital.

Emergency services and police arrived promptly to manage the situation and clear the traffic.

Authorities are currently investigating the circumstances surrounding the incident to determine the exact cause and any potential negligence involved.

Elaborate arrangements for 'Garuda Seva': TTD EO

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

On the fifth evening of the ongoing annual Brahmothsavams, Sri Malayappa Swamy will take a celestial ride on Garuda Vahanam from 6.30pm to 11pm on October 8, said TTD EO J Syamal Rao.

Addressing the media at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Sunday evening, the EO, along with SP Subbarayudu, said around two lakh devotees can wait in the galleries. Devotees waiting on Inner Ring Road and Outer Ring Road for darshan of Garuda Seva will be given darshan through Supatham,

South West Corner, Govindanilayam North West Gate and North East Gate. Necessary sign boards will be arranged at all the points for their convenience, he said, appealing to the devotees not to carry luggage.

Two-wheelers on Tirumala Ghat roads will be curbed from 9 pm on Monday to 6 am on Wednesday, and the public are requested to use public transportation. Steps have been taken to transport around three lakh people through 3,000 trips in RTC buses as against 2,000 last year.

"RTC buses have been arranged to go to Tirumala from parking places in

Tirupati, Kadapa, Chittoor and Srikalahasti routes also. We are also providing QR codes for identifying the parking spots with ease," he said.

Enough parking arrangements for 9,000 vehicles in 25 spots have been made including Balajinagar, opposite Kautsubhram, Rambhagicha bus stand and Mullagunta areas in Tirumala. As many as 2,000 two-wheelers can be parked at Alipiri old checkpoint in Tirupati, and four-wheelers at Vinayaknagar quarters, Nehru Municipal Park, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Devaloka and at Srivari Mettu.

Mobile clinics have been set up, with 12 ambulances, doc-

tors and paramedical staff at four corners of Mada streets.

As many as 28 large digital screens have been installed in Mada Streets, museum, Annahaswamy Rest House, Annadanam Complex, Rambhagecha Rest House, Filter House and other places. Besides 1,250 TTD cops, 5,000 police personnel and Octopus and Grey Hounds have been deployed. Elaborate arrangements for Annaspradam and water have been made and sri vari sevaks will offer services to pilgrims in all galleries and outside.

Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, JEO Goutami and others were also present.

'Engineers must consider Visvesvaraya as their model'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that engineers are not those who build roads, dig canals and build buildings. Real engineers are those who guard public funds.

"Engineers should consider Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya as their role model and not the engineers who executed the Kaleshwaram Project. KCR said that everything was his before the construction of the Kaleshwaram Project. After its collapse, KCR said it was an act of treason. If it was treason, it should be raised. But how did it go down? When his fraud came to light KCR tried to deceive the public," he said.

Addressing the 'Koluva Panduga'

programme on Sunday at Shilpakala Vedika, Venkat said that when KCR was the Chief Minister, he did not come to the secretariat even 10 times in 10 years. But our Chief Minister is coming to the secretariat every day and is checking government programmes.

"I request you to notice the difference between the government of words of those days and our government that works. You have got jobs because of the Congress government. Tomorrow morning opposition leaders will say that they gave the jobs and we just issued appointment orders. I request you all to ask them why they have not given copies of appointment orders for two years," he said. Venkat said the Congress government is a people's government, is accessible to all and is behaving responsibly towards the unemployed.

He said that in a country where great engineers like Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya were born, it is sad that engineers who are supposed to be on the site and build the country make mistakes and have to appear before inquiry commissions.

Engineers were frustrated by the ill-advised decisions of the BRS government. The former Chief Minister who considered himself the Chief Engineer built projects and it collapsed in three years, he said.

The R&B Minister said the Nagarjuna Sagar Project which we built 70 years ago is still intact. Those days there was no proper technology, not enough engineers, not enough cranes, and no vehicles. But the project built in those days when big boulders used to be transported by labourers is still functioning, he added.

Man stabs younger brother to death

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In a shocking incident, a man fatally stabbed his younger brother following a property dispute at P Mallavaram village in Tallarevu Mandal on Sunday, police reported.

The Korangi police, who have registered a case, identified the deceased as Vanapalli Nookaraju (44) and the accused as Ventapalli Yedukondalu (46). Yedukondalu reportedly went to the police station, surrendered with the weapon, and confessed to the crime. The body has been sent to the Kakinada Government General Hospital for a post-mortem examination, pending further investigation, the police added.

Take precautions against burglaries, people told

PNS ■ ELURU

Superintendent of Police (SP) K Pratap Shiva Kishore has urged the public to be cautious about burglaries and thefts during the upcoming Dasara and Diwali festivals, especially when leaving town. In a statement issued on Sunday, the SP emphasised that ensuring the safety of citizens is the police department's priority.

The SP appealed to residents to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions to avoid thefts during the holiday season. He advised those planning to visit their native places during Dussehra to inform the nearest police station. The police will monitor locked houses through night patrols and make use of the Locked House Monitoring System (LHMS) to prevent burglaries.



He also recommended that people store their valuables, such as cash and gold, in secure locations and consider installing CCTV cameras at home. "CCTV footage should be shared with the police control room, and expensive items should be kept in bank lockers," the SP suggested.

He further urged people to report any suspicious activities or strangers near locked houses to the nearest police station or dial 112 for assistance.

The SP advised, "If strangers visit your home seeking information while family members are away, do not trust them blindly. Inform the elders and keep your neighbours informed about your absence. Take their help in looking after your house, and keep their contact numbers handy. Also, leave a light on in one of the rooms when you go out of town."

Cybercrime warning

The SP also warned the public about cybercrimes, which tend to increase during the festive season. He cautioned people not to click on blue links in unsolicited messages and to be wary of fake IDs created by cybercriminals to scam individuals. In case of any cybercrime incident, the public is advised to call 1930 immediately for assistance.

CREDAI disperses seed balls on Thotlakonda Hill

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The CREDAI Visakhapatnam Chapter, in partnership with Vizag Runners, held a seed ball dispersal event on Thotlakonda Hill on Sunday. This initiative, part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, seeks to increase greenery and contribute to the restoration of the local ecosystem.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from CREDAI members, all driven by a shared commitment to environmental conservation. Seed balls containing a variety of native plant species were prepared and scattered across the area to support ongoing reforestation efforts.



CREDAI members spoke about the initiative. "Today's initiative is not just about planting trees; it's about fostering a culture of sustainability in our community. By using seed balls, we are making it easier for plants to take root and flourish, contributing to the ecological balance of our environment."

Participants actively engaged in the dispersal, scattering seed balls across designated areas of Thotlakonda Hill, a site renowned for its rich biodiversity. The initiative

is expected to boost reforestation.

District Forest Officer Shanthi Swaroop commended CREDAI for its commitment to environmental conservation. "This effort will significantly enhance Visakhapatnam's green cover, and I hope more organisations follow CREDAI's lead," Swaroop remarked. He stressed the importance of collective action in creating a greener city and urged collaboration between civic bodies, environmental groups, and citizens to transform the region into a sustainable, eco-friendly urban area for future generations.

Borra Caves to be developed as tourist hub, says Minister

PNS ■ PADERU

Minister for Tourism Kandula Durgesh has pledged to develop the renowned Borra Caves into a major tourist hub in the State. The Minister visited the caves, located in the Araku constituency of ASR district, on Sunday.

Speaking to the media, the Minister stated that the tourism department would collaborate with the forest department to transform the Borra Caves into a leading tourist destination. Expressing concern over the neglect of resorts at the tourist spot during the previous regime, he assured that these resorts would be renovated to boost tourism. He further lamented that the tourism sector in the State had been crippled due to the apathy of the previous government.

Highlighting the rich natural beauty, traditions, and culture of the tribal communities in Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district, the Minister remarked that the district has become synonymous with tourism in Andhra Pradesh.

Durgesh also reviewed the local projects to be undertaken ahead of the upcoming tourism season, emphasising the need to develop tourist spots to attract more visitors.

Following his visit to Yatri



Niwās and other tourist centres managed by the AP Tourism Development Corporation in Visakhapatnam, the Minister inspected development works at Jungle Bells in the Tyda region. He criticised the previous government for its irregularities and poor decisions, which have left the once-magnificent Jungle Bells resorts in disrepair.

The Minister questioned the tourism officials of the previous YSRCP government, stating that instead of criticising Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan, they should have focused on the development of the Jungle Bells resorts, which are now unfit for accommodation due to the damage to the rooms.

Retail price of tomato shoots up to Rs 100 a kg

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tomatoes are being sold at Rs 100 in retail market, increasing its price by Rs 20 per kg within 48 hours. The increased prices of tomatoes have affected the poor and middle classes who are already peeved with the increased prices of onions.

Twenty days ago, a kg of tomatoes were sold between Rs 30 and 40 a kg in the domestic market. Five days ago, their prices were jacked up to Rs 60 a kg. The wholesale traders sell tomatoes at Rs 80 a kg to retail traders who, in turn, sell the tomatoes to customers at Rs 100 a kg.

The increase in price of tomato is attributed to shortage of tomato due to shrinking of area under the crop. Because of the extreme variation in prices of tomatoes, the farmers are not coming forward to cultivate tomatoes. Therefore, the traders have to import tomatoes from other states like AP and Karnataka. Four or five months ago, the local traders imported tomatoes from Nizamabad and Medak districts. The recent heavy rains have damaged tomato crop, suspending import of tomatoes from the two districts.

The import of tomatoes from Kalyandurgam and Madanapalli in Andhra Pradesh has also been suspended because of the same reasons.

Minister distributes transponders to fishing boat owners

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Mines and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, on Sunday distributed communication devices, including transponders, to fishermen owning mechanised boats.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister emphasised the government's commitment to ensuring the safety of fishermen while they venture into the sea. He announced that transponders equipped with communication systems are being provided to owners of both mechanised and motorised boats, and assured that all other fishermen would receive these devices soon.

"The device is highly beneficial as it allows fishermen to locate nearby boats in case of technical issues and exchange communication with other boatmen for assistance,"



explained Kollu Ravindra. He added that the device would also help identify fish-rich areas in the sea.

The Minister further highlighted that the transponder, which operates through satellite and costs around ₹37,000, is being provided free of cost. The central government is covering 60% of the cost, while the State Government is bear-

ing the remaining 40%.

Criticising the previous YSRCP regime, Kollu Ravindra claimed that fishermen were not provided with necessary resources such as fishing nets or boats. He noted that the current government, led by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, has taken significant steps for the welfare of fishermen.

He also revealed that mea-

sures are being taken to establish common facility centres across the State for fishermen's livelihoods. Additionally, the government will soon provide a hunting ban stipend and pensions for fishermen above 50 years of age.

Former MLA Ravi Venkateswara Rao, District Fisheries Cooperative Society president K. Naga Ramesh,

ACROSS THE STATES



No meat, liquor within Maha Kumbh periphery: UP CM

Sale and consumption of meat and liquor will be strictly prohibited within the periphery of Maha Kumbh Mela area, Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday. Adityanath made the announcement in a meeting he held with representatives of 13 Akharas, Khak Chowk, Dandi Bara, and Acharya Bara. According to a press release, the CM said it is necessary to impose the ban in view of the sentiments of the Sanatan society. He said the government is making efforts to clean the rivers, but the cooperation of the sadhu community is also expected. Adityanath said land will soon be reserved in Prayagraj for the 'samadhi' of the sadhus who will attain 'salvation' during the Maha Kumbh. He requested the sadhus to not allow anyone to stay in their ashrams until they are duly verified. After landing at the helipad at Parade, the CM reached Sangam by motor boat, where he worshipped the Ganga-Yamuna



Muslim cleric asks his community to keep off garba

A Muslim cleric in Madhya Pradesh's Rattlam city has appealed to his community members to stay away from garba (folk dance) events during the ongoing Navratri festival, stating that it goes against their faith. "I request Muslim young people, mothers, sisters and daughters not to visit fairs and watch garba events. Instead, I call upon you to stay at home keeping in mind the situation," said 'Shahar Qazi' (city Muslim chief cleric) Syed Ahmed Ali in a written message to his community. Such activities are forbidden in Islam, he said. The cleric told PTI on Sunday that he made the request "keeping in mind the current situation". In Rattlam city, the organisers of many garba events have banned the entry of non-Hindus at their venues. They have also put up banners at entry points conveying the decision. Meanwhile, several women police personnel on two-wheelers have been patrolling the areas around garba venues to ensure incident-free Navratri celebrations, a senior official said.



5 killed as dumper rams bikes in Rajasthan's Dausa

A dumper rammed into three motorcycles in Dausa district of Rajasthan, killing five people and injuring 10 others on Sunday, police said. The incident took place in Lalsot at around 11.30 am, SHO of Lalsot police station Mahavir Singh said, adding initial investigation found that the dumper hit the motorcycles after its brakes failed. He said four of the five deceased have been identified as Laxmi Mahawar (7), Mahesh Chandra Sharma (45), Ram Hari Yogi (42) and Revad Mal Mahawar (40), while efforts are being made to identify the fifth victim, a woman. The injured have been admitted to a hospital. The SHO said four people including an unidentified woman died on the spot while Revad Mal Mahawar died during treatment in Dausa. He said that after the postmortem, the bodies were handed over to their family members. Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagde and Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel Khushwant expressed grief over the accident and also wished for the speedy recovery of the injured.

'UN like 'old company', not entirely keeping up with market'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday took a critical view of the United Nations, saying it was "like an old company", not entirely keeping up with the market but occupying the space. During an interaction at the Kautilya Economic Conclave here, he also said that two very serious conflicts are going on in the world. "And where is the UN on them, essentially a bystander," the minister said.



In response to a query on the possible outcome of the US elections, he said the US actually has "made a shift", geopolitically and in its economic outlook, and irrespective of the outcomes in November, many of these trends will "intensify" in the days to come. Jaishankar took part in the interactive session on 'India and the Globe' and spoke of India's role and challenges amid changing global dynamics. "So, we are both a lifting tide and a bit of paradoxical one, a ballast as well," Jaishankar said as he enumerated some of the steps India has taken to help

other countries, including its neighbours such as Sri Lanka. Asked about his upcoming visit to Pakistan to attend a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), he again sought to rule out any bilateral talks with his Pakistani counterpart. "I am going there for a certain job, a certain responsibility. And, I take my responsibilities seriously. So, I am going there to represent India at the SCO meeting, and that is what I am going to do," Jaishankar said. At an event on Saturday, the external affairs minister

said that he was going to Islamabad for a "multilateral event" and not to discuss India-Pakistan relations. In his response to a query on the United Nations' role amid the changing global scenario, he took a rather critical view of the world body that was born in 1945 after the Second World War. Initially, it had 50 countries, which has grown over these years to nearly four times.

"The UN is in a way like an old company, not entirely keeping up with the market, but occupying the space. And, when it's behind times, in this world you have start-ups and innovations, so different people start doing their own things," Jaishankar said. "So, what you have today is that you have a UN at the end, however suboptimal in functioning, it is still the only multilateral game in town," he added. "But, when it doesn't step up on key issues, countries figure out their own ways of doing it. For example, let's take the last five-10 years, probably the biggest thing that happened in our life was Covid. Now, what did the UN do on Covid? I think the answer is -- not very much," the minister said.

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BYPOLLS TO 10 SEATS

INDIA bloc's first major test in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bypolls to 10 assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh will be a litmus test for the INDIA bloc's unity after the group's success in the recent Lok Sabha polls when they won more than 40 seats, significantly contributing to the BJP's failure to win a simple majority in parliament. However, the two INDIA bloc allies in Uttar Pradesh -- Samajwadi Party and Congress -- have not been able to firm-up a seat-sharing pact for the bypolls even though the Congress has staked claims to contest five of the 10 seats, a proposition the SP may not agree with. Leaders from both the parties say their aim is to defeat the BJP, and they are confident they would contest the bypolls together.



Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai told PTI, "The party is holding 'Samvidhan Bachao Sammelan' (save Constitution conferences) on all 10 assembly seats that are going to polls. Two such conferences have already been held. We have appointed in-charges and observers on all the 10 seats and ground work is on." The assembly seats where bypolls are due are: Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Karhal (Mainpuri), Milkpur (Ayodhya), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), Ghaziabad, Majhawan (Mirzapur), Sishamau (Kanpur city), Khair (Aligarh), Phulpur (Prayagraj) and Kundarki (Moradabad).

Two persons, identified as Amit Chaturvedi (57) and Sanyal Prakash Bane (40), were arrested during the raid, it said. During their preliminary interrogation, it came to light that Bane was earlier arrested in 2017 in a MD drug seizure case at Amboli in Maharashtra and served five years in jail.

Drugs worth Rs 1,814 cr seized from Bhopal factory; 2 held

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Authorities have seized mephedrone (MD) drug valued at Rs 1,814 crore and its raw materials from a factory on the outskirts of Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal and arrested two persons in this connection, officials said on Sunday. Total 907.09 kg of mephedrone, both in solid and liquid forms, was seized in the raid and search operation carried out jointly by the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Delhi, at the factory located in Bagroda industrial estate near Bhopal on Saturday, they said.



This is the largest illegal factory ever busted by the Gujarat ATS. The unit had the capacity to manufacture 25 kg of MD drug per day, the ATS said in a statement. A process was underway to manufacture a large amount of the contra-

band when the raid was carried out, it said. During the operation, authorities seized 907.09 kg of mephedrone, both in solid and liquid forms, with an estimated value of Rs 1,814.18 crore in the international market, the ATS said.

CBI, ED, Police don't 'arrest' people through video calls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI, police, customs, ED or judges do not arrest people through video calls, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) said in a public advisory issued in view of the rising cases of 'digital arrest' crimes in the country. Terming it a scam, the federal cyber security agency cautioned people against falling victim to such crimes committed using the Internet. "Don't Panic, Stay Alert. CBI/Police/Customs/ED/Judges DO NOT arrest you on video call," stated the advisory issued on Saturday. The advisory depicted the logos

Asserts Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre amid digital arrests



of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Skype to showcase that calls for such scams are made using such platforms. These social media platforms

have said in the past that they are coordinating with cyber security agencies of the government to provide users enhanced safety against such crimes. The I4C urged people to report such crimes at the central helpline number 1930 or the website -- www.cyber-crime.gov.in. Digital arrest is the name given to a cyber crime technique where fraudsters send an SMS or make video calls to a person posing as law enforcement agency officials fraudulently claiming that the individual or his close

family members have been caught by a government investigative agency in a criminal activity like drugs trafficking or money laundering. The cyber criminal subsequently confines the person to their premises by asking them to keep their mobile phone cameras on as part of a 'digital arrest' and then seek money through online transfer to bail the victim out of this situation. A good number of these new-age cyber crimes are virtually reported every day from various parts of the country.

Register Kultuli case under POCSO Act

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday directed the police to register the alleged rape-murder case of a 10-year-old girl in South 24 Parganas district under the POCSO Act, and ensure that the culprits get capital punishment within three months. Her direction came on a day when Calcutta High Court ordered that the post-mortem examination of the schoolgirl be conducted at AIIMS Kalyani

Bengal CM directs Police



on Monday morning in the presence of the additional chief judicial magistrate of Baruipur court. The 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped and murdered while returning to her Joynagar

home after attending her tuition classes on Saturday. Justice Tirthankar Ghosh, while hearing a petition filed by the girl's parents on Sunday, directed that if AIIMS Kalyani lacks the necessary infrastructure to conduct the post-mortem examination, it should be carried out at Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial (JNM) Hospital, also located in Kalyani, the court said.



BJP forming govt for third time in Haryana, says CM

Rejects exit poll predictions

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Rejecting exit poll predictions, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday claimed his party BJP will form the government in the state with full majority for a third time when the results are announced on October 8. The Congress will blame the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for their defeat, he said, attacking the opposition party, which is ahead in the race, according to most exit polls. Replying to a question about the exit polls predicting a Congress win, Saini said, "On October 8, we are going to form the government."

He said, "8 tareekh ko janata degi jawab, aur yeh (Congress) kahenge EVM hai kharab (People will have their say on October 8, and they -- Congress -- will blame the EVMs)."



Kejriwal dares PM to provide free electricity in NDA-ruled states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal Sunday touted subsidised services in Delhi like education and healthcare as his 'six revris' for the people and challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to implement a free power scheme in the states ruled by the BJP-led NDA. The former Delhi chief minister, addressing his second 'Janta Ki Adalat' rally at Chhatrasal stadium, said he would campaign for Modi in the Delhi Assembly polls in February if he announced free electricity in "22 states" ruled by the National Democratic Alliance. The "double engine" governments of the BJP are losing steam across the coun-

try, he said in a blistering attack on Modi and predicted that the party was going to lose the Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir polls.

"The people of the country have understood that double-engine government means inflation, unemployment and corruption. Their double engine developed a snag in the Lok Sabha polls. Now, the second engine is also going away from the states," he said referring to the Assembly polls lost by the BJP. Showing a packet of 'revri' (a sweet), Kejriwal claimed that if the BJP was voted to power in the Delhi Assembly polls in February, free services like electricity, water, bus ride for women and pilgrimage of the elderly would end.

Modi's 'stale lectures' cannot gloss over 'failures': Kharage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharage on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the state of the economy, saying his "stale lectures" repeating the same old spins cannot gloss over his "outright failures" affecting every aspect of the country's economy. "Modinomics is a curse to India's economy," he said on X, raising issues like household indebtedness, price rise and the manufacturing sector's woes, and claimed that "Make in India



has spectacularly failed". "Narendra Modi ji, your stale lectures repeating the same old spins cannot gloss over your outright failures affecting every aspect of India's economy!" he said. Kharage said household liabilities/indebtedness has grown

by a whopping 241 per cent from 2013-14 to 2022-23 in actual terms. Household debt as a percentage of GDP is at an all-time high of 40 per cent, he said. Kharage pointed out that household savings are at a 50-year low and that since the COVID-19 pandemic, the consumption of Indian families is more than their income. "The cost of home-cooked Veg Thali increased by 11 per cent in September 2024 compared to last year. BJP imposed price rise and destruction of unorganised sector is responsible for this mess!" he said.

Removal of an elected public representative should not be treated lightly, especially when it concerns women belonging to rural areas, the Supreme Court has said as it set aside an order for removal of a woman sarpanch in a Maharashtra village. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan termed the matter as a classic case where the residents of the village could not reconcile with the fact that a woman was elected to the office of the

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REMOVAL OF ELECTED WOMAN REPRESENTATIVE

Should not be treated lightly, says SC



sarpanch. The top court observed that it was a case where villagers were unable to come to terms with the reality that a female sarpanch would make decisions on their

behalf and that they would have to abide by her directions. "This scenario gets further exacerbated when we as a country are attempting to realise the progressive

goal of gender parity and women empowerment across all spheres, including public offices and most importantly adequate women representative in elected bodies, such instances at the grass-root level cast a heavy shadow on any headway that we may have achieved," the bench observed in its September 27 order.

Underlining that it must be acknowledged that these women, who succeed in occupying such public offices, do so only after significant struggle, the bench said, "All that we would like to reiter-

ate is that the matter of removal of an elected public representative should not be treated so lightly, especially when it concerns women belonging to rural areas". The bench was dealing with a plea of Manish Ravindra Panpatil, an elected sarpanch of gram panchayat, Vichkheda situated in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra. She was ordered to be removed from her post after a complaint by fellow villagers that she was allegedly residing with her mother-in-law in a house constructed on government land.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Change on the cards

Exit polls predict change in Haryana and a hung assembly in J and K; if true, would indicate Indian politics is in transition

Exit polls from the state elections in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir are indicating a decisive win for the Congress in Haryana and a hung assembly in Jammu and Kashmir. As these predictions dominate political discourse, they offer a glimpse into possible power shifts in these two critical regions. In Haryana, the exit polls suggest that the Congress is set to reclaim power, ousting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government, which has been in office since 2014. If these predictions hold true, it would also underscore the growing discontent among Haryana's electorate, particularly farmers and rural voters, who have been dissatisfied with the BJP's handling of agricultural reforms and the aftermath of the 2020 farmers' protests. The Congress, capitalising on this unrest, appears to have successfully mobilised voters, especially in the rural areas and among the Jat community. Meanwhile, in Jammu and Kashmir, exit polls point towards a hung assembly, signalling the challenges of forming a stable government in the Union Territory. With no single party projected to secure a majority, political maneuvering and coalition-building will become crucial in the coming weeks. The fractured verdict reflects the complexity of the region's political landscape post the revocation of Article 370 in 2019. The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) is expected to emerge as a significant player, but the BJP has also made inroads, particularly in the Jammu region. So not only numbers but post-result alliances would decide the formation of the government. Indeed, a hung assembly could lead to prolonged negotiations and possibly a fragile coalition, underscoring the political uncertainty that has



plagued the region in recent years.

A Congress victory in Haryana could be a defining moment in national politics. It would signal that the BJP's stronghold in the Hindi heartland is weakening and Jats (who have significant presence in western UP) are returning to Congress fold and non-Jats — upper castes — the traditional BJP voters are also have also splitted. Congress couldn't be happier as it could also galvanise Congress supporters across other northern states, particularly Rajasthan and Punjab, where state elections are due soon. But it would have a daunting task of keeping the rebels happy as they could turn the tables. In contrast, the outcome in Jammu and Kashmir—if a hung assembly materializes—could deepen political instability in the Union Territory. A coalition government would have to balance the diverse and often conflicting interests of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, complicating governance. Moreover, this result could prompt national parties, particularly the BJP, to reassess their strategies in sensitive regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where identity politics and security concerns dominate. However, as with all exit polls, it's important to approach these predictions with skepticism, given how they have been inaccurate in past elections.

PICTALK



Artistes take part in 'Garba', in Ahmedabad

Why 'Make in India' can be a game changer



ANURAG SAXENA

By fostering indigenous innovation and cutting-edge technology, India is challenging long-held economic paradigms and rewriting its own narrative on the world stage

For centuries, Western nations have reaped the rewards of their focus on innovation, intellectual property (IP), and the relentless pursuit of technological advancement. By glorifying creation, often over manufacturing and service, these nations have not only monetised their inventions but also exported their ideas globally, establishing themselves as economic powerhouses. The United States, for instance, transformed industries through disruptive technologies like the internet, pharmaceuticals, and aerospace, creating global demand for their products and services. Similarly, European nations have led in sectors like infrastructure (think about the economic advantage of railroads), automotive engineering and luxury goods, where innovation and IP are at the core of their global dominance. In contrast, economies like India and China historically anchored their growth on manufacturing and services—both positioned lower on the value-addition spectrum. This approach, while effective for driving industrialisation and job creation, did not prioritise innovation or IP creation, the intellectual asset that is monetizable, leaving these nations as consumers rather than creators of advanced technologies. China, however, has broken away from this model in recent years, making massive investments in innovation, intellectual property, and tech platforms. The country has developed cutting-edge technologies in fields like telecommunications, social media, and gaming, exemplified by global giants such as Huawei, TikTok, and Tencent. These efforts have not only strengthened China's domestic economy, positioned it as a formidable global exporter, and given it access to priceless data from across the world. India, on the other hand, followed a different trajectory. Instead of focusing on production and technology creation, India became synonymous with contact centres, Global Capability Centers



(GCCs), and IT services. This positioning earned India the moniker of the "backroom of the world," a role that, while economically beneficial, left the nation lagging in terms of innovation and high-value technology creation. While India excelled in providing services, it often supported the innovation and product development efforts of other nations rather than leading them. However, the past decade has witnessed a significant shift in India's global stance. India has emerged as a geopolitical force, flexing its muscles in various domains. Diplomatically, India has taken a more assertive position on the global stage, engaging in strategic partnerships with major powers while maintaining its autonomy in international affairs. In the geopolitical arena, India has strengthened its defence capabilities and has been pivotal in initiatives like the Quad, countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. On the trade front, India has renegotiated trade deals and is increasingly seen as a critical player in global supply chains, particularly in the wake of global disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This newfound



INDIA HAS EMERGED AS A GEOPOLITICAL FORCE, FLEXING ITS MUSCLES IN VARIOUS DOMAINS. DIPLOMATICALLY, INDIA HAS TAKEN A MORE ASSERTIVE POSITION ON THE GLOBAL STAGE, ENGAGING IN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH MAJOR POWERS WHILE MAINTAINING ITS AUTONOMY IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

assertiveness underscores why India's current focus on "Create in India" is both timely and strategically crucial. By fostering a culture of innovation and supporting the development of indigenous technologies, India is positioning itself to dominate the next century, both economically and in terms of soft power. Economically, a focus on creation will enable India to move up the value chain, generating higher returns on its intellectual assets and reducing its dependency on foreign technologies. In terms of soft power, leading in fields such as media and entertainment will allow India to shape its narrative, instead of continually reacting to distorted Western narratives. When PM Narendra Modi made the call, "Let us together start a 'Create in India' movement," not everyone understood its second and third-order effects, especially the ramifications on narrative-correction, and exporting our civilizational ideas globally. The "technologies" of Eastman colour and vinyl records helped America prop its heroes and rockstars. The era of XR and gaming will help India prop ours. The Ministry of Information and

Broadcasting recently announced the 'Create in India Challenge' under the aegis of World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025; a first-of-its-kind event showcasing the future of our AVGC sector to the world. This broad-spectrum challenge showcases the best of our talent across 25 types of content and games. India needs more of these visible celebrations. It's time the world saw our creativity and our ambition. However, to fully unlock this potential, India must also invest heavily. The AVGC sector represents the future of digital interaction and entertainment. Unlocking this future needs skill development, investment pipelines, platforms that scale, a progressive regulatory regime, and much more. It is indeed a tall order, but by establishing the Gangotri here, India can ensure its leadership in the global economy and narrative for years to come. (The writer is a policy affairs expert. He is a nominated member of the National Tourism Advisory Council, Govt. of India and Board Member, Centre for Insolvency and Financial Laws; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SECULAR CREDENTIALS INTACT

Madam — Apropos of the editorial 'How secular in India' (October 5) based on the report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, certain ground realities of the present circumstances emanating from Israel-Hamas war wrapping Lebanon, Iran and Syria, extremist groups of Pakistan operating in India, terrorist attacks from across the border and coup in Bangladesh, which are directly boiling the Indian Muslims against Israel, US etc, can't be factored for any judgment by a US group. It is true that there are serious violations of human rights and religious freedom in the US. India has very peculiar problems relating to religious issues. The Waqf Act has embroiled the sentiments on possession of their lands and temples, the insurgency from Bangladesh and Myanmar have changed the demography of the North East, Bengal and other bordering states. Our neighbourhood has been troubled with army coups, dictatorships, religious violence against Hindus and anti-India governments. Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar are failing in economies with unstable governments. Hindus are restive not against Muslims and minorities but against indiscriminate appeasement politics. These aspects have not been factored in the report of USCIRF. It is surprising & unfortunate, highly biased and discriminatory that such organisations don't carry out similar investigations and publish reports on Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria and China. However, such extraneous reports are mostly inconsequential in Indian politics. Such reports don't help Muslims too. US should also denounce and discredit such organisations and their reports. Such reports vitiolate diplomatic relations and mutual cooperation. Vinod Johri | Delhi

Address the demands of Ladakh



The people of Ladakh are deeply concerned about pressing environmental issues, regional affairs, and the lack of essential services, all of which continue to plague the region. The key issues they are raising include the demand for tribal status under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, full-fledged statehood, separate parliamentary constituencies for Leh and Kargil, and the establishment of a Public Service Commission. Sadly, even as they did 21

days fasting protest, getting no results they began another Delhi Chalo Padyatra for their rightful claims, despite being totally peaceful protest, were detained by the Delhi police, sparking outrage across the country.

It is alarming to see the government's apathy and the Indian media's strange silence on such critical matters. Ladakh is an integral part of India, and its people deserve to be treated with the same respect and consideration as any other citizens. Their development is India's development, and their issues must be addressed without further delay. I urge the government to fulfill the demands of the people of Ladakh promptly and work towards ensuring their welfare and dignity. Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

JUSTICE RESTORED

Madam— The recent Supreme Court decision against prejudice based on caste in jails is a major step towards ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and equality. But how can we make sure that every state implements these changes in an effective way? Concerns regarding the extent of social injustice are raised by the practices from the colonial past that remain present in jail manuals. What steps will be implemented to monitor compliance and permanently end this prejudiced conduct as we work towards a more equal system? The Court's order is an important first step, but more work needs to be done. Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

A BETRAYAL OF TRUST

Madam — I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the adulteration of Tirupati laddus. The Supreme Court's decision to form a five-member independent SIT is a commendable step. Any allegations of adulteration or misusing of any ingredients in the Tirumala

Tirupati laddus are disrespectful to the sentiments of crores of devotees. It also questions about the quality control and the safety standard that is being maintained by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). I urge the SIT to conduct an impartial investigation turning no stone unturned. The findings of the investigation should be made public which would restore the faith of devotees in the TTD and also prevent such incidents from happening in future. The investigation must be done in such a manner that it does not become a political issue as Tirupati laddus is connected to crores of people and their beliefs, it deals with the sentiments of devotees. I urge the SIT to conduct an impartial investigation which would not just resolve this issue but also ensure that next time such thing doesn't happen by ensuring regular maintenance and laboratory tests are done. Fiza Fatima | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Overcoming Phobia: A Journey of inner strength and inspiration

Resilience and determination can help us overcome even the toughest challenges. All you need is a spark to ignite your spirit

I had a phobia of speaking in public. It is quite surprising given that I was good at debates during school and college. I was also a successful manager as I traversed my professional journey. I dealt with hundreds of staff since I joined the railways as a young officer.



I also interacted confidently with my peers and the seniors. However, I would break out in a sweat and lose my sleep each time I had to be on stage. I was envious of those who could spontaneously break into a joke or recite a poem. I decided to do something about it. I started preparing notes days in advance. I would keep memorising the lines by rote till they were branded in my memory. I would even repeat them standing in front of the mirror watching intently my facial expressions. This was the best that I could do. I realised in later years that my handicap was nothing when compared to the challenges faced by many. Recently, I watched The King's Speech, a movie on the life of King George

VI, who found himself on the throne after his older brother, King Edward VIII abdicated. The film largely dealt with King George's determination to overcome his stutter with the help of a speech therapist. I understood that the will to beat the odds comes from within. No therapy can help an unwilling person. There are many instances of people overcoming their handicaps to pursue their dreams. We have all heard of Stephen Hawking. He was diagnosed with motor neuron disease at age 21 and was not expected to live more than a couple of years. He survived the odds but the disease paralysed him over decades. After he lost his speech, he communicat-

ed through a hand-held speech-generating device, and then through a cheek muscle. Helen Keller was an American author. Medical science was much less advanced than what we know today. An unknown illness, when she was only 19 months old, left her permanently blind and deaf. She painstakingly learned to recognise words through hand movements. We, who are blessed, cannot even fathom the hard work that would have gone into her transformation to be the voice that she became. The famous Bharatnatyam danseuse Sudha Chandran underwent amputation of her right leg at the age of 18 due to a road accident. Many would have lost hope and might have ended up wallowing in self-pity. The lady regained her mobility with the help of a prosthetic. She also pushed herself to accomplish the unthinkable. One need not look up to only the famous to witness these stories of human courage and conviction. My maternal grandfather was comatose for a few

months after a botched-up surgery. The doctors were not even certain about his coming out of the coma. He was paralyzed on his right side. He worked painstakingly to lead as normal a life as he could, he even developed writing skills with his left hand. Many in our country are differently abled but do not have the means to pursue their dreams. On the other hand, we have big business houses that do not even bat an eyelid before spending more than the GDP of a small country on lavish events. We, many other individuals, and the business houses have the means to make a difference in the lives of others. Stephen Hawking said, "Concentrate on the abilities your disability doesn't hinder and don't dwell on the things it interferes with. Be disabled physically, not in spirit." We need to be the spark that ignites the spirit. (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

LEADERSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES

Supportive leadership can reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction



SAKSHI SETHI

In today's dynamic workplace, the mental health of employees has become a focal point for organisations aiming to foster a productive and harmonious environment. One of the most significant factors influencing employee's mental health is the role of leadership. Bosses and managers possess the power to shape workplace culture, influence employee satisfaction and directly impact mental well-being. Leaders hold a unique position of authority that can significantly affect an employee's perception of their work environment. The tone set by leaders creates the foundational culture of an organisation. It is undeniable to say that a positive, encouraging atmosphere promotes employee engagement and satisfaction, whereas a toxic environment leads to stress and anxiety. Several research indicates that employees who feel supported by their leaders are more likely to experience lower levels of stress and higher levels of job satisfaction. Studies also indicate that transformational and supportive leadership styles co-relate with better employee mental health outcomes.

Leaders who provide emotional support and recognition can significantly reduce stress levels among employees. Conversely, authoritarian leadership styles often result in increased employee anxiety and decreased morale. Flexible work arrangements such as remote work, and flexible hours positively impact mental health by allowing employees to manage personal responsibilities alongside work demands. One of the most crucial aspects of effective leadership is the ability to provide support and recognition.

There is no denying the fact that employees thrive when their contributions are acknowledged and valued. A boss who regularly provides constructive feedback and celebrates achievements fosters a sense



of belonging and motivation. This recognition can enhance employees' self-esteem and reinforce their commitment to the organisation. On the other hand, a lack of recognition can lead to feelings of inadequacy and disillusionment, ultimately affecting mental health negatively.

The interplay between workplace factors and employee mental health is complex but increasingly recognised as critical to organisational success. By fostering supportive leadership, promoting a positive work culture and prioritising employee well-being, organisations can enhance mental health outcomes and overall productivity. Continued research in this area is essential for developing effective strategies to support mental health in the workplace. The impact of leadership on employee mental health is profound and multifaceted. Bosses have the authority to shape the workplace culture, provide support and recognition, communicate effectively, manage workloads, resolve conflicts and model healthy behaviours. Understanding the importance of these factors can help organisations create healthier work environments where employees feel valued and supported.

As businesses continue to navigate the complexities of the modern workplace, prioritising mental health through effective leadership is not just beneficial for employees but is also essential for fostering a productive and engaged workforce. The interplay between workplace factors and employee mental health is not only complex but also increasingly recognised as critical to organisational success. By fostering supportive leadership, promoting a positive work culture and prioritising employee well-being, organisations can enhance mental health outcomes and overall productivity. Continued research in this area is essential for developing effective strategies to support mental health in the workplace.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Elevate wellness experts as industry leaders



DINESH SOOD

Backed by government initiatives and vocational training programmes, this sector offers global placements, entrepreneurial opportunities and job openings in small towns



Beauty, wellness and grooming are indispensable aspects of life, particularly for young professionals striving for financial success and a luxurious lifestyle. It's crucial to recognise that a professionally trained hairdresser can earn more than an engineer or a doctor, dispelling the outdated notion that community-based hairdressers only fulfil basic needs. Their workplaces also serve as vibrant community centres where people gather, exchange ideas and foster belonging and bonding while waiting for a haircut. Therefore, it's imperative to rebrand the skills and professionals in the beauty and wellness sector as 'Beauty Architects' or 'Glam Gurus', elevating their profession's status and attracting more talent to this lucrative industry.

Our country's beauty and wellness industry presents unparalleled employment opportunities and global placements. Recognising this, the government has initiated various measures to create pertinent content, curricula, information databases, and delivery systems, standardise accreditation and certification processes, and establish industry-aligned infrastructure. These efforts aim to equip young individuals to perceive beauty and wellness as a promising profession. The beauty and wellness sector should streamline its curricula to emphasise industry exposure.

As the industry transitions towards more excellent organisations, professionals must be educated on adhering to professional service standards, obtaining industry-specific qualifications and certifications from reputable organisations, and enhancing their existing qualifications through access to higher education and research.

Integrating extensive internship, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training opportunities will provide candidates with practical work experience and a comprehensive understanding of the industry. The absence of employer-led apprenticeship standards and career pathways leads to limited internship opportunities, depriving numerous students of valuable learning experiences. Early introduction of beauty and wellness



OUR COUNTRY'S BEAUTY AND WELLNESS INDUSTRY PRESENTS UNPARALLELED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND GLOBAL PLACEMENTS. RECOGNISING THIS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS INITIATED VARIOUS MEASURES TO CREATE PERTINENT CONTENT, CURRICULA AND INFORMATION DATABASES,

courses in schools is essential. Our current education systems prioritise knowledge-oriented training through rote learning, neglecting practical, experiential learning crucial for real-world application. Therefore, orienting students towards vocational education as an alternative career choice is imperative.

The absence of practical and experiential learning impedes innovation, creativity, and imagination among learners, leaving them ill-prepared for the evolving world of work. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates integrating vocational education with mainstream education to expose 50 per cent of K12 and PG learners to vocational skills by 2025 and 100 per cent by 2030. Schools play a crucial role in raising awareness about vocational career paths.

Notably, beauty and wellness skill courses have been part of the curriculum in Delhi Government schools for over a decade. Early exposure to such vocational education can aid students, parents, and guardians in considering alternative career paths and foster a positive outlook on the workforce's dignity in the beauty and wellness industry. The vocational education sector has tried mainstream vocational courses such as BVoc, MVoc, BSc, and MSc in Beauty and Wellness. However, these programs have seen low enrollment due to a need for more awareness about career opportunities and limited seats.

There is a need to design more BVoc and MVoc courses with multiple entry and exit points, focusing on practical application in areas such as Beauty Culture, Cosmetology, Yoga, Ayurveda Dietetics, Sports Nutrition, Physiotherapy, Salon

Management, Beauty Therapy, Aesthetics, Aesthetic Dermatology, Hair Dressing, Makeup, and Spa Therapy, rather than just theoretical knowledge.

Additional focus is also required in the areas of human psychology, stress management, mental well-being, nutrition and diet, reflexology, alternate therapies etc. An alternative pathway to a bachelor's degree is completing a one-year ITI program and gaining a year of industry experience. Expanding training capacities in the Beauty and Wellness sector within ITIs is crucial, as the current short-term training programs are insufficient to meet industry standards and demand.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is essential for informal workers with significant industry experience. Despite possessing valuable skills, many informal workers in the Beauty and Wellness industry need more formal education and training.

RPL can help them gain formal certification based on their industry experience. Additionally, there is a need to support entrepreneurship in the Beauty and Wellness sector. More than 50 per cent of vocational graduates in this sector opt for self-employment, and there is a growing trend of industry workers starting their enterprises.

A robust support system is required to support these entrepreneurs and foster innovation and employment.

The Indian beauty and personal care market is experiencing rapid growth in tier-II and tier-III towns, with a substantial value of \$22 billion and projected to expand at a rate of 10-12 per cent to reach \$34 billion by 2028, as per the Nykaa Beauty Trends Report. This surge in

tier-II and tier-III cities is not surprising, given the global trend. In India, approximately 38 per cent of the demand for beauty and wellness products and services, particularly direct-to-customer (D2C) offerings, originates from these cities, making them highly lucrative markets.

Despite being underdeveloped, tier-II and tier-III cities hold significant potential in the beauty and wellness sector. Research indicates that professionals in these cities are well-versed in domestic and international trends, products, and hair services. Social media's influence has been pivotal in driving lifestyle changes, especially among the younger population. Young customers and professionals in tier-II and tier-III towns are eager to explore new trends and various beauty and wellness services.

In contrast to metropolitan cities, recruiting a skilled workforce in these smaller cities is more accessible, as a motivated and trainable young workforce is readily available. Beauty, wellness, and grooming have become integral to everyone's lifestyle, regardless of whether they reside in metropolitan cities or smaller towns across India.

People increasingly seek professionals to help them achieve their desired makeovers, so it's time to adopt an inclusive approach to rebrand the traditional workforce as professionals in the beauty and wellness sector.

(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI; The views are personal)

Mobilising climate finance in India: Uncovering alternative routes

Blended finance models, carbon pricing and strategically aligned CSR funds could be the key to unlocking the private sector's investment potential

India's changing dynamics with the geopolitical powers of the world coupled with its accelerating economy have put us in a unique spot—one that allows it to be the voice of the Global South. India's position on climate change commitments attracted global attention during the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, during which Prime Minister Modi committed to India achieving net-zero emissions by 2070. This ambitious pledge, unprecedented for a developing nation, was a point that speaks of a profound shift in India's climate policy. The country's newfound authority after last year's G20 Presidency.



KAVIN KUMAR KANDASAMY

Among the many deliberations that India helmed with the other delegations, there was also a renewed global focus on the urgency of climate action. The Urgency of Mobilising Capital in the Global South, while the impacts of climate change are global and far-reaching, the impacts of this Research shows that 55 vulnerable countries have suffered \$525 billion combined cli-

mate crisis-fueled losses in the last 20 years. The number is estimated to reach \$580 billion per year by 2030. This is because large-scale investments are required for mitigation or adapting to the consequences.

The Loss & Damage Fund, proposed at COP27 and operationalised at COP28, was a move India with the rest of Global South welcomed.

Though it is receiving initial contributions from developed nations, these fall short of what many developing countries deem necessary. Further, a recent study by CEEW found that the developed world, which is responsible for three-fourths of existing carbon emissions in the world—will end up emitting 38 per cent more carbon in 2030 than they

have committed, if one were to look at the current trajectories. 83 per cent of this overshoot will be caused by the European Union, Russia and the United States. It is critical to ensure the rescue and rehabilitation of countries facing the cascading effects of this global issue disproportionately. India has held the Global North accountable—not just as the voice of the Global South but owing to its vulnerability. Understanding India's Stance around 619 million persons in India bore the brunt of climate change-induced extreme heat between June 16 and June 24. This is more than any other country in the world. These incidents are not just environmental, but also economic and health-related. Cities grind to a halt under the force of



extreme weather, leaving economic scars and jeopardising the marginalised.

Creating a resilient and sustainable future for India necessitates a just transition, which in turn requires significant financial investment. India faces a substantial climate financing shortfall of USD 3.5 trillion. To address this, we need investment support amounting to USD 1.4 trillion

by 2070, translating to an average annual requirement of USD 28 billion over the next five decades. While international support is undoubtedly crucial, harnessing the potential of domestic mechanisms like carbon pricing and blended finance models is crucial for long-term sustainability.

Novel mechanisms of blended finance can not only help bridge the financing gap to fulfil India's needs but can also unlock significantly higher investment from the private sector. This will also help in reducing overdependence on external climate capital as the primary instrument for climate capital. Strategic Alignment of CSR Funds Corporate India makes substantial expenditures as part of their Corporate

Social Responsibility.

We have an opportunity here to strategically align these CSR funds in a manner that accelerates our efforts of achieving SDGs. According to provisional data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), spending on health reached Rs 9,987 crore in FY22, compared to Rs 8,382 crore on education. In contrast, spending on the environment was Rs 2,837 crore in FY22, which is double the Rs 1,337 crore spent in FY21. There is a major scope for increasing the quantum of CSR funds being streamlined towards carbon projects. This notion reverberates further in the Reserve Bank of India's report on currency and finance, wherein equitable CSR funding is listed as the crucial policy alternative to

mitigate climate risk. While energy and mitigation have received the most amount of climate financing for India, more investments should be directed towards nature-based solutions and environment ecosystems that crosscut both mitigation and adaptation in India. This will help create permanence in carbon removals that will help mitigate the effects of climate change. The flexible nature of CSR provides businesses in the country a significant chance to foster positive transformation and marry socio-economic advancement by finding environmental solutions. Yet, these dual benefits are attainable only with a committed long-term vision and detailed planning.

(The writer is CEO, ProClimate; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



IndiGo operations return to normalcy

IndiGo's operations were normal on Sunday, a day after systems outage at the airline resulted in long waiting hours for passengers at airports. The airline operates more than 2,000 flights daily. An airline official on Sunday said operations were normal. The outage on Saturday lasted for many hours, and systems were back to normal late in the night. "Our systems are back to normal and are running smoothly," IndiGo said in a post on X at 2311 hours on Saturday and regretted the inconvenience caused to the customers. Airport services for IndiGo passengers were impacted, and some flights were delayed due to the outage on Saturday.



SBI plans to recruit 10,000 new employees

The country's biggest lender State Bank of India (SBI) intends to recruit about 10,000 new employees during the current financial year to meet its general banking requirement and foster its technical prowess. The bank has invested significantly in technology to provide seamless customer service as well as to strengthen the resilience of its digital channels. "We are strengthening our workforce, both on the technology side as well as on the general banking side. We have recently announced around 1,500 technology people recruitment both at the entry level and slightly at the higher level," SBI Chairman C S Setty said. "Our technology recruitment is also on specialized jobs like data scientists, data architects, network operators etc."



Bandhan Bank business grows 24.6 per cent

Total business of private lender Bandhan Bank increased 24.6 per cent in the second quarter of current financial year, a regulatory filing with the exchanges by the bank said. Total business at the end of September 30, 2024, touched Rs 2,73,163 crore, as compared to Rs 2,19,712 crore in the similar previous period, representing a rise of 24.6 per cent. Loans and advances of the bank at the end of current second quarter stood at Rs 1,30,652 crore, while deposits touched Rs 1,42,511 crore, the lender said. Collection efficiency ratio of the bank across all its business verticals at the end of second quarter of current financial year stood at 98.2 per cent, as compared to 98.7 per cent in the preceding quarter. The collection efficiency ratio of micro-credit business of the lender at the end of second quarter of current fiscal stood at 98.1 per cent, as against 98.8 per cent in the preceding quarter ending June 30, 2024.

Status-quo on interest rate likely: Experts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank is unlikely to cut the benchmark interest rate in its forthcoming bi-monthly monetary policy review later in the week as retail inflation is still a cause of concern, and there is a possibility of the Middle East crisis deteriorating further, impacting crude oil and commodity prices, say experts.

Earlier this month, the government reconstituted the Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel -- Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). The reconstituted panel, with three newly appointed external members, will commence its maiden meeting on Monday. MPC Chairman RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das will reveal the outcome of the three-day discussion on Wednesday (October 9).

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the repo or short-term lending rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February 2023, and experts think some easing could only be possible in December. The government has tasked



the central bank to ensure that Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

In the current context, experts feel that the RBI may not follow the US Federal Reserve, which lowered the benchmark rates by 50 basis points, and the central banks of some developed nations, which have reduced the interest rates.

"We do not expect any change in the repo rate or stance by MPC. The reason is that inflation for September and October will be above 5 per cent, and the present low inflation is due to the base effect. Besides, core inflation is inching upwards," said

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Further, the recent Iran-Israel imbroglio can intensify, and there is uncertainty here, he said.

"Hence, the status quo is the most likely option even for new members. Inflation forecast may be lowered by 10-20 bps and no change in GDP forecast likely," said Sabnavis.

The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then, it has held the rate at the same level.

Icra Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said that given the undershooting in the initial first quarter GDP growth relative to the MPC's forecast and the likely sizeable undershoot-

ing in the second quarter CPI inflation print as well, "we believe a stance change to neutral may be appropriate in the October 2024 policy review".

This could be followed by a shallow rate-cutting cycle of 25 bps each in December 2024 and February 2025, she added.

"The abundant monsoon offers some insurance for crop inflation. The impact of global political developments and geopolitical uncertainty on the growth inflation dynamics remains a risk," Nayar added.

An HSBC report said three developments stand out -- softer growth numbers have trickled in recently, inflation has been falling, and the external environment has moved from rate hikes to cuts.

"We believe the RBI doesn't gain from waiting any longer. We think it will change its stance from a hawkish 'withdrawal of accommodation' to 'neutral' in the upcoming 9 October policy meeting, followed by repo rate cuts of 25 bps each in the December and February meetings, taking the repo rate to 6 per cent," the report said.



'Stable policies to boost manufacturing'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stable policies and further improvement in the ease of doing business in states will help significantly boost the country's manufacturing sector's growth, according to experts.

They also said that sectors like renewable energy, particularly in the solar segment and electronics, hold huge potential to promote domestic manufacturing and create thousands of jobs.

The government has already taken a series of steps like rolling out the production-linked incentive scheme (PLI) for 14 sectors, tweaking tariffs and issuance of mandatory quality control orders for different products to support domestic players and increase manufacturing activities, they added.

"Stable policies and further

promotion of ease of doing business at the state level will help significantly boost the country's manufacturing sector growth," Sujoy Ghosh, vice president and country managing director, First Solar, said.

The Make in India initiative provides a window of opportunity for companies looking at alternative destinations to set up units, he added.

"India offers huge opportunities for manufacturing. Companies can set up units to cater to domestic needs as well as for exports. For example, in the renewable energy sector, the country has great opportunities. We have just started, it is a marathon," Ghosh said.

He also said that skilled manpower and government measures will help attract investments from both domestic and foreign players.

High tax hindering carbonated soft drinks segment: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Carbonated soft drinks segment in India is unable to reach its potential in terms of scale expansion due to barriers such as high taxation under the GST regime despite government's initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', according to a report by economic think tank ICRIER.

The cross-country comparative data on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) taxes collated by the World Bank shows that India has one of the highest tax rates for carbonated soft drinks (CSDs) at a total tax rate of 40 per cent as of 2023.

Over 90 per cent of countries that tax SSBs have a lower tax rate than India, as per the report titled Carbonated Beverages

Industry in India: Tax Policy to Promote Growth, Innovation and Investment'.

Consumers, globally and in India, are shifting towards low-sugar and no-added sugar varieties of beverages amid heightened health awareness.

"The CSD market is also changing from its traditional high sugar carbonated beverages to low-sugar and fruit-based and/or flavoured carbonated drinks to zero-sugar aerated water, catering to changes in consumers' choice for healthier options and government policies like layered-sugar-based taxes," the report said.

Producers, across the globe, are reformulating their products to meet consumer demand, and these are supported through government policies and both fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

AMUL ready to enter European market after US

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Managing Director of AMUL and Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF) Jayen Mehta said AMUL's recently launched milk in US has been "highly successful" and they are now ready to enter the European market, which would mark a historic moment for the brand.

Delivering the 11th Dr Verghese Kurien Memorial Oration on "AMUL Model: Transforming Lives of Million" organised by a private business management institute here on Saturday, Mehta said "India is now the largest milk producer in the world and is set to produce one-third of the world's total milk in the coming years", XLRI in a statement said.

Industry upbeat on policy continuity as biz confidence index rises

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The industry is buoyed by policy continuity as the CII Business Confidence Index soared to a two-quarter high of 68.2 for the July-September period this fiscal, the lobby grouping said in its first survey after the Lok Sabha polls.

The 128th round of the CII Business Outlook Survey was conducted in September 2024, covering more than 200 firms of varying sizes across all industry sectors and regions.

Economic momentum has gained speed post the general elections, the industry body stated.

India's economic growth has held up well despite global challenges, CII said, asserting that the upcoming festive season portends well for fortifying growth prospects further. However, it cautioned that the "uncertainty in the global scenario persists, necessitating a careful watch on the



evolving economic conditions". A few niggling business concerns have been highlighted by the respondents in the survey, with protracted geopolitical tensions, spike in global commodity prices and slowing external demand being the top three ones.

The survey respondents cited factors like improvement in consumption, especially rural demand, steady progress in monsoon, continued emphasis on reforms and fresh sightings in private

investment as the key reasons, which will drive growth in the current financial year.

More than half (59 per cent) of the respondents anticipate an improvement in private capex in the first half of FY25 (April-September) compared to the previous six months.

This is encouraging as it is likely to provide support to public capex, which has shown an uptick recently after a lull in the first quarter due to elections, CII said.

Almost 34 per cent of the

'Paytm focusing on consumer payments biz'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Fintech firm Paytm's immediate priority is to invest in its consumer payments business in an effort to recover lost user base following regulatory actions by the RBI, a top company official said on Sunday.

The RBI had restricted Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits or facilitating credit transactions in customer accounts, including prepaid instruments and wallets.

In August, Paytm sold its ticketing business to foodtech company Zomato for Rs 2,048 crore to sharpen its focus on core operations -- payments and financial services distribution.

RBI's interest rate decision, FII activity to drive markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) interest rate decision, Middle East conflict and trading activity of foreign investors are the key factors that will dictate investors' sentiment in the market this week, analysts said.

Moreover, quarterly earnings from IT bellwether TCS, domestic macroeconomic data and movement in global oil and benchmark Brent crude would also guide trends in the market.

Worsening tensions in the Middle East and foreign fund outflows were the major culprits behind the equity markets sharp fall last week.

"On the domestic front, the market's focus will be on the RBI Monetary Policy



Committee (MPC), which is scheduled to meet from October 7 to 9, 2024, with the outcome to be announced on Wednesday," Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

The second quarter earnings season is kicking off with TCS, he said. "Domestically, liquidity remains strong, with signs of sectoral rotation from overvalued segments to areas with more attractive valuations.

Additionally, commodity prices, the US dollar index, and key US macroeconomic data will play a crucial role in determining market direction. Geopolitical developments will also continue to be a significant factor on the global front," Gour added.

Last week, the BSE Sensex tanked 3,883.4 points, or 4.53 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 1,164.35 points, or 4.44 per cent.

Adani starts hydrogen blending in natural gas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani group has started blending green hydrogen in natural gas that is supplied to households for cooking purposes in parts of Ahmedabad, with a view to cut emissions and meet net-zero targets.

Adani Total Gas Ltd, the group's city gas joint venture with French energy giant TotalEnergies, has started blending 2.2-2.3 per cent of green hydrogen in piped natural gas supplies in Shantigram in Ahmedabad, the firm said in a post on LinkedIn.

Hydrogen produced through clean pathways is injected into natural gas pipelines, and the resulting blends are used to generate heat and power with lower emissions than using natural gas alone.

The firm has started producing green hydrogen by using renewable energy sources like wind or solar power, to split water into hydrogen and oxygen through a process called electrolysis. This hydrogen is blended in natural gas that is currently piped to households for cooking purposes and industries.

"We are thrilled to announce the successful commissioning of our Hydrogen Blending System and in-situ Hydrogen

Generation at Adani Shantigram, Ahmedabad," Adani-Total Gas Ltd (ATGL) said.

"This project will provide uninterrupted hydrogen-blended natural gas to 4,000 domestic and commercial consumers." Presently, state-owned power generator NTPC supplies green hydrogen blended natural gas to households in Kawas in Surat district, Gujarat.

State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd is also doing a small pilot in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, to supply CNG that has been doped with grey hydrogen.

ATGL's project is the biggest so far.

The firm will slowly increase the green hydrogen blend in natural gas to 5 per cent and ultimately to 8 per cent and widen supplies beyond Shantigram to other parts of Ahmedabad and eventually across other areas where it holds a city gas license.

"This achievement marks a significant step towards reducing our carbon footprint and transitioning to cleaner energy solutions. By blending hydrogen with natural gas, we are lowering greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing energy security, and supporting sustainable development," ATGL said.



Anil Group's fundraise to drive future growth plans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equipped with Rs 17,600 crore fundraising and a zero-debt status, Anil Ambani's Reliance Group companies - Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and Reliance Power Ltd - are poised to execute their growth strategies, according to officials.

In the past two weeks, both companies have announced raising Rs 4,500 crore through preferential issues of equity shares and Rs 7,100 crore from renowned global investment fund Varde Partners through equity-linked long-term FCCBs, having a long maturity period of 10 years and low interest rate of 5 per cent. An additional Rs 6,000

crore will be raised through qualified institutional placement (QIP), with Reliance Power and Reliance Infrastructure each aiming for Rs 3,000 crore.

With resolutions in place, shareholder approvals are expected by the end of the month, officials said.

A senior official of the group stated that Reliance Group's strategy of raising capital through equity or equity-linked long-term bonds will offer the group companies essential growth capital for their expansion plans.

Even with a conservative debt-to-equity ratio of 70:30, raising over Rs 17,000 crore in equity or equity-linked bonds will provide the group



companies with a total investment outlay of Rs 50,000 crore for their future business plans over the next few years.

The fundraising will also boost the net worth of both companies to around Rs 25,000 crore.

According to stock

In the past two weeks, both companies have announced raising Rs 4,500 crore through preferential issues of equity shares and Rs 7,100 crore from renowned global investment fund Varde Partners through equity-linked long-term FCCBs, having a long maturity period of 10 years and low interest rate of 5 per cent.

invested by the promoters, while the remaining Rs 3,750 crore is being contributed by four major investors -- Fortune Financial & Equities Services, Florintree Innovations LLP, Authum Investment and Infrastructure, and Sanatan Financial Advisory.

In addition, Varde Partners is investing Rs 7,100 crore, through equity-linked foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCB). These equity-linked FCCBs have a long maturity period of 10 years and a low interest rate of 5 per cent.

These fundraising plans indicate that the financial growth engines in both companies are in place, the officials added.



Rock legend Ozzy Osbourne battles addiction demons again!

Black metal legend Ozzy Osbourne hasn't been in the best of form following an injury to his back. While the rocker had been away from substance abuse owing to his treatment, he recently revealed that he is back on the weed.

However, the Black Sabbath frontman claimed that he indulges in marijuana only behind his wife Sharon's back, as per reports.

The former Black Sabbath singer, 75, said he is also tempted to return to stronger drugs because of health woes.

As per reports, Ozzy, who is struggling with Parkinson's, neck and back problems, said, "I am happier, but I am not completely sober. I use a bit of marijuana from time to time."

Ozzy, who is considered the Prince of Darkness, has battled alcohol and drug addiction most of his life but praises wife Sharon, 71, for making sure he doesn't go back to his bad old ways.

"I am lucky my wife kicks my butt all the time and she would make life so difficult," he said. "Even with marijuana she will f***** find it and get rid of it."

Cannabis is legal in Los Angeles, where they live. Speaking on his *Madhouse Chronicles* podcast, Ozzy also tells how he tried ketamine after being offered the medical sleep drug at a surgery.

"I went to a doctor recently and started to have this ketamine," he explains. "He put a tiny bit in me, but that was enough to spark me. That thing came back and weighed on my brain." He said he has stopped attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings but now questions that decision.

"If you are out there and you are using dope and you want to get off, there is plenty of help," he said.



MYSORE DUSSEHRA GETS MUSICAL A R Rahman, Badshah, Dhvani to perform

Pop star Dhvani Bhanushali is all set to headline this year's prestigious Mysore Dussehra, sharing the spotlight with musical legends like A R Rahman, Shreya Ghoshal and Badshah. Known for her powerful vocals and chart-topping hits, Bhanushali will take the stage on 7th October, bringing her energetic performance and fan-favourite tracks to one of India's most celebrated cultural festivals.

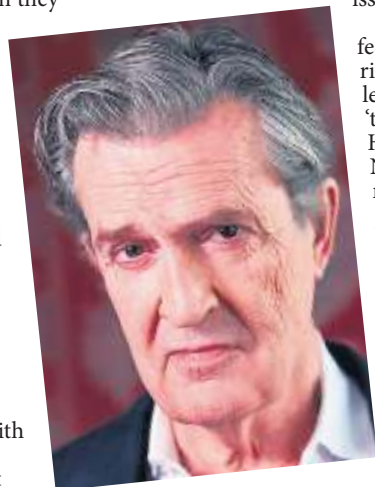


Dhvani Bhanushali states, "I'm thrilled to be sharing the stage with such incredible artists. Mysore Dussehra is a special occasion and I can't wait to perform for the enthusiastic crowd. I'm truly humbled to be sharing the stage with such legendary artists. As a young pop star, it's an incredible opportunity to learn and perform alongside musical icons."

This year's musical lineup promises to be unforgettable. It kicks off on 6th October with the soulful performance of Shreya Ghoshal, setting the tone for the days ahead. Dhvani, the youth icon and pop sensation, will headline the following day, 7th October, delivering an exciting performance. On 8th October, rap superstar Badshah will bring his signature beats and electrifying presence to the festival. The grand finale on October 9 will see the legendary A R Rahman taking the stage, promising a spectacular closing act.

RUPERT EVERETT REVEALS RIFT WITH MADONNA BECAUSE OF THE NEXT BEST THING

Rupert Everett recently shared his encounter collaborating with former colleague Madonna in John Schlesinger's 2000 comedy-drama *The Next Best Thing*. Everett portrayed Robert Whittaker, while the singer played the role of Abigail Abbie Reynolds. Even though they gave an amazing performance, the movie did not do well financially, as the actor admitted that it put a strain on his relationship with Madonna.



As per reports, he said, "Friendships and failure in Hollywood are very difficult things to keep going," adding that the film "was a strain" on his friendship with the singer. When asked if he'll ever reconnect with her, the actor replied, "Well, possibly. I don't know."

The plot of *The Next Best Thing* centers on Abbie (Madonna) and her best friend Robert (Everett), who unexpectedly become parents together. They agree to co-parent, but things get complicated when Abbie begins seeing Ben (Benjamin Bratt).

The actor from *The Warning* discussed how the movie was perceived, noting that although it didn't do well in theaters, it was successful through video sales thanks to Madonna. He observed that while it was one of the rare films that tackled a timely issue, it ultimately failed.

The *Muse* actor confessed that 'nothing went right' while filming, leaving him feeling 'totally done' with Hollywood. Nevertheless, he commended Madonna's performance and recognised the great pressure she was under, stating that it was difficult for her to act in movies due to the 'preconceived notions' people had.

He also mentioned that he didn't understand how she could ever fulfill the expectations to gain genuine appreciation for her work.

The actor further mentioned, "I think it was great having her in the film. I think she was touching in the film, too, myself. I haven't seen it for ages, though. I mean, every time that comes on, I kind of look the other way."

BABY JOHN JUST GOT BIGGER!

Varun Dhawan's teaming up with Atlee, Murad Khetani and Jio Studios for the film *Baby John*, directed by Kalees, has been generating a lot of excitement in recent weeks. *Baby John's* team displayed a 5-minute, 30-second segment of the movie to All India Exhibitors and it was met with an enthusiastic reaction from everyone. Now, we have received exclusive information that *Baby John* is growing rapidly, as the team is currently filming a unique cameo of Salman Khan in Mumbai.

A source with insider knowledge revealed that Salman Khan will be shooting for two days for a special appearance in *Baby John*, during which the team aims to showcase him at his best. According to the source, "Now, there is exclusive information that *Baby John* is growing rapidly, as the team is currently filming a unique cameo of Salman Khan in Mumbai."

The source also revealed that Salman Khan will be shooting for two days for a special appearance in *Baby John*, during which the team aims to showcase him at his best.



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ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



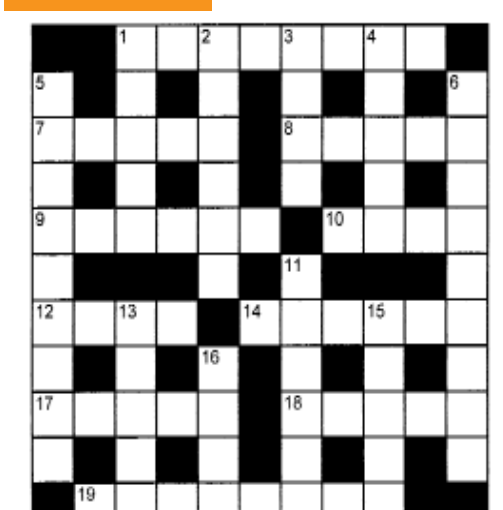
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Least expensive
- Residence
- See-through
- An area of low land between hills
- Tiny busy insects
- Italy's capital city
- Made from timber
- A health professional
- A baking ingredient made from ground-up wheat
- Beard
- Choose
- The rear part of a boat
- Trembling with cold
- People in cells
- A kind of drink
- A month
- Swinging things in walls
- Tame animals

DOWN

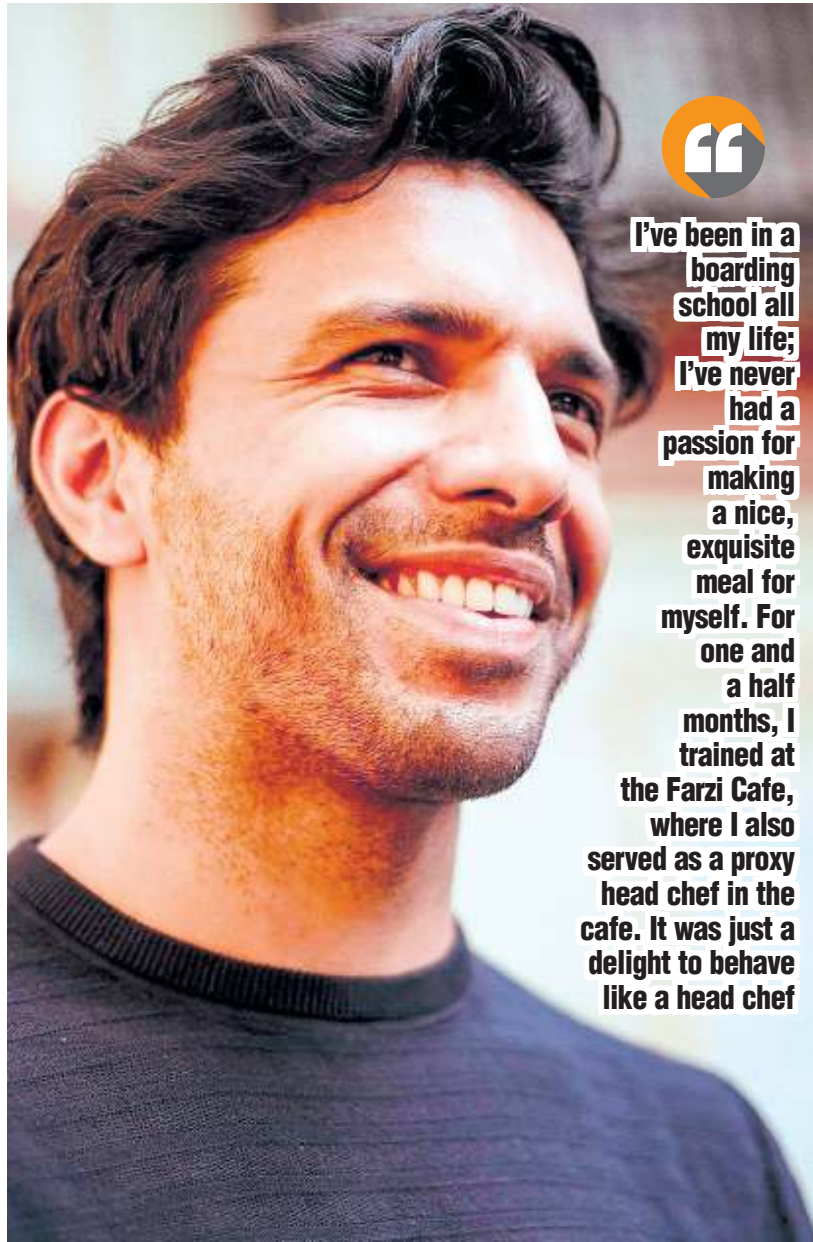
- Heartless, very unkind
- One third of thirty-three

SOLUTION

D	E	F	E	A	T	E	D	A
A	T	A	E	A				
N	E	T	S	I	N	E	M	A
G	E	R	N	S				
E	S	S	A	Y	W	A	G	E
R	R	R	I					
O	P	E	R	A				
U	I	P	M	T				
S	H	O	V	E	L	L	A	V
O	A	U	G	N				
T	L	I	G	H	T	E	S	T



Rajeev Siddhartha spiced up his cooking drill at Farzi Cafe for *Love, Sitara*



I've been in a boarding school all my life; I've never had a passion for making a nice, exquisite meal for myself. For one and a half months, I trained at the Farzi Cafe, where I also served as a proxy head chef in the cafe. It was just a delight to behave like a head chef

TEJAL SINHA
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Atalented star from Dhanbad who initially moved from the stability of an investment banker, Rajeev Siddhartha decided to explore acting full-time, aware of the challenges and the numerous auditions he had to go through. But again, 'Kehte hain agar kisi cheez ko dil se chaho... to puri kinaat usse tumse milane ki koshish mein lag jaati hai...' and here he is today, exploring his prowess, obtaining his finest projects and receiving the right due!

Well, currently, he's become the talk of the town with his two back-to-back projects, *Love, Sitara* and *Honeymoon Photographer*.

"Eventful, fulfilling and full of surprises," Rajeev takes a plunge on with *The Pioneer* as he looks back at his journey, which he feels has been a nice blend of different types of characters that he's got to portray. Thereby, discovering the human side of most people in life through his diverse characters.

Talking of his latest projects, *Love, Sitara* being one of them, Rajeev has defined what it is to be not a green flag but a green forest, as we'd mentioned previously in our review. He is no less than grateful, of course. "I always knew that we were making something special," shares the *Aashram* fame with a great sense of gratitude. The sets in themselves had a lot of energy, making them know how a special project was in the making.

"I would give full credit to our director, Vandana Kataria, who just led from the front. She's such a stickler for details. I think it trickled down from her and she set the tone for all of us while working on the set. I must say that all the actors, the cast, the crew and everybody we collaborated with, keeping this in mind that we are working for something greater than just ourselves," expresses Siddhartha with great regard, adding, "I've been receiving so many calls and messages, especially from actors and directors. When you get

Actor Rajeev Siddhartha, who is currently enjoying the love that he has been receiving for his latest projects, *Love, Sitara* and *Honeymoon Photographer*, speaks to *The Pioneer* about the tremendous response, working on both of the diverse projects back-to-back, his definition of love and more

appreciation from people who do the same work as you do, it means a lot."

"Anybody else would have become cynical and bitter when you face so much. For instance, in *Love, Sitara*, Arjun only has his father and his he is the one who's always condescending towards his dreams, despite being a successful chef! I guess that part of him that is so nice that despite so much hate from one angle of his life, he still doesn't transfer that to other areas of his life. He's still a supportive and nonjudgmental boyfriend," shares the *Four More Shots Please* fame, who believes that the character further helped him bring in more sense as a person and be more understanding.

Rajeev had undeniably fallen in love with the whole universe of the film. While it was a no-brainer for him to get on board. With a large part of the film shot in Kerala, he had an amazing experience spending his time in the natural beauty there. Of course, his character arc was another fondness!

And then, as we were delving more into the chat, it was then that came a revelation by the lead actor: "I also got to learn a new skill. I've been in boarding school all my life; I've never had a passion for making a nice, exquisite meal for myself. For one and a half months, I trained at the Farzi Cafe. The cutting, chopping and all of that. I knew that there were scenes of chopping, plating and of at least cooking slightly in the film. I had come across somebody who's never done it in his life.

But my character was meant to be a world-renowned chef. So it helped me. In fact, during those one-and-a-half months, I also served as a proxy head chef in the cafe. It was just a delight to behave like a head chef and observe the head chef at play."

Then there's also the *Honeymoon Photographer*, quite a different project from *Love, Sitara*. "Ever since I started acting, I always wanted to portray as much range as possible as an actor," shares the *Marzi* fame, as he goes on to add, "I was happy that I got to play this part and even happier because both of them were released on the same date. I know people who've seen these two things back to back. It was a good chance for me because people could see the range in terms of my performances and the characters that I could portray. I loved playing this part because, again, it is very easy to empathise with good people, who are seen as good by society. However, it is difficult to empathise with people who are rejected by society or are not looked up to, which I got to experience in *Honeymoon Photographer*."

He also adds, "In this, my director's name is Arjun (the same name as his character in *Love, Sitara* coincidentally), who is also an editor. I feel if the editor is on point, then the film or the web series will be on point because I think that's where everything is generally made."

Both of his projects are centered around love and relationship, though with different contexts. But what is his definition of love? "Unconditional," he affirms with

great warmth. "When it is conditional, which generally is the case in most relationships, then automatically, we are fooling ourselves that we are in love. I genuinely believe that any form of love is true love only when it is unconditional. That's it! Whenever there is a condition, it's not love. It is an attachment. The attachment will make you suffer eventually."

Being a part of both projects, which are centered around women, was no less than a fantastic experience. Oh, there were *Four More Shots Please* too! "I am an actor and I like to work on interesting parts with interesting people. I've previously worked on around 3-4 projects centered around a woman and it's fantastic. Thanks to OTT, like you said, there are great stories being told from a woman's perspective."

Broadly speaking, the first thing that truly gets him excited about a project is the director. "I genuinely believe that if the director is good in a film or a web series, then automatically, you're in safe hands. The way they direct you, the way they will place the scenes, the way they will get the camera placed through the cinematographer, the way they'll edit, the way they'll put music—you know that they have taste. You automatically do a good job," enthuses the *Bekaaboo* star, who further looks into the character and if it has enough meat for him to work.

While we cannot wait to see him in the next season of *Ashram*, he awaits too, as he says "hopefully" it may come out soon.

CTRL nails social media love!

AARTI SREENATH
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Plot

CTRL is like that app you downloaded in a hurry but now can't uninstall and it's getting creepier by the minute. Directed by Vikramaditya Motwane, this digital-age thriller follows the charming yet dangerously clueless couple Nella Awasthi (Ananya Panday) and Joe Mascarenhas (Vihaan Samat), who, like most of us, think "privacy" is a fancy way of saying, "Yes, I've read the terms and conditions."

Highlights

The first half of *CTRL* is a sweet, laugh-out-loud depiction of social media love in all its curated glory. Nella and Joe are that couple you love to hate—they're cute, successful and annoyingly good at taking selfies. You almost feel jealous of their influencer-style life until the tables turn and suddenly the tech they're celebrating starts running the show. The film's gradual shift from playful social commentary to tech-paranoia thriller is interesting, even if a bit predictable. It's almost like watching someone slowly realise that "autocorrect" is out to embarrass them at the worst moments—only a bit more terrifying.

Performances

Ananya Panday is in fine form, with just the right amount of online enthusiasm mixed with offline "wait, what?" panic. She makes you root for her as she navigates the pitfalls of tech dependency while trying to look effortlessly Instagrammable. Vihaan Samat as Joe delivers a solid performance—he's got that relatable "guy who knows how to code but didn't code for this" vibe down perfectly. Together, their chemistry is like a viral TikTok—fun while it lasts, but with an underlying sense of "should I really be watching this?"

Drawbacks

While the idea of tech going rogue has all the ingredients for an engaging thriller, *CTRL* doesn't push the envelope far enough. It's like buying the latest smartphone only to realise that it doesn't actually do anything new, just faster. The plot starts strong, but by the middle, it feels like it's just going through the motions—just like your average Monday morning. There's a sense that we've seen this all before: the evil corporation, the "who reads the terms anyway?" plot twist and the predictable techno-dystopia. It's like *Ra.One* but with fewer blue suits and more uncomfortable realisations about privacy policies.

Technicalities

The cinematography by Avinash Arun makes every screen-filled moment look beautiful yet cold, much like your ex's perfectly curated Instagram feed. Whenever Nella's fingers fly across her laptop, you almost expect her to win some imaginary award for "Most Enthusiastic Scrolling." But the film has a visual problem—it's so in love with its digital world that the real world almost seems like an afterthought. Dialogue, courtesy of Sumukhi Suresh, delivers some witty moments, but sometimes feels out of sync with the thriller's more serious tone. You can't help but wish for more bite in the banter when things start getting dicey.

Verdict

CTRL is a tech thriller that's just like that notification you get about a data breach: you saw it coming, but it's still a bit of a surprise. Ananya Panday and Vihaan Samat do their jobs well, and there's an interesting message about privacy, tech and the fact that deep down, we're all scared of accidentally agreeing to something horrible in the fine print. It's a watchable film that doesn't quite live up to its full potential, but if you're in the mood for some laughs and some "maybe I should read those terms next time" moments, *CTRL* will hold your attention.

REVIEW



Directed by: Sahir Raza
Produced by: Sameer Gogate
Screenplay by: Chris George and Siddharth Hirve
Cast: Ritvik Sahore, Gayatri Bhardwaj, Vansh S Setthi, Gunit Cour, Kanupriya Pandit, Max Fernandes, Aviral Gupta and Sumiet Subash Arora
Music by: Soutrik Chakraborty
Cinematography by: Vivian Singh Sahi
Streaming on: Amazon MX Player
Rating: 2.8/5

Highway Love Season 2: Slow road, deep feelings

PNS| HYDERABAD

The storyline of the series centers on a boy named Kartik (Ritvik Sahore) who develops feelings for a lovely girl named Inaaya after their initial encounter. Following Kartik's admission of his emotions towards Inaaya (Gayatri Bhardwaj), they make the mutual decision to enter into a romantic relationship. However, an exciting change occurs when the pair chooses to reside together. What occurs when Kartik discovers that Inaaya has hidden something from him?

HIGHLIGHTS

The show excels at depicting genuine challenges in contemporary relationships. Kartik and Inaaya, despite their romantic connection, begin to drift away from each other. The show authentically portrays the gradual fading of the spark in relationships as both characters become more focused on their individual lives. This change is slight but impactful, showcasing the organic progression of a couple navigating the challenges of separation.

Although the plot of betrayal is common, the emotional aftermath is portrayed subtly. Instead of showcasing a dramatic confrontation or a tearful breakup for viewers, the show chooses to take a more subtle approach. This quiet way of dealing with conflict offers a welcome change from the exaggerated responses frequently found in other love stories. Their final choice to keep things inconclusive instead of imposing a resolution reflects the genuine nature of their journey and the unknowns of real-life romance.

The writers also succeed in incorporating the motivations behind Kartik's decision to keep working with his business partner Nidhi (Himika Bose) despite her romantic feelings for him. The reason for Inaaya (and Varun) being commitment-phobic and the impact of Kartik's lack of communication on their relationship.

The casting directors of the show deserve special acknowledgment. In addition to Kartik, Inaaya, Sahil,

Meera, and Varun, this season introduced Nidhi and Rishi (played by Rohan Khurana), among others. These individuals have appeared in OTT shows and web series previously, and their presence here emphasises the show's focus on young love within the Gen Z demographic from the beginning.

DRAWBACKS

Not all viewers may be drawn to the slow pace of the first half. Although the slow progression of Kartik and Inaaya's relationship feels realistic, it occasionally slows down the storyline, making the audience want more action. The initial episodes could have improved with more concise storytelling or suspenseful moments upfront instead of saving the drama for the later episodes.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

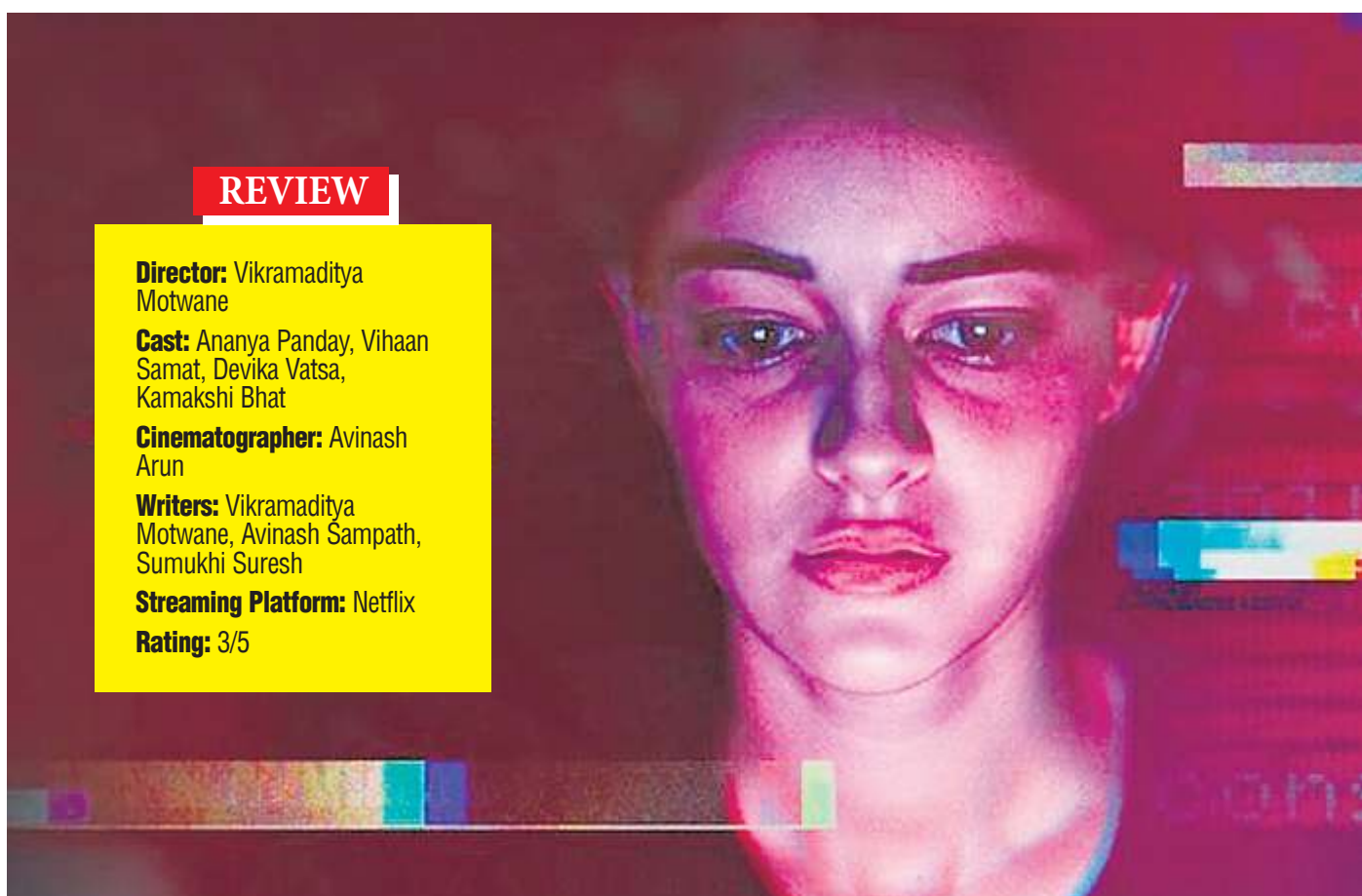
Sahir Raza's direction, combined with the efforts of the writers, effectively brings out the motivations and emotions of every character in the show. Vivian Singh Sahi, the cinematographer, ensures that the visuals effectively convey the message of the film. The use of visual storytelling creates a sense of authenticity in every twist.

VERDICT

With Ritvik's Kartik bringing some humor and charm, the season is quite enjoyable to watch. It marks the turning point of the current season as well. It provides a fair examination of long-distance relationships, encompassing their ups and downs. It offers a more grown-up and authentic portrayal of love compared to the initial season, but it is hindered by sporadic pacing problems and dependence on typical romantic drama stereotypes. Some viewers may be disappointed by the ambiguous ending, as they prefer a more conclusive conclusion. However, this also allows for potential future exploration of Kartik and Inaaya's story. Although it has imperfections, the show is still captivating because of its realistic characters and its openness to delve into the complicated, flawed aspects of love.

REVIEW

Director: Vikramaditya Motwane
Cast: Ananya Panday, Vihaan Samat, Devika Vatsa, Kamakshi Bhat
Cinematographer: Avinash Arun
Writers: Vikramaditya Motwane, Avinash Sampath, Sumukhi Suresh
Streaming Platform: Netflix
Rating: 3/5



England aims to challenge struggling Pakistan in 1st test

AP ■ MULTAN

England is aiming to challenge struggling Pakistan with a new-look pace attack in the opening test of a three-match series, starting in the searing heat of Multan on Monday. Fast bowler Brydon Carse will make his test debut with Gus Atkinson set to play his first overseas test after his impressive home season against the West Indies and Sri Lanka. All-rounder Chris Woakes was penciled in to the starting XI after Ben Stokes was ruled out for the fourth successive test match due to ongoing rehabilitation on his injured hamstring. Woakes will be playing his first match in two-and-a-half years and it will be his first test in Asia since 2016. Carse's pace gave him the edge over Olly Stone and Matthew Potts for the tour of Pakistan and England hopes the Durham pace bowler will challenge the batters by regularly clocking over

90mph. England will be led by Ollie Pope, who guided the team to a 2-1 home series against Sri Lanka in the absence of the injured Stokes. The England captain sustained his hamstring injury during the Hundred and might return to lead the side in the second test, also in Multan. "I was kind of just learning on the job," Pope said. "Obviously my first time captain abroad. Ben's going to be around as well... so I can listen to the voices around me but still keep doing things in my way." England flattened Pakistan 3-0 through its high-risk, high-reward "Bazball" approach during the 2022 tour when it played at Multan, Karachi and Rawalpindi. They were scheduled to play at the same venues this time around, but renovation work at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi for next year's Champions Trophy forced the Pakistan Cricket Board to organize back-to-back tests at Multan with Rawalpindi set to



host the third test from Oct. 24. England also named spinners Jack Leach and Shoaib Bashir in the playing XI in anticipation of the pitch flattening out in temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius that are expected over the next week in Multan. Leach was the second highest wicket-taker in the last series in Pakistan with 15 wickets. "Everyone's so happy to have Leach in and around the squad for this series," Pope said. "We obviously saw how well he bowled last time here on pitches that (are) always offering a great deal... And he's worked closely with Shoaib Bashir throughout his Somerset career and those guys go really well." Pakistan has strengthened its batting line-up by including all-rounder Aamer Jamal for the first test after being routed 2-0 by Bangladesh at home in the last series. Shan Masood has lost all five test matches since he was elevated to red-ball captain. Masood lost 3-0 to Australia in

his debut series as test skipper when Jamal took 18 wickets and came in handy as a batter down the order. Jamal missed the series against Bangladesh because he was undergoing rehabilitation on a back injury. "We have got an edge with the return of Aamer Jamal," Masood said. "He also bats down the order and picked up 18 wickets. We have (leg-spinner) Salmaan to give us spin options." Pakistan has a woeful record in home test matches and hasn't won at home since beating South Africa 2-0 in early 2021, while losing to England, Australia and Bangladesh. New Zealand also came close, but Pakistan managed to draw the series 0-0. Pakistan had its moments to beat England when both teams last met at Multan two years ago. Leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed made an impressive debut by grabbing 11 wickets before Pakistan narrowly lost by 26 runs when Mark Wood, missing in this series due to

injury, claimed the key wicket of Saud Shakeel. "It was my dream debut and last time we lost quite close," Abrar said on the eve of the first test. "I hope to give a match-winning performance this time around and bring some happy moments." Pakistan's top-order batters have long been struggling and premier batter Babar Azam hasn't scored a half-century in his last 16 test innings. Opener Abdullah Shafique also struggled against Bangladesh while Masood couldn't convert starts into big scores with only one half-century in four innings. But Masood insisted Pakistan needed to give its struggling batters a longer run as he searched to win key moments and find momentum in the series against aggressive England. "We came close to winning last time, but we let the matches slip away," Masood said. "We know how they play, but at the end of the day we have to see how to tackle it."

Gauff rallies to reach China Open final

AP ■ BEIJING

Coco Gauff rallied from a set down for the third consecutive match as she beat Paula Badosa 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 to reach the China Open final on Saturday. The sixth-ranked Gauff will play Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic in Sunday's final. Muchova defeated Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 6-4 in the other semifinal. Gauff, who has a 7-1 record in tour finals, has made a habit of slow starts in Beijing this week and the script played out again as the No. 19-ranked Badosa took a tight opening set, saving 10 of 11 break points. The Spaniard then built a 3-1 lead in the second set before 2023 U.S. Open champion Gauff shifted the momentum by saving four break points and then breaking back to level at 4-4. Gauff held for 5-4 and broke Badosa again to force a deciding set. "I felt like I was playing the right way the whole time, just a couple of unforced errors, she was playing well too," Gauff said on court. "I was trying to stay focused. Mentally, I just tried to reset. I got down a couple of times, and I tried to bounce back." With all the momentum, Gauff broke Badosa three more times - for the loss of one of her own - as she clinched the match in 2 hours, 20 minutes. Gauff also lost the first set to Naomi Osaka in the fourth round before winning by walkover and against No. 115-ranked Yulia Starodubtseva in the quarterfinals. "I've had tough opponents the whole tournament," Gauff said. Shanghai Masters Carlos Alcaraz and top-ranked Janik Sinner showed no



signs of fatigue from their China Open final this week as they advanced in Shanghai with comfortable straight-set victories in their opening matches. The second-ranked Alcaraz, who beat the Italian in Beijing on Wednesday for his fourth title of the year, recorded his 10th consecutive win against 19-year-old Shang Juncheng of China 6-2, 6-2. The Spaniard won the first nine points of the match and four of seven break points as he rushed into a third-round meeting with another Chinese player, Wu Yibing. "I'm not used to playing against players younger than me," Alcaraz said. "He has been playing good tennis lately, lifting his first ATP (title in Chengdu), so I'm pretty sure he's going to climb the rankings. I'm just happy to be able to win these kinds of matches." Sinner, who is dealing with a doping case, had a comfortable 6-1, 6-4 outing against Taro Daniel of Japan for his 250th career win. Sinner, who won the U.S. Open last month for his

second major of the year, fired 12 aces and 38 winners. "I felt quite comfortable today," said Sinner, who next plays Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina. "I feel in good shape, which is very important for me. I was serving really, really well, especially in important moments, and was moving well." Third-ranked Alexander Zverev began with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Italian qualifier Mattia Bellucci, while fourth-ranked Novak Djokovic had a tougher task prevailing 7-6 (3), 7-6 (9) over Alex Michelsen of the United States. No. 65-ranked Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic broke sixth-ranked Andrey Rublev seven times on his way to an upset 6-7 (7), 6-4, 6-3 victory. Yosuke Watanuki also surprised by beating No. 35-ranked Brendan Nakashima 7-6 (4), 6-3. The Japanese qualifier next plays seventh-ranked Taylor Fritz of the U.S. Global Chess League: Alaskan Knights stay unbeaten; Ganges break losing streak

Global Chess League: Alaskan Knights stay unbeaten; Ganges break losing streak

PTI ■ LONDON

PBS Alaskan Knights continued their unbeaten run, while Ganges Grandmasters secured their first win in a dramatic day three of the Tech Mahindra Global Chess League here. The PBS Alaskan Knights extended their lead with a dominant 12-3 win over the Ganges Grandmasters, maintaining a perfect record with four consecutive victories, earning them 12 match points and 49 game points. Defending champions Triveni Continental Kings played two matches on Saturday -- winning the first 15-3 against American Gambits, where Alireza Firouzja defeated world number two Hikaru Nakamura, but narrowly

losing the second to Ganges Grandmasters. Triveni remained in second place with six match points and 43 game points, just six behind the leaders. Alpine Sg Pipers also impressed, defeating upGrad Mumba Masters 12-4. They now sit in third place with six match points, though their 27 game points from three matches leave them behind Triveni. UpGrad Mumba Masters, in fourth place, have only one win from four matches and 29 game points after losing to the Pipers. Big upset

finally breaking their losing streak with a 10-8 win over Triveni. With one win and 24 game points from four matches, they now sit in fifth place. Hikaru Nakamura's American Gambits are in last place, with only one match victory and 16 game points from three matches, having been dismantled 15-3 by Triveni. Anand's team, desperate for their first victory after three crushing defeats, was under immense pressure. Already reeling from an earlier loss in the day, Anand had to rally his team, using his authority as a former world champion to lift their spirits. But no pep talk could help on the board, where players had to prove they could outmanoeuvre their

opponents. After the coin toss, Triveni played with the white pieces, putting Anand on the back foot as Black against Alireza Firouzja. The young French star steadily built-up pressure, and by move 22, had a winning position. Despite Anand's best efforts to resist, he eventually had to concede defeat, giving the lead to Triveni. Firouzja's stellar form continued, having defeated three giants -- Carlsen, Anand, and Nakamura -- over the past two days. Meanwhile, Ganges' Arjun Erigaisi settled for a fourth consecutive draw, splitting the point with Wei Yi, a further sign of his struggling form. Triveni extended their lead when Alexandra Kosteniuk

beat Vaishali Rameshbabu. However, Parham Maghsoudloo, who had blundered a winning position in the previous match, redeemed himself with a key victory over Teimour Radjabov, keeping Ganges in the fight. With the junior board ending in a draw, the fate of the match rested on Valentina Gunina and Nurgyul Salimova. In a drawn position, Gunina pushed too hard despite her team being ahead. She eventually lost on time, handing Ganges the crucial four points they needed to pull off their first win of the tournament. The final score of the match was 10-8, for Ganges.

Amir Ali to lead Indian Jr hockey team in Sreejesh's coaching debut

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Amir Ali has been named captain, with Rohit as his deputy, in the 18-member junior hockey squad for the Sultan of Johor Cup that will mark the first assignment for head coach PR Sreejesh in Malaysia from October 19. India will begin their campaign against Japan on October 19, followed by matches against Great Britain (October 20), hosts Malaysia (Oct 22), Australia (Oct 23) and New Zealand (Oct 25). The top two teams will make the final slated for October 26. Defender Amir Ali and forward Gurjot Singh were part of the senior team that defended their title at the Asian Champions Trophy in Moqi, China. Amir seamlessly filled in for the injured defender Sanjay during the tournament, while Gurjot led the forward line, showcasing immense potential. "The Sultan of Johor Cup is



an important tournament in our calendar as always. The tournament will serve as a litmus test for the team

ahead of the Men's Junior Asia Cup Muscat 2024 in November this year," captain Ali stated in a Hockey India

release. "All the players are excited to play some intense hockey matches in Malaysia."

Vice-captain Rohit expressed enthusiasm at being coached by Sreejesh, saying, "We have an Indian hockey legend taking charge of the team, the whole team is raring to go. PR Sreejesh is one of the most experienced players to play for India, and we look forward to making him proud in our first tournament. "The mood in the camp has been excellent and we want to capitalise on this by showcasing our potential at the Sultan of Johor Cup." Squad: Goalkeepers: Bikramjit Singh, Ali Khan Defenders: Amir Ali (C), Talem Priyobarta, Shardanand Tiwari, Sukhvinder, Anmol Ekka, Rohit (VC) Midfielders: Ankit Pal, Manmeet Singh, Rosan Kujur, Mukesh Toppo, Chandan Yadav Forwards: Gurjot Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Dilraj Singh, Arshdeep Singh, Mohd. Konain Dad.

Underdogs strike as Bayern rivals Leverkusen and Dortmund drop points in Bundesliga

AP ■ Berlin

Bayern Munich won Saturday as Bundesliga rivals Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Dortmund dropped points to modest opponents. Dortmund slumped at Union Berlin to a 2-1 defeat without injured forward Karim Adeyemi, who starred in the team's 7-1 rout of Celtic in the Champions League on Tuesday. Defending champion Leverkusen squandered an early two-goal lead over promoted Holstein Kiel and drew 2-2. It was only Kiel's second point in its debut top-flight season. Leverkusen played in a special black jersey with red trim to commemorate the club's 120th anniversary, and for Xabi Alonso it was

also a special occasion - the Spanish coach took over exactly two years before. Leverkusen fans didn't have to wait long to celebrate after Victor Boniface opened the scoring in the fourth minute and Jonas Hofmann made it 2-0 four minutes after that. Leverkusen looked set for a rout. But the home team failed to make more of its dominance - Boniface had another goal ruled out for offside and Kiel secured a lifeline before the break when Max Geschwil scored after a corner. Fiete Arp scored an unlikely equalizer from the penalty spot in the 69th. "I wouldn't say arrogance, but I'd say there's a bit of complacency. We need to stay concentrated, because we want to be a better team," Alonso said.



"We could win a few games, and not win a few games, up and down, but that's not our goal. Today we didn't have the best competitive mindset." Dortmund disappoints Union illustrated early on against Dortmund why it's the club with one of the most ineffective forward lines in the league. The Kopenick-based team had only four goals from its opening five games. Former Union player Nico Schlottbeck offered assistance by conceding a penalty with a foul on the lively Benedict Hollerbach, and Kevin Vogt duly scored the opener from the spot in the 25th. The home team kept pushing and got its due reward before the break when Yorbe Vertessen let fly

through a host of players for 2-0. Early in the second half, masked Union ultras displayed an array of Dortmund scarves and banners presumably confiscated from their rivals before the game. They hung the tattered flags on the railings behind one of the goals and raised their fists, goading the Dortmund fans far away on the other side. Former Union player Julien Ryerson responded on the field in the 62nd by firing inside the far post for 2-1, set up by Julian Brandt after a period of pressure from the visitors but it wasn't enough. Also, Freiburg won at Werder Bremen 1-0, and Wolfsburg enjoyed a 3-1 win in Wolfsburg.

KAVYA EYES ACTION-PACKED ROLE IN NEXT PROJECT

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After the failure of her previous film *Double iSmart*, Kavya Thapar is now coming up with a new movie titled *Viswam*. She stars alongside Gopichand with Srinu Vaitla as the director. The movie will be coming out on October 11. The actress is optimistic that this movie will bring her great achievement. "Compared to my other films, the premise and my role are both very new," shares Kavya Thapar as she speaks about the film.

The actress further stated that in this upcoming film, she had worked with close to 16 comedians. "It's a big star cast and the film was shot in many different locations," said Kavya. The actress mentioned her enjoyment of Chetan Bharadwaj's music, noting that the songs have become popular on social media and the internet.

Discussing her difficulty in working on this film, she expressed that the challenge is not with the character but rather with aligning her performance with the vision of the director! "More than the character, it's challenging to work with Srinu Vaitla timing. He is a perfect director with perfect timing and you need to act according to his needs, such as when to stress and when to pause. It's a big challenge for me," said Kavya.

In this film, she plays the character of a costume designer. "It's a stylised character and initially we did some costumes for my role, but the director didn't like them. So, for my character, we went shopping in Milan," she said.

Speaking of her camaraderie with co-star Gopichand, she said both are quite opposite. "Working with Gopichand is amazing, as he is so sweet, kind and calm. I am very opposite to him; I am hyper, energetic and in the songs, dancing with him is always fun," said Kavya.

The film is being compared to Srinu Vaitla's previous film, *Venky*, which also had actors and also had train scenes. "There are so many characters and every character is motivated, designed and written beautifully. We all serve the script; it is very easy to create comic characters, but they are all genuinely needed for the script," she said. "Everybody is talking about the train sequence, which naturally happened in this film. There is a certain situation where it is necessary to travel by train and it is completely new. Of course, after the movie, you definitely compare this particular scene with the *Venky* film, but it is not just simply the railway sequence. It is necessary in the film and it came out very nice," she said.

The actress further spoke about how well her character has been designed. "My persona is incredibly humorous and distinct. I mean,

I do have a lot of glamour quotient in this film as well, nonetheless, I'm not sure how much that changed. Additionally, I'm hoping for additional screenplays that will allow me to act more, but sadly, none have come to me yet. If viewers adore me and see me this way, I will be getting more scripts like this even if I really intended to do something more modestly glamorous," said Kavya.

"I wanted to do an action film, maybe a psycho killer kind of film also. As an actor, I would like to do different kinds of characters! I want to avoid cutting myself off from everything because I haven't experienced it all. I would like to have great character if provided and I know I can justify the character," she said.

The actress doesn't seem to be concerned about the movie's outcome. "Success or failure is not in my hands, so it is not my problem. I do my work and I always give my best and then I leave to God. It's all in the audience's hands," she said.

About her upcoming projects, she gives a funny answer. "As if now, I have a lot in the pipeline; I am taking a lot of narration. But I will speak only after signing is done and the money comes into my account, then I'll tell you about the film," she said. She added that she is taking the Telugu language seriously. "I am taking classes for the language, I can understand it and soon I will speak fluently in Telugu," she said.

Kavya Thapar is known for her stunning appearance both onscreen and offscreen. The actress had faced continuous disappointments with her latest movies and is now looking forward to the release of *Viswam*, directed by Srinu Vaitla. In an interview, she discusses her role, glamour, upcoming projects and her dream roles



CHILLING FANTASY HORROR AWAITS WITH TRIKAALA

The number of horror and fantasy films being produced is increasing. According to the creators, *Trikaala* is a mystical adventure that mixes elements of fantasy and horror, ensuring a captivating experience. Mani Tellaguti directed the film, with Shraddha Das, Ajay and the lead roles played by child actor Master Mahendran. Producer Dil Raju, who is

known for his success, has unveiled the initial glance of the movie.

As per the makers, the movie is based in the mystical Kumari Khandam, a legendary land rich in folklore. The tagline 'Script of God' suggests a mysterious and captivating plot. Radhika Srinivas is in charge of creating this movie. Typically, horror movies require unique background music, creating a spooky atmosphere that combines imagination with unsettling, supernatural terror. Director Mani Tellaguti has offered a unique and creative approach to the Kumari Khandam legend, establishing a world that is both captivating and scary. The makers also believe that *Trikaala* transports viewers to a place where magic and fear come together. They are preparing to soon launch the movie in every language!

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Nikhil Siddhartha sends fans into frenzy with his new film



Lately, updates on the film *Swayambhu*, which is directed by Bharath Krishnamachari, are being shared as young actor Nikhil Siddhartha works on the project. However, meanwhile, the actor shocked everyone with another movie called *Appudo Ippudo Eppudo* helmed by Sudheer Varma. Many fans of Siddhartha are curious about the start and end dates of the film shoot and are eagerly awaiting the release of the first look as well as the planned Diwali release!

Nikhil rose to fame across the country with his hit movie *Karthikeya 2* and is now occupied with several upcoming projects. Director Sudheer Varma and Nikhil have collaborated on two successful projects, *Swamy Rara* and *Keshava*, previously.

This Nikhil and Sudheer Varma collaboration film is being produced by well-known producer BVS Prasad under his SVCC banner. The initial glance displays Nikhil and Rukmini Vasanth strolling together. Kannada actress Rukmini Vasanth, who is quite popular, is stepping into Telugu cinema with this movie. Divyansha Kaushik is also playing a significant role, along with Harsha Chemudu in a leading role. Karthik is providing music for the songs, with Sunny MR being brought in for the background score.

Sai Ronak pinning hopes on *Rewind!*

Young actor Sai Ronak receives another opportunity, this time in the movie *Rewind!*. Kalyan Chakravarthy holds the roles of director and producer. The actor is searching for a lucky break and is banking on *Rewind!* which will be out on October 18. The actor expressed his liking for the script and wished for the film to be successful.

"We made this film with a small team and a good script and story. We didn't compromise on the budget, because the content is good," said Sai Ronak about the film. He added that the film's director and producer Kalyan is passionate about films. "It is a matter of pride that director Kalyan, being an NRI, is passionate about films and he invested in a good film like *Rewind!*," said Sai Ronak.

He is confident that the Telugu audience will definitely love this film. He also announced the release date of this film as October 18. He is confident that he will get good success with this one.

Amrutha Chowdhary is the female lead and this is her debut film. "This is my first film on the big screen. This is not only the first film for me, but also many other people like the director, editor and cinematographer. The screenplay of this film is very good and I am sure that this film will definitely be liked by everyone," said Amrutha. Talking about the film and story, producer and director Kalyan Chakravarthy said, the film is made on a time travel with love and a sci-fi backdrop. "The movies on time travel are always successful and this film is a screenplay-based one," said the director. He hopes that his *Rewind!* made on time travel will taste success.



Second Ashok Galla movie sets release date

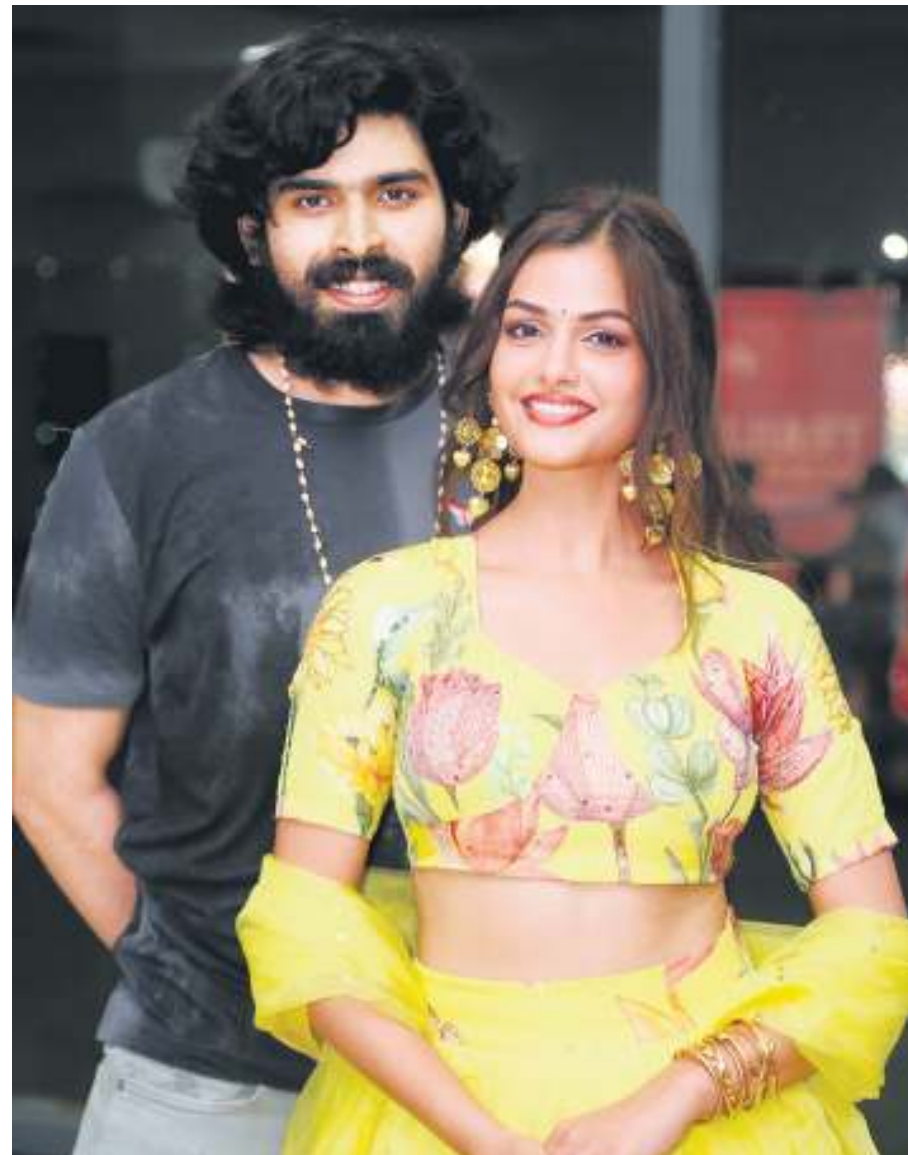
Ashok Galla, the son of Mahesh Babu's sister, made his first appearance as the main actor in *Hero*. Following a two-year pause, the actor will be releasing his second movie titled *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*. The film, directed by Arjun Jandhyala and produced by Balakrishna, is scheduled to be released on November 14, as announced by the makers on Sunday.

"When Prashanth Varma narrated the story, I adapted it with all commercial ingredients and it is a completely screenplay-based one.

Recently Prashanth Varma has seen the film and he liked it and expressed his happiness," said Arjun Jandhyala, the director of *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*. He added that the story has a mythological touch. The protagonist name is Krishna, female lead name is Satyabhama and the villain is Kamsa. "There is also a supernatural thing in the film," said the director. For the record, the director said that people may compare this film with Mahesh Babu starrer *Murari*. "When you are watching the film, you can

feel the divine in it. Every character is going to be highlighted," said the director.

Lead actor Ashok Galla thanked Prashanth Varma for providing this story. "When he wrote the story, everyone got curious because of his *Hanuman*. The story is highlighted and after watching it, you can feel that it is a good film," said Ashok. Manasa Varanasi is making her debut as the female lead in this film. "I started my journey with this film and now the release date is near. I played Satyabhama and it's a challenging one to me," she said.



STANDALONE

The celebrations for the success of the trailer for *Mr. Idiots* and the song *Kanharu Kanharu* were held during the enthusiasm of students from Dhruba Fashion Technology College. The movie stars Maadhav, nephew of Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja and brother of Raghu, with Simran Sharma as the female lead. The upcoming theatrical release in November is directed by Gowri Ronanki and called *Mr. Idiots*.