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**India, Maldives ink currency swap agreement**

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**STATUS QUO**

ON INTEREST RATES LIKELY

8



**Sudheer Babu on his scarring experience on sets of Maa Nanna SUPERHERO**

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**QUOTE OF THE DAY**



**The Congress government will disburse Rythu Bharosa funds to farmers after fully implementing the farm loan waiver scheme. The protests of farmers would have hit Congress leaders directly if the public had been unhappy. Why is the PM unable to see the Rs 18,000 crore spent on waiving farm loans**



- Tummala Nageshwar Rao, Minister Telangana

P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Goddess appears as Mahachandi...**

On the fifth day of the Dasara Navaratri festival celebrations, the presiding Goddess Kanakadurga manifested as Sri Mahachandi Devi on Monday. Goddess Sri Mahachandi Devi is revered as the trishakti embodiment of Mahalakshmi, Mahakali, and Mahasaraswati, symbolising the power to vanquish evil and protect the virtuous. Devotees believe that praying to Sri Mahachandi is akin to worshipping all deities, as she encompasses their divine powers. Her blessings are said to confer education, fame, and wealth, while also transforming...

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**In this Lucknow temple, demon...**

While Ravana is killed throughout the country on Vijaydashami or Dussehra, there is a temple in Lucknow where the demon king is worshipped on the occasion. In the Char Dham temple at Rani Katra in the old city area, the "Ravana Darbar" is present where he is worshipped by some people. Siyaram Awasthi, a priest at the temple, told PTI Videos. He said that the temple was constructed about 135 years ago. "The Char Dham temple was built by Kundan Lal Kunj Bihari Lal and now his sixth generation is..."

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**Jio seeks revised paper on satellite...**

Reliance Jio has urged telecom regulator Trai to come up with a revised paper on spectrum allocation for satellite communication alleging that it ignores the key point of ensuring level-playing field between satellite and terrestrial services. In a letter to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) Chairman, Anil Kumar Lahoti, Reliance Jio has sought revision of the consultation paper on recommending rules for "terms and conditions for the assignment of spectrum for..."

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**Our batters don't know how to...**

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has candidly admitted that his team doesn't know how to consistently post 180 plus totals in a T20 game. Batting has been Bangladesh's weak link for a while, especially their approach in the powerplay. They struggled to 39 for two in six overs on Sunday night before managing a below par 127. India chased that down in just 11.5 overs to go 1-0 up in the series. "We have the ability, but we have room for improvement in our skills. We have been batting..."

-SPORTS

## PM-CM meet 'fruitful'

NAIDU UPDATES MODI ON DEVELOPMENTS IN AP



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The top leaders of the coalition NDA government at the Centre and Andhra Pradesh met in Delhi on Monday. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi held discussions in the evening and reportedly had a fruitful meeting.

In a message on the social media platform X, Chandrababu Naidu stated, "I had a fruitful meeting with PM Narendra Modi," and thanked him for the approval granted by the Union Cabinet for the revised cost estimates of the Polavaram project.

He also informed PM Modi about the developments in Andhra Pradesh and expressed his gratitude

- Naidu thanks Modi for the approval of revised cost estimates for the Polavaram project.
- Expresses gratitude to PM for support regarding fiscal stress and Amaravati's development.
- He is scheduled to meet several Union Ministers for further discussions.

for the PM's overall support to the state concerning its fiscal stress and the development of the capital city, Amaravati.

Naidu was accompanied by several TDP MPs, including Lavu Krishnadeva Rayulu, Pemmasani

Chandrasekhar, Ram Mohan Naidu, and others.

Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled to meet several Union Ministers on Tuesday. He will stay overnight in Delhi and is set to meet Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday morning. The Chief Minister is expected to discuss funding for the development of National Highways, including the Amaravati Outer Ring Road. After he meets with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at 11:30 AM, he will meet Piyush Goyal and Hardeep Singh Puri in the evening. Chandrababu is also scheduled to meet Home Minister Amit Shah at 8 PM and later have a meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at 11 PM, sources say.



**Disciplinary action against IPS officer Sunil Kumar**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has initiated disciplinary action against senior IPS officer PV Sunil Kumar, who is currently serving as the DGP on a waiting list. Sunil Kumar's comments on social media have put him in a difficult position. According to the government order, the charges against him include a social media remark related to an FIR filed on July 11 under several sections of the IPC at the Nagarampalem police station in Guntur district.

The government has also accused him of violating Rule 7 of the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968. This rule prohibits public servants from making statements that could criticise government policies, cause embarrassment between the Central and State governments, or strain relations with foreign governments. Sunil Kumar's post, made on July 12 in response to the FIR filed against him, is central to these charges.

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## Stone for new railway zone may be laid in Dec

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During his two-day visit, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu met Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday evening. Following the meeting, the Chief Minister posted on the social media platform X, "I met with Hon'ble Union Minister of Railways, IT, and I&B, Shri @AshwiniVaishnaw Ji, and thanked him for advancing the long-pending assurance of establish-

ing a Railway Zone with Vizag as its Headquarters. I am hopeful that the foundation stone for the new zone will be laid by December. The Hon'ble Minister has informed me that the Railways is investing Rs 73,743 crore in various infrastructure projects across Andhra Pradesh. These projects include the four-laning of the Howrah-Chennai stretch in AP, modernising 73 stations, and introducing more local trains. [Continued on Page 2](#)

## AP seeks 800 spl police officers to combat LWE



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has sought Rs 25.69 crore from the Centre as reimbursement for the honorarium paid to special police officers. Anitha participated in a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday, which focused on tackling Left-wing extremism. [Continued on Page 2](#)

**CRPF ASI electrocuted during combing operation**

**PADERU:** In a tragic incident, an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of the CRPF was electrocuted during a combing operation in the forest area near Donkarai village on Monday. According to police reports, the deceased, identified as Tirunaik Arasu, was attached to the CRPF's 42nd battalion. While participating in a combing operation in the forest, Arasu accidentally came in contact with an electric fence, which had been illegally erected by poachers to trap wild animals. Arasu was rushed to the Area Hospital in Chintur, where he succumbed to burn injuries.

## Ex-MP Suresh arrested again

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Bapatla MP Nandigam Suresh was arrested once again on Monday and produced before the Mangalagiri court. It may be recalled that Suresh was earlier arrested in connection with the attack on the TDP central office in Mangalagiri and was remanded to Guntur jail. Although the AP High Court had recently granted him conditional bail, he remained in jail due to a delay in submitting the surety bond. Meanwhile, the Tulluru police arrested Suresh after the Mangalagiri court issued a PT warrant in connection with the murder of a woman named Mariyamma. The court has remanded him till October 21 in this case. Mariyamma died in 2020 during group clashes in Velagapudi.

## Tomato price touches Rs 100 in retail market

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Tomato has turned into a costly commodity, with 'A' grade tomatoes now priced between Rs 80 and Rs 100 in the open market of the city. Wholesale traders predict that prices may exceed Rs 100 within a few days.

The surge in tomato prices is attributed to a significant gap between supply and demand. While tomatoes are available for around Rs 75 in various Rythu Bazaars, the quality is reported to be very poor, according to one trader.

Previously, the Rajahmundry wholesale market received over 30 tonnes of tomatoes daily; however, it is now only receiving about 15 tonnes. Each Rythu Bazaar in Rajahmundry requires 50 quintals per day but is currently receiving

only 15 quintals.

Tomato prices were around Rs 18 during September and October 2023. In some Rythu Bazaars, ordinary quality tomatoes are being sold at Rs 58 per kg, while top-quality tomatoes command prices between Rs 90 and Rs 100.

In response to the scarcity and rising prices, the government has started supplying 20 to 40 trays of tomatoes to Rajahmundry Rythu Bazaars. Officials have set the price of tomatoes at Rs 58 per kg in these markets; however, consumers have to compromise on quality.



Traders have noted that pest damage to tomato crops in Madanapalle has considerably reduced yields. They expect fresh tomato crops from the Narsipatnam region to enter the market starting in December.

Meanwhile, the prices of other vegetables have also risen, making them unaffordable for the common man. Gherkins are being sold at Rs 60, bottle gourd at Rs 70, and drumsticks at Rs 20 each. A vegetable trader cited the damage to vegetable crops caused by floods in August and September as a key reason for the steep price hikes.

## Newborn stolen from GGH, suspect held with baby

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The case of a stolen newborn baby boy from the Government General Hospital (GGH) here has ended on a positive note, as the police successfully traced the infant and reunited him with his mother.

According to police reports, Naseema from Gorantla village was admitted to the GGH on Sunday for delivery and gave birth to a baby boy in the early hours of Monday. However, the baby was found missing shortly



after, leading to suspicions that he had been stolen. Upon reviewing CCTV footage, police identified a woman who had

taken the newborn from the hospital in an auto-rickshaw.

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## Stalker stabs girl, her parents in Bapatla

PNS ■ BAPATLA

In a shocking incident, a stalker attacked a girl and her parents at Kanagala village in Cherukupalli mandal during the early hours of Monday.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Bhargav Reddy, had been stalking the girl for several months, persistently pressuring her to accept his advances, which she refused. [Continued on Page 2](#)

## Nobel Prize in medicine goes to US scientists



PNS ■ STOCKHOLM

The Nobel Prize in medicine was awarded Monday to Americans Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun for their discovery of microRNA, a fundamental principle governing how gene activity is regulated.

The Nobel Assembly said that their discovery is "proving to be fundamentally important for how organisms develop and function." Ambros performed the research that led to his prize at Harvard University. He is currently a professor of natural science at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Ruvkun's research was performed at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School, where he's a professor of genetics, said Thomas Perlmann, Secretary-General of the Nobel Committee. Perlmann said he spoke to Ruvkun by phone shortly before

the announcement. "It took a long time before he came to the phone and sounded very tired, but he quite rapidly, was quite excited and happy, when he understood what, it was all about," Perlmann said.

Last year, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine went to Hungarian-American Katalin Karikó and American Drew Weissman for discoveries that enabled the creation of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 that were critical in slowing the pandemic.

The prize carries a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1 million) from a bequest left by the prize's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel.

The announcement launched this year's Nobel prizes award season. Nobel announcements continue with the physics prize on Tuesday, chemistry on Wednesday and literature on Thursday. The Nobel Peace Prize will be announced Friday and the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences on Oct 14.

The laureates are invited to receive their awards at ceremonies on Dec 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death.

**BJP CONFIDENT, CONG HOPEFUL**

## Who will have the last laugh?

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Political parties and leaders wait with bated breath as the counting day approaches in Haryana, with the ruling BJP confident of retaining power for a third term, and the Congress, which is out of power for 10 years, more than hopeful of making a comeback when results are announced on Tuesday. Officials said all preparations, including security arrangements, have been completed for the counting process which begins at 8 am on October 8.

A three-tier security arrangements have been made at counting venues," Haryana's Chief Electoral Officer Pankaj Agarwal told PTI on Monday.

The elections in Haryana are the first major direct contest between the BJP and the Congress following the Lok

**J&K, Haryana votes to be counted today**



Sabha polls, and the result here would be used by the winner to build a narrative in their favour in other states

where polls due over the next few months. The key parties in the fray are the BJP, the Congress, Aam Aadmi

Party, INLD-BSP and JJP-Azad Samaj Party. However, most seats are likely to see a direct fight between the BJP and the Congress.

Jammu and Kashmir also voted alongside Haryana, but most seats there have witnessed multi-corner contests rather than a direct Congress-BJP fight. Elections are due in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi in a few months. A total of 1,031 candidates, including 464 Independents and 101 women, are in the fray on Haryana's 90 constituencies which voted in single phase on October 5.

Several exit polls have predicted a Congress victory in Haryana which recorded a voter turnout of 67.90 per cent. Rejecting the exit poll results, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has claimed his party BJP will

form the government for a third time with full majority on October 8.

He said when results are announced on October 8 the Congress will blame Electronic Voting Machines.

On the other hand, Congress leader and former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, a frontrunner for the chief minister's post if his party wins, exuded confidence of a comfortable majority. On BJP leaders claiming that their party will return to power, Hooda had earlier stated, "What else will BJP say? They will come to know once results are out." The INLD-BSP alliance has also claimed that it will form the next government once results are declared, while JJP leader Dushyant Chautala has exuded confidence that his alliance will get good numbers. [Continued on Page 2](#)



# TTD: Time for revolutionising pilgrimage with digital tweaks

In the vast array of spiritual sanctuaries, the Lord Venkateswara temple on Tirumala Hills, run by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), stands as a beacon of everlasting hope for millions of devotees across the globe. As the custodian of the world-renowned Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, TTD needs to manage tens of millions of devotees each year. However, over the years, the TTD, despite being one of the wealthiest religious institutions globally with immense resources at its disposal, has not been able to make a pilgrimage to Tirumala a blissful experience for all devotees. For the common people a pilgrimage to the Tirumala shrine often proves to be more of an ordeal than a serene journey. For, outdated systems and inefficient processes hinder the institution's ability to manage the ever-increasing influx of

pilgrims effectively. As the world embraces digital platforms across sectors, the question arises: Why hasn't Tirumala followed suit? Complex industries like aviation have integrated technological innovations to streamline logistical systems, ensuring smooth booking, check-ins, and real-time updates. If something as intricate as air travel can benefit from such advancements, why can't the experience and comfort levels of pilgrims at Tirumala improve? The time has come for Tirumala to embrace the digital age, enhancing the pilgrimage experience for millions seeking spiritual solace. Imagine a pilgrimage as smooth and seamless as booking a flight—no more endless lines, uncertainty regarding accommodations, or privileged access disrupting the sacred *darshan*. Just as air travelers enjoy hassle-free digital check-ins, pilgrims at

**Imagine a pilgrimage as smooth and seamless as booking a flight—no more endless lines, uncertainty regarding accommodations, or privileged access disrupting the sacred darshan. Just as air travelers enjoy hassle-free digital check-ins, pilgrims at Tirumala should be able to embark on their spiritual journey without the stress of logistical hurdles**

Tirumala should be able to embark on their spiritual journey without the stress of logistical hurdles. Yet, for most devotees today, this vision remains far from reality. Despite TTD's vast financial and administrative resources, its systems are riddled with inefficiencies. What should be a peaceful spiritual sojourn is often marred by long queues, confusing procedures, and an overarching lack of transparency. With its abundant resources, TTD is ideal-

ly positioned to undertake a technological overhaul to modernize and simplify the pilgrimage experience for devotees. One of the most critical areas for improvement is the *darshan* booking process. Pilgrims should be able to log into a dedicated TTD app, select their preferred *darshan* slot, and receive a QR code for seamless entry—just like booking a flight. This simple digital solution could eliminate hours of waiting and



**DR. ARJA SRIKANTH**  
(Former Special Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

ease the burden on temple staff. Real-time notifications for any delays, similar to flight status updates, would provide an additional layer of convenience for devotees. The process could be further streamlined by introducing automated check-ins at the temple gates. Pilgrims could scan their QR codes at self-

service kiosks, reducing the need for human intervention. For those unable to access mobile devices, e-seva centers could offer printed QR codes, ensuring inclusivity. By automating these processes, TTD staff could focus on more critical responsibilities while preserving the sacred atmosphere within the temple. A digital transformation could also address the disparity in *darshan* access. VIPs and influential individuals currently enjoy swift, uninterrupted *darshan*, while ordinary pilgrims are forced to endure hours of waiting. This inequality has been further exacerbated by multiple *darshan* classifications, leading to confusion and frustration. A digital booking system based on a first-come, first-served basis would level the playing field, ensuring that every devotee has an equal opportunity to experience *darshan*.

Accommodations remain another significant challenge. Despite booking months in advance, many pilgrims still struggle to secure lodging. Integrating room bookings into the same app used for *darshan* reservations would simplify the planning process, offering a unified platform for managing the entire pilgrimage experience. This would make the entire journey more efficient and stress-free for devotees. Transparency and safety must be the cornerstones of Tirumala's transformation. Clear, standardized pricing for rooms, ceremonies, and services should be made available through the app to reduce overcharging and confusion. Meanwhile, safety concerns, particularly for pilgrims trekking the Alipiri and Srivari Mettu pathways, must be addressed with protective barriers to shield devotees against wild animal attacks, ensuring both physical and spiritual

security. To further promote fairness, TTD could implement a policy limiting repeat visits within a specific period, with visits tracked digitally to prevent individuals, particularly those with influence, from receiving multiple *darshans* at the expense of first-time visitors. This would ensure that more devotees have the opportunity to participate in *darshan*, rather than a select few enjoying privileges repeatedly. The time for Tirumala's digital transformation is now. TTD has the resources, influence, and responsibility to revolutionize the pilgrimage experience for millions. By blending modern technology with its sacred traditions, Tirumala can become a symbol not only of spiritual grace but also of efficiency, equality, and transparency. The future of pilgrimage is upon us, and Tirumala must lead the way.

## Olectra to supply 327 electric buses to HP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To enhance green mobility in Himachal Pradesh, the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) invited bids for 327 electric buses (297 units of 9-metre buses and 30 units of 12-metre buses) for outright purchase. After completing the tender process and technical evaluation, Olectra and Switch Mobility were found to be technically qualified, with Olectra emerging as the lowest bidder based on its offered rates. HRTC is expected to finalise the order shortly and award it to Olectra to ensure the swift deployment of the



buses and meet the urgent transportation needs of the public. In the first phase of electric bus deployment, HRTC launched a pioneering electric bus service between Kullu, Manali, and Rohtang Pass in September 2017. A fleet of 25 buses, supplied by Olectra, was introduced into service. This marked a historic mile-

stone, as it became the first electric bus service in the world to operate at an altitude of 13,000 feet along the Manali-Rohtang highway. The deployed Olectra buses have showcased excellent performance in navigating the challenging mountainous terrain, providing reliable and efficient public transport even at high altitudes. Their operation has significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions, resulting in improved air quality in the region. The electric buses also operate quietly, reducing noise pollution, which is vital for preserving the tranquillity of the hilly landscape.

### Rs 5 L ex gratia for kin of lightning strike victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu on Monday announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of two women who died in a lightning strike during the recent cyclonic storm.

The victims, Sankamma and Malliswari, were struck by lightning while working in their agricultural fields in Rayachoti. The Chief Minister assured Rs 5 lakh as ex gratia to their families. He also instructed the District Medical and Health officials to provide the best possible treatment to those injured in the incident.

## TDP coalition swindled Rs 534 cr in donor funds for flood relief: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR district YSRCP president Devineni Avinash and Vijayawada Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi have severely criticised the TDP coalition leaders for allegedly misappropriating Rs 534 crore in donor funds intended for flood relief. They accused the coalition of submitting false accounts despite receiving generous contributions from donors across the globe, moved by the plight of the flood victims. Addressing the media at the party office on Monday, Devineni Avinash lashed out at the TDP coalition government for failing to assist the flood-affected people properly. He



alleged that, instead of providing genuine help, the government exploited the situation for publicity and corruption. Avinash further pointed out that the government falsely claimed to have spent Rs 1.40 crore but did not even establish a single rehabilitation centre. He

highlighted the inflated claims of Rs 368 crore spent on food, Rs 26 crore on bottled drinking water, and Rs 23 crore on candles and cooking stoves, stating that flood victims were deprived of necessities for three days. He demanded that the government disclose details of the

contractors involved and ensure transparency in the utilisation of the relief funds. Mayor Bhagyalakshmi also questioned the government's expenditure, particularly the claim of Rs 23 crore spent on candles and matchboxes, which she termed as exaggerated. She expressed doubts over the government's assertion of deploying 412 drones for food distribution, noting the absence of any evidence during the relief operations. She also wondered what happened to the food provided daily by charitable organisations, such as the Akshaya Patra Foundation. Both leaders urged the government to be transparent in its spending and ensure that the flood victims receive the assistance they deserve.

## Disciplinary action against IPS...

Continued from Page 1

The order directs Sunil Kumar to submit a written statement within 15 days, specifying whether he admits or denies the charges and indicating if he wishes to be heard in person. Failure to do so will result in action being taken based on the available evidence. The government has also cautioned him against attempting to use political or external influence in this matter, which would constitute a further violation of service conduct rules. The disciplinary proceedings include a detailed statement of imputations of misconduct. While no witnesses have been listed, the government has included several documents to support the charges, such as the FIR and Kumar's social media post. The inquiry will proceed if Sunil Kumar denies the charges or if the government deems it necessary.

## Free DSC coaching for SC/ST aspirants

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director of the Social Welfare Department, B. Lavanya Veni, announced on Monday that the Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare Departments will offer free residential DSC coaching for SC/ST aspirants. This initiative aims to enhance the skills of candidates preparing for the DSC exam, enabling them to secure teaching positions in government schools. The programme will be implemented across Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare study circles and empanelled institutions throughout the State. Lavanya Veni stated that the Social Welfare Department will provide coaching for 3,050 candidates, while the Tribal Welfare Department will support 2,000 candidates in empanelled institutions and study circles. The coaching will be conducted in a resi-

dential format, with a duration of three months. She further noted that the institutions offering coaching must have at least two years of experience in DSC coaching during previous recruitment cycles. Additionally, they must have facilitated 100 selections in past DSC recruitments and possess a minimum average annual turnover of Rs 40 lakh over the last three years. The Expression of Interest (EOI) document (Document Number: 757795) has been uploaded on the AP e-procurement portal for the empanelment of coaching institutes to train SC and ST aspirants for the DSC exam. Interested institutions can download the bid/EOI document online at <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in> starting from 07.10.2024. The last date for submission of proposals is 21.10.2024.

## Botsa slams TDP for price hike

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM/PRODDATUR

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council and MLC Botsa Satyanarayana has criticised the TDP coalition government for its widespread failures within just four months, highlighting the ineffective implementation of the free sand supply policy, rising prices of essential commodities, and negligence in addressing key issues like the proposed privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Speaking to media persons in Visakhapatnam on Monday, Botsa criticised the government's claim of providing free sand, stating that the current prices are higher than during the previous government's term, severely affecting the construction industry and 25 sectors dependent on it. He demanded the proper implementation of the free sand policy by October 15, 2024. The former minister also addressed the sharp rise in the cost of essential commodities,



citing pulses priced at Rs 160 per kilogram and rice at Rs 65 per kilogram. He called for the immediate establishment of counters in Rythu Bazaars to provide essential goods at affordable prices. Regarding the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Botsa urged coalition leaders Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan to oppose the privatisation efforts, stressing that the plant holds immense sentimental value for the people. He also raised concerns about the delay in establishing

a railway zone in Visakhapatnam and questioned the incomplete investigation into the drug seizure at the port, calling for transparency and decisive action. Meanwhile, in a separate press conference in Proddatur, former MLA and YSRCP Official Spokesperson Rachamalla Prasad Reddy launched a strong critique against the coalition government, citing widespread failures within four months. He stated that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has not fulfilled any election promises except for increasing pensions, which are also being reduced, with 1.5 lakh pensions already cancelled. Reddy condemned Naidu for engaging in diversionary politics and highlighted the government's failure to protect women and children, its mishandling of flood relief efforts in Vijayawada, and corruption in managing donations. He warned that until the promises are fulfilled, his party would continue to raise these issues.

## AP seeks 800 spl...

Continued from Page 1

The meeting, held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, was attended by Chief Ministers, Home Ministers, Chief Secretaries, and Directors General of Police (DGPs) of Maoist-affected States. Speaking to the media afterwards, Anitha said she also requested the Union Home Minister to allocate 800 special police officers to combat Left-wing extremism in Andhra Pradesh. She further informed that five Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) teams, previously transferred out of the State, were discussed for redeployment to strengthen anti-extremism efforts. Anitha highlighted that of the 346 mobile towers sanctioned to Andhra Pradesh under the Mobile Tower Project Phase-II, work on 211 towers is progressing swiftly. She urged the Centre to expedite the construction of the

remaining 53 towers on a war footing. The Home Minister also mentioned that proposals have been submitted to the Centre for the construction of 1,455.23 km of roads and bridges in Maoist-affected areas, with orders expected soon. Additionally, 526 acres of land at Relli in Kothavalasa mandal has been identified for setting up a Greyhounds training centre, and discussions regarding this project's clearance were held during the meeting. Anitha further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, the State Government is establishing an Anti-Narcotics Task Force to curb the smuggling and misuse of narcotic drugs. She requested the Union Home Ministry's support in capacity building and the formation of a joint task force with other States to tackle this issue.

## Newborn...

Continued from Page 1

The suspect was apprehended in Konuru village, located in Achampet mandal, and the baby was subsequently brought to the Sattenapalli DSP office. GGH Superintendent Kiran Kumar revealed that the woman disguised herself as a postnatal patient to gain access to the hospital and steal the newborn. In light of this incident, he assured that security measures at the GGH would be further strengthened. The newborn baby boy was later handed over to his relieved mother.

## Who will have the last laugh?...

Continued from Page 1

Aam Aadmi Party supremo Arvind Kejriwal, whose party contested Haryana polls on its own, has been claiming that no government in Haryana can be formed without the support of his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The ruling BJP has been saying that its return to office will be powered by its record on good governance, transparent administration, equitable development, jobs on merit, welfare initiatives for all sections including farmers, poor and the weak. However, Congress and other opposition parties have dubbed the BJP government a failure, and targeted it on issues related to farmers, unemployment, Agniver, inflation, law and order, and others. Prominent among those in the fray are Chief Minister Saini (Ladwa), Leader of Opposition

Hooda (Garhi Sampla-Kiloi), INLD's Abhay Chautala (Ellenabad), JJP's Dushyant Chautala (Uchana Kalan), BJP's Anil Vij (Ambala Cantt), Capt Abhimanyu (Narnaund), O P Dhanekar (Badli), AAP's Anurag Dhandha (Kalayat) and Congress' Vinesh Phogat (Julana). From Tosham seat, former MP Shruti Choudhry of BJP and Anirudh Chaudhary, both cousins, are contesting. From Dabwali, Devi Lal's grandson Aditya Devi Lal, an INLD candidate, is taking on JJP's Digvijay Singh Chautala, great grandson of the former deputy prime minister. The BJP has fielded former chief minister late Bhajan Lal's grandson Bhavya Bishnoi for the Adampur segment of Hisar while its nominee from Ateli in Mahendragarh is Arti Rao, whose father Rao Inderjit Singh is a Union minister.

Among the Independents are Savitri Jindal (Hisar), Ranjit Chautala (Rania) and Chitra Sarwara (Ambala Cantt). Taking on Dushyant from Uchana is Congress' Brijendra Singh, son of former Union minister Birender Singh. A few rebels from both Congress and BJP have also entered the fray. In the outgoing Assembly, the strength of ruling BJP is 41 (including the Adampur seat won in 2022 bypoll), the Congress has 28 MLAs, the JJP (6), while Haryana Lokhit Party and Indian National Lok Dal have one member each. There are four Independents, while nine seats are vacant. Seven of the nine seats fell vacant as their representatives resigned after switching sides, while the Badshahpur seat fell vacant as Independent MLA Rakesh Daulatabad died in May.

## Gold, cash stolen from woman at bus station

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

A theft took place at the Shadnagar bus station in broad daylight on Sunday sparked outrage over lack of security in the public place. A thief stole two totals of gold and Rs 28,000 from a woman passenger. The passenger, identified as Alivelu from Chinthakon dappali village, Keshampet mandal, went to the bus station to Jacharla. When she was boarding bus, a thief snatched away her purse containing cash and gold and fled. The woman's brother, Anemoni Krishna, filed complaints with both the local police and the depot manager, expressing frustration over the indifference shown by officials.

## Stalker stabs...

Continued from Page 1

Enraged by her rejection, Bhargav Reddy reportedly broke into her house in the wee hours and stabbed the girl. When her parents intervened to save her, he attacked them as well. Upon hearing the commotion, neighbours rushed to the house, causing Bhargav Reddy to flee. The injured girl and her parents were immediately shifted to the Government General Hospital in Repalle, where doctors stated that their condition was critical. The police have registered a case and are investigating the incident.

## Stone for new...

Continued from Page 1

The Government of Andhra Pradesh looks forward to partnering with Indian Railways to strengthen the logistical and commuter infrastructure in the state. The Chief Minister is scheduled to meet several Union Ministers in Delhi on Tuesday before returning to Andhra Pradesh. He will meet Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Piyush Goyal, and Hardeep Singh Puri. Later in the evening, he will meet Home Minister Amit Shah and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH  
ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT  
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**  
NIT No.21/Judicial/2024-25/ER&B/VZM/2024 Dt: 04-10-2024  
Tenders are being invited for construction of court complex building at Bobbili, in Vizianagaram district, during 2024-25 in the limits of Vizianagaram (R & B) Circle. Estimated value of the work: Rs 2100.00 lakh. The last date for submission of tenders: 29-10-2024. For details: <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in> or contact phone: 94919 11705. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, R and B Department, Vizianagaram

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# Laddus prepared as per highest quality standards: DC

## 2.5 lakh laddus ready for Moola Nakshatram



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has said that there shall be no compromise on the quality of laddu prasadam and anna prasadam at Kanaka Durga Temple. "They are being prepared in accordance with the highest quality standards and keeping in mind the rush of devotees, measures are being taken to ensure availability of required laddu from time to time," she said. On the occasion of Dasara Navaratri festival celebrations, Collector Srijana conducted a surprise inspection of the laddu preparations centre (Laddu Potu) and anna prasadam preparation centres

in Vijayawada Brahmin Street on Monday. Later, the Collector spoke to the media and said that steps have been taken to ensure that the highest quality standards are followed in the preparation of laddu prasadam, which is most loved by the devotees. She said that Vijaya ghee is being used for making prasadam, samples are being sent to the lab for tests, and the test reports are recorded. The Collector said that the raw materials used for the preparation of prasadam at Laddu Potu and Anna Prasad centres have been examined. According to the Food Safety SOP, quality raw materials are

being used and precautions are being followed in the preparation process. It is explained that 60,000 to 70,000 laddus are being sold every day during Navaratri celebrations. A total of 25 lakh laddus are likely to be sold during Navaratri celebrations, she said, adding that the number of devotees on the occasion of Moola Nakshatram day will be more than expected. At the same time, the demand for laddus will also increase, keeping this in mind, steps are being taken to prepare 2.5 to 3 lakh laddus. It was explained that the staff of the devasthanam is ready to increase the prasada sales centres as per the need.

She said that besides Kanakadurga Nagar, there are prasadam sale counters in railway station, bus stand and Bhawani Ghats, and the devotees can also buy them in those counters. It has been observed that high quality flour, sugar, oil, ghee, cashew nuts, raisins and cardamom powder are used to ensure that laddus last longer and laddu prasadam are prepared in the most hygienic environment. Temple Executive Engineer L Rama, AEO P Chandrasekhar, Superintendent Y Hemadurga, staff K Sitaramaiah, Jagannath Rao, Adinarayana and others were present.

## DASARA CELEBRATION AT INDRAKEELADRI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the fifth day of the Dasara Navaratri festival celebrations, the presiding Goddess Kanakadurga manifested as Sri Mahachandi Devi on Monday. Goddess Sri Mahachandi Devi is revered as the trishakti embodiment of Mahalakshmi, Mahakali, and Mahasaraswati, symbolising the power to vanquish evil and protect the virtuous. Devotees believe that praying to Sri Mahachandi is akin to worshipping all deities, as she encompasses their divine powers. Her blessings are said to confer education, fame, and wealth, while also transforming foes into friends. Many devotees hold a strong conviction that their wishes will be fulfilled by seeking her grace.

# Goddess appears as Mahachandi Devi on Day 5

## Endowments, Police & Revenue Depts, VMC make elaborate arrangements for darshan

Administration implemented extensive arrangements to ensure a smooth and comfortable experience for all. Senior officials from the Endowments, Police, Revenue, and Municipal Corporation departments are actively monitoring the necessary arrangements to facilitate easy darshan for the common devotees.



The authorities have made several provisions to enhance the spiritual experience for those visiting the temple. Temple staff and voluntary organisations are continuously distributing drinking water, buttermilk,

and milk to devotees in the queue. Thanks to the efforts of the Endowments Department, devotees are enjoying a hassle-free darshan experience.

In addition, youths from various colleges, including NSS and Red Cross volunteers, are providing invaluable assistance. Elderly and disabled devotees are transported to the Rajagopuram in wheelchairs, ensuring they can have darshan of the presiding goddess. Facilities are being managed effective-

ly to accommodate the increased number of devotees. Many are appreciative of the Police Sevadai personnel, who are also assisting the elderly and disabled in accessing darshan.

Devotees have expressed their gratitude for District Collector Dr G. Srijana's daily visits to the temple, where she inquires about the devotees' needs and ensures swift action to address any concerns, thus facilitating a smooth experience during the Dasara festival.



Pics: Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

## Will work to bring RTC back on path of profits: VC



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

PS Muniratnam assumed charge as the Vice Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) at RTC House on Monday in the presence of officials. Speaking to the media, he stated that APSRTC has the distinction of operating buses even in remote tribal areas, serving the needs of poor travellers in rural regions. He mentioned that the free bus scheme promised by the

coalition government will soon be implemented under the guidance of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. Muniratnam expressed his gratitude to the Chief Minister, describing him as a visionary leader who has entrusted him with the important responsibility of RTC Vice Chairman. He vowed to work towards steering the RTC onto a path of profitability, with the support of RTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao and Minister Ram Prasad Reddy.

Highlighting the achievements of CM Chandrababu Naidu, Muniratnam noted that the Chief Minister has been elected eight times as the legislator from the Kuppam constituency and has consistently turned crises into opportunities, driving the state's development.

## 'Put your heart and soul into your work'

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD Executive Officer (EO) J Syamala Rao urged employees assigned to Brahmotsava Garuda Seva deputation duties to carry out their responsibilities with complete dedication, putting their heart and soul into their work.

Addressing the workforce at Asthana Mandapam on Monday evening, the EO, along with TTD Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, stated that meticulous planning had gone into this year's G-day arrangements. All 183 galleries along the four Mada streets have been assigned a coordinator to oversee the facilities for pilgrims waiting in the galleries.

"If any issue arises that cannot be resolved, escalate it to higher authorities without delay. Coordination and teamwork are of utmost importance," the EO emphasised. Earlier, the Additional EO

urged every deputed employee to take the lead at their respective workstations. "We have deployed more staff than in previous years for better coordination and to ensure hassle-free services for pilgrims. For East Mada Street, 176 staff, for South 76, West 129, and North 182, bringing the total to 563 employees for over 180 galleries across the four Mada streets. Additionally, 46 senior officers and 360 ministerial staff have also been deployed," he explained. JEO Veerabrahmam, CVSO Sridhar, TTD Chief PRO Dr T Ravi, FACA O Balaji, DyEO Health Asha Jyothi, VGO Surendra, and other sectoral and senior officers, as well as deputation employees, were also present.

'Snapanam' concludes The three-day Snapana Tirumanjanam concluded won-



derfully at Ranganayakula Mandapam on Monday. The sacred aromatic bath for the utsava deities, which began at 1 pm, lasted for about two hours. The Veda Parayanandars recited Sri Suktam, Bhu Suktam, Purusha Suktam, Narayana Suktam, and Neela Suktam in rhythmic synchrony. On the third day, the deities of

Sri Malayappa, along with Sridevi and Bhudevi, were adorned with beautiful garlands and crowns after each aromatic bath. The utsava murthis were decorated attractively with cloves, cardamom, figs, pistachios, rose petals, and strawberries. TTD EO J Syamala Rao, Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, and other officials were present.

## SRM hosts workshop on road maintenance

### Minister Janardhan Reddy says govt received proposals to repair 1,393 damaged roads



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SRM University-AP, in association with the Andhra Pradesh Roads and Buildings (R&B) Department and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI), hosted a one-day workshop on exploring the challenges and best practices for State Roads Maintenance and Rehabilitation (M&R).

Kantilal Dande, Principal Secretary, (R&B), and Prof Manoranjan Parida, Director of CSIR-CRRI, along with Minister for Roads & Buildings (R&B) BC Janardhan Reddy participated virtually in the event. Dignitaries from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the R&B Department, Industries, Universities, and Research Institutes participated in the workshop to address

the critical challenges associated with the maintenance and rehabilitation of State roads.

In his virtual address, Minister Janardhan Reddy explained that the government had received proposals of Rs 290 crore to convert 1,393 damaged roads, covering 7,071 km, into pothole-free roads across the State. He said that with the latest technology and technical support from SRM University-AP, a complete restoration of the road network would be possible.

The event facilitated a constructive platform that assembled policymakers, academicians, researchers and young minds from various sectors to discuss the pressing challenges faced in the maintenance and rehabilitation of roads and exploring cost-effective and sustainable methods to achieve

the same. "Road is the index of a developed society. To tackle the key factors leading to road damage and rehabilitation, we require technical support and cutting-edge research from reputed institutes like CSIR-CRRI and new-age universities like SRM University," said Kantilal Dande.

Prof Manoranjan Parida, Director of CSIR-CRRI, delivered the keynote address elucidating the immense significance of technology on road development. "A methodical approach to Road Asset Management is pivotal to ensure successful road maintenance and rehabilitation in the State. Sustainable technologies such as recycling technology can be utilised for rehabilitation projects, which will be cost-effective and economical," said Prof Parida.

## CM misusing power, alleges Ambati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and YSRCP Guntur district president Ambati Rambabu criticised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for allegedly using political power to dismiss legal cases against himself and to target YSRCP leaders with false charges.

Addressing the media in Guntur, Rambabu pointed to an incident in Angallu, where he claimed Naidu instigated violence against YSRCP members. This led to a non-bailable Section 307 case being filed against Naidu and 20 others,



which was closed without proper investigation once the TDP came to power. In contrast, he alleged that false cases under the same section were being filed against YSRCP leaders.

Rambabu also condemned the liquor policy introduced by the TDP, stating that it caused significant financial losses to the state's treasury. He claimed that coalition MLAs threatened business owners, leading to a low number of applications for wine shop tenders, and demanded hefty bribes from those awarded licenses. He further accused the government of mismanaging the sand policy, alleging that 40 lakh tonnes of sand, stocked by the previous YSRCP government, were sold illegally under the new administration.

## AU's innovation hub mentors startups globally a-hub is one of India's fastest-growing academic incubators

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University's innovation incubator, known as a-hub, is making significant progress in the startup ecosystem, mentoring businesses in India and internationally. Recently, the incubator began mentoring startups in Mauritius through both physical and virtual cohort programmes, marking its expansion beyond Indian borders and reinforcing its growing influence in global innovation.

In an exclusive interview with The Pioneer, a-hub's CEO Ravi Eswarapu shared insights into the incubator's rapid development and future goals. Launched in March 2022, a-hub has quickly become one of India's fastest-growing academic incubators. Its sector-agnostic approach supports startups in a wide range of fields, includ-

ing technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, food, marine, energy, and social impact, among others. "Our vision is to create one of India's largest multidisciplinary integrated university incubation ecosystems by 2026," Ravi stated. By June 2026, a-hub aims to expand its incubation space to 2,00,000 square feet, support 350 active startups, generate Rs 500 crore in exports or import substitution, and create over 2,000 full-time jobs.

a-hub has built a strong presence by partnering with top incubators such as the Meity Center of Excellence in AI & IoT and the upcoming STPI Next Gen Incubation Centre at Andhra University. Its focus on diverse sectors includes emerging areas like space tech, AI, IoT, data analytics, robotics, drones, augmented reality, and defense



Ravi Eswarapu

technologies. Currently, a-hub occupies 65,000 square feet within Andhra University and hosts 186 active startups, with 88 per cent of them generating revenue. Since its inception, it has seen 34 startups graduate, raising Rs 129 crore in funding by September. The incubator has also contributed significantly to

regional employment, with 642 full-time employees working at a-hub. "We are probably the only incubator in the world that has achieved financial sustainability within just three months of starting operations," Ravi said proudly, attributing the success to strategic management and clear vision.

Looking forward, a-hub plans to extend its influence beyond Andhra Pradesh, with a new incubation centre opening soon in Hyderabad. The hub is also playing a key role in supporting other incubators across the State, offering essential mentoring and fostering collaboration. This move will further cement its role as a driving force for innovation and economic growth in the region.

On the international front, a-hub is actively supporting startups in Mauritius. "Our virtual

and physical cohort programmes are helping to close innovation gaps in developing ecosystems. We are dedicated to sharing our knowledge and supporting startups across borders," Ravi explained. He also noted that a-hub helps Indian startups explore new markets, particularly in Africa, and provides a gateway for international startups to enter the Indian market through collaborations with local companies. The hub is currently working with startups from several African countries and the Netherlands through the Indo-Dutch Commission.

By 2026, a-hub aims to establish itself as a global leader in innovation, driving entrepreneurial growth and technological progress, not just in Andhra Pradesh or India, but on an international scale.



'More sand reaches will be opened'

PNS ■ ELURU

Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy has announced that three additional sand reaches will soon be made available to address the rising demand for sand in the district.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, alongside SP K. Pratap Shiva Kishore, the Joint Collector assured that the current sand reserves in the district are sufficient for one month.

The Joint Collector highlighted that the sand distribution is efficiently managed through the Felicity Centre. Free sand supply, which began on September 20, is being implemented via the AP Sand Management Portal.

Consumers are only required to pay the transportation charges under this scheme. "Approximately 70% of the free sand bookings are made every Saturday, with the remaining 30% reserved for



Speaking at a press conference on Monday, alongside SP K. Pratap Shiva Kishore, the Joint Collector assured that the current sand reserves in the district are sufficient for one month.

missioners or tehsildars facilitate the sand supply, she added.

Dhatri Reddy further stated that from September 28 to October 6, 546 people booked more than 10 tonnes of sand each. GPS tracking has been implemented to prevent illegal sand transportation.

A Facility Centre has been established at the Collector's office to assist the public with



the free sand policy. The government can be contacted at several helpline numbers, and those facing issues can reach the Facility Centre at 1800-425-6025 or 08812-234014.

SP Shiva Kishore assured that the free sand policy is being implemented transparently and that strict action will be taken against those involved in irregularities. Enforcement officials are monitoring the process to ensure compliance, and consumers can report any problems to 112.



Support will be given to players to participate in intl events: Durgesh

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Minister for Tourism and Cinematography Kandula Durgesh asserted that the State government will provide the necessary support and encouragement to players for participating in international sports events.

The Tourism Minister inaugurated the 68th inter-district handball championship 2024 at Prakash Vidya Niketan campus, Diwan Cheruvu, near Rajahmundry on Monday.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Durgesh emphasised the need to further promote the

sport of handball. He stressed that holistic personality development is possible only when one excels in sports alongside academics.

Durgesh highlighted that the State government is committed to supporting sports at the State level and extending cooperation to elevate athletes to the national and international levels.

The Minister congratulated the DEO and PD for successfully organising the tournament, adding that such events help showcase the sports talent of East Godavari district globally.

He praised handball as a wonderful sport and noted that

organising it as a State-level tournament would increase its recognition.

Durgesh also announced plans to organise a ball badminton tournament in the State soon. He expressed happiness over the participation of players from the 13 combined districts in the championship and encouraged students to excel in sports alongside their education.

MLAs Gorantla Butchiah Chowdary, Battula Balamakrishnan, Prakash Vidyanketan chairman Vijay Prakash, and other officials were present.



Neglected tourist gems of Anakapalli await revival

Coalition government has shifted focus towards pending tourism projects in district

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

After years of neglect, Anakapalli district is gearing up for tourism resurgence, thanks to the newly-formed coalition government. The district, renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty, suffered severely under the previous YSRC rule, with little to no growth in the tourism sector despite grand promises.

The coalition government, which took office three and a half months ago, has shifted its focus towards pending tourism projects in the district.

"Tourism is a key area for the district's economic and cultural revival," said a government spokesperson. "We are determined to bring these ignored projects to completion."

One of the key areas neglected under the previous government is Kondakarla Ava, a site of lush green hills and a freshwater lake that was once a thriving habitat for various bird species.

Despite promises to develop the area, nothing materialised. "Kondakarla Ava is shrinking due to encroachment and mismanagement. The lake, once a wintering ground for Siberian birds, has lost its allure," said a local environmentalist. Boating services that once attracted tourists have dwindled, and visitors now rely on fishermen's boats for lake tours.

"The previous administration failed to develop this eco-sensitive zone," another local resident added. However, there is renewed hope. The coalition government has instructed officials from the district's forest, fisheries, and tourism departments to create a plan for developing Kondakarla Ava as an eco-tourism hub.

"The lake has immense potential, and with proper planning, we can restore its glory," said a district official involved in the project. Another untapped treasure

is the district's coastline, stretching from Paravada mandal to Payakaraopeta mandal. Every Sunday, particularly during Kartika month, crowds flock to these beaches, but facilities are scarce. Locations like Tantadi Beach, often used for film shoots, lack basic amenities. "We come here for shoots, but the lack of accommodations is a major hurdle. We have to travel all the way to Visakhapatnam or Anakapalli to find a place to stay," said a film technician.

Revupolavaram, another coastal gem in S. Rayavaram mandal, attracts tourists for its pleasant climate, yet basic infrastructure remains absent. "In 2018, the TDP government proposed developing the Pudimadaka coast, but after YCP came to power, those plans were shelved," a tourism official said.

The coalition government, however, plans to change that. "We have identified several coastal areas—Muthyalammampalem, Tantadi, Pudimadaka, Sitapalam, and Revupolavaram—as prime locations for development," said the official. "These beaches have the potential to become major tourist attractions if the right infrastructure is put in place."

Meanwhile, Bojannakonda, a prominent Buddhist site near Sankaram village, continues to attract tourists, but it too was neglected by the previous government. "There was no proper road leading to the site until last year," said a local historian. With funding from the Central government, a road was recently constructed, and additional facilities like a meditation center and a laser show theater, worth Rs. 2.5 crore, have been completed. On Friday, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu virtually inaugurated these developments in celebration of World Tourism Day.

Utilise DMF funds to complete hostel, PHC buildings: Kollu

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Mines and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, has directed officials to expedite the construction of hostels, Anganwadi centres, and Primary Health Centre (PHC) buildings using funds from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF).

During a meeting with the district Collector and MLAs of Krishna district on Monday, the Minister emphasised the need to prioritise the use of DMF funds for completing pending works on Anganwadi centres, hostels, PHCs, and school buildings across the district.

Krishna district Collector, DK Balaji, informed the Minister that Rs 20 crore is currently available from the DMF to undertake developmental works. He explained that 55 percent of the funds could be



utilised for providing drinking water, improving sewerage systems, developing PHCs, addressing mining-related health issues, and for insurance schemes, schools, laboratories, libraries, toilets, dormitories, and skill centres.

Furthermore, 40 per cent of the funds can be allocated for

the construction of roads, bridges, irrigation projects, and other infrastructure, while the remaining 5 per cent would cover administrative expenses for the Mines and Underground Department.

Collector Balaji briefed that from the available Rs 20 crore, Rs 8 crore has been earmarked

for repairs in social welfare and BC welfare hostels, Rs 2 crore for purchasing health equipment, Rs 15 lakh for tribal welfare works, and Rs 50 lakh for setting up an aqua laboratory. An additional Rs 11 crore has been proposed for various development and welfare works in all constituencies.

'Disbursal of Rythu Bharosa funds after completion of loan waiver'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao said the Congress government will give Rythu Bharosa funds to farmers after completing the farm loan waiver scheme.

Participating in the 'Face to Face with Minister' programme on Monday at the Gandhi Bhavan, he lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for stating that the loan waiver scheme had not been implemented fully. He asked whether the PM was not able to see Rs 18,000 crore spent on loan waiver. He asked the PM to explain whether there is any government like Telangana across the nation in implementing assurances.

Tummala said the pain of losing power is the BRS's and the



pain of coming to power is the BJP's. He said the BRS and the BJP are continuing their tirade by throwing mud at the Congress government.

He said the protests of farmers would have touched Congress leaders directly if there was unhappiness among the people. He said the people

and Congress activists attended the programme in huge numbers and brought their problems to the attention of the Minister and the Minister solved some problems on the spot. The Minister made a phone call to the Suryapet Collector and asked to solve the problem of an old woman

named Yadamma from Nereducharla mandal in Suryapet district. Yadamma had raised her land issue with the Minister and he directed the Collector to solve her problem. Tummala received 95 petitions regarding land issues, jobs, pensions, Indiramma houses and other issues.

Curtain-raiser held for Property Expo

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The curtain-raiser for the three-day 10th CREDAI Visakhapatnam Property Expo-2024, scheduled to be held at Gadiraju Palace at MVP Colony here from November 29 to 1 of December, was held at a hotel here on Monday.

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad officially launched the event, while SBI Dy. General Manager, Real Estate and Housing Business Unit Sitakashi Singh, and SBI Dy. General Manager Sri Pankaj Kumar graced the occasion as the guest of honour. The property expo is expected to attract a significant number of visitors, investors, and real estate enthusiasts.

Chapter Chairman KSRK Raju (Sai), along with president

Dharmender Varada and secretary V Sreenu, highlighted the significance of the Property Expo for the local real estate sector. The expo serves as a unique platform that brings together a wide variety of real estate options, allowing visitors to explore multiple opportunities in one place. It is a key event for potential buyers and investors seeking the best of Visakhapatnam's growing property market.

Property Expo convener Ch. Govinda Raju mentioned that the event will feature around 80 stalls offering everything from residential to commercial properties. He also emphasised that the expo not only presents a broad spectrum of real estate choices, but also provides professional advice from industry experts.



Lead Group conducts masterclass on school leadership

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

School edtech company Lead Group has successfully concluded the second year of the Shiksha Awards, one of India's biggest school award programmes. Shiksha Awards by Lead Group recognises and celebrates exceptional schools and school leaders whose dedication to educational excellence is transforming learning in India.

These are schools that, irrespective of location or size, have successfully implemented NCF-aligned multimodal learning in their classrooms through meticulous preparation, teach-

ing, assessment and remediation. They have also improved parental involvement in student education through various initiatives.

The event also featured a masterclass on school leadership by Sumeet Mehta, CEO and co-founder, Lead Group. Over 2,200 schools and 29,000 teachers participated in the 2023 Shiksha Awards ceremony. D. Shoba Reddy, owner and principal of Sri Kakatiya Public School and Sri Kakatiya High School in Tirupati, along with Reddy Jayachandra, owner of Sri Viswam Public School in Tirupati, were among the winners.

NTPC Simhadri launches health check-up programme for workers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

NTPC Simhadri took a significant step towards ensuring the well-being of its workforce by launching its Occupational Health Check-Up programme on Monday. The initiative, which was inaugurated by Sanjay Kumar Sinha, Chief General Manager (CGM) of NTPC Simhadri, aims to provide regular health screenings for employees involved in physically demanding and hazardous roles.

"The health of our employees is paramount to NTPC," emphasised Sinha during the inauguration ceremony. "Regular health check-ups allow us to identify potential health risks early on and take preventive measures to ensure



the safety and productivity of our workforce." Prasanta Kumar Jena, General Manager (Operations & Maintenance), stressed the importance of the initiative, stating, "Given the nature of our work, it's crucial to prioritise occupational health. This camp provides a

platform for early detection and prevention of health issues."

The comprehensive health camp, conducted in partnership with Apollo Hospitals, Visakhapatnam, offered screenings for vision, hearing, respiratory function, cardiovas-

cular health, and other occupational health risks. Key dignitaries, including S Padmapriya, General Manager (Technical Services), and B B Patra, Head of Human Resources, were present to show their support for the programme.



ACROSS THE STATES



6 killed in coal mine blast in West Bengal's Birbhum

At least six people were killed and three others injured when explosives kept in a truck went off in a coal mine in West Bengal's Birbhum district on Monday, a police officer said. The explosion occurred when detonators were being transported in the truck for planned blasts at the Gangaramchak and Gangaramchak-Bhadulia coal mines, an official of the West Bengal Power Development Corporation Ltd (WBPDCL) said. The incident happened around 10.30 am in Bhadulia village in which the captive mine of the WBPDCL is situated. "Six people were killed and three others were injured." Additional Superintendent of Police of Birbhum, Rana Mukherjee, said. The incident occurred in the dump yard of the coal block, WBPDCL Chairman and Managing Director P B Salim said. "An investigation has been initiated to ascertain the cause of the blast. Those killed in the explosion were workers of the agency deployed for mine operations.



SC sets aside death sentence in murder case

The Supreme Court has set aside the death penalty awarded to a man convicted of dacoity and murder of a couple in Ahmednagar in Maharashtra and sentenced him to life imprisonment. A bench of Justices BR Gavai, Prashant Kumar Mishra and KV Viswanathan restored the October 21, 2013 order of the Ahmednagar trial court and set aside the high court order awarding death sentence to one Shivkumar Ramsundar Saket. The bench refused to interfere with the conviction orders of the trial court and the April 8, 2022 order of the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court. "We find that the trial judge as well as the judges of the high court have correctly appreciated the material on record and come to a conclusion that the appellants are guilty of committing the crime," the bench said in its order dated September 26.



Kolkata's iconic Globe cinema to reopen today

Kolkata's iconic Globe Cinema is set to reopen on Maha Panchami (Tuesday) after a hiatus of nearly two decades. Once a hub for film lovers, the cinema will screen three Bengali films alongside two recent all-India hits, rekindling the magic that once captivated audiences. The reopening promises to be a celebration of nostalgia and excitement, as the city's cinephiles eagerly anticipate the revival of this cultural landmark. Satadeep Saha, managing director of SSR Cinemas, which has leased the property, on Monday announced that the newly revamped Globe will feature two screens (Dual-Plex) equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, with seating capacities of 239 and 197, respectively. Originally built by the British in 1867 as the Grand Opera House, the venue initially hosted a mix of British and Indian plays, establishing a significant cultural legacy in the city. In 1917, Bijou Company Limited took over, and in 1922, it transitioned into a movie theatre under the Madan Theatre banner.

India, Maldives ink currency swap agreement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to strengthen bilateral ties, India and the Maldives on Monday inked a currency swap agreement, a move that would help the archipelago nation overcome foreign exchange reserve issues.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu also launched Rupay card in the Maldives, inaugurated the new runway at the Hanimaadhoo International airport and agreed to further strengthen bilateral relations that had hit a rocky patch last year.

Muizzu, who is on a four-day state visit, held talks with Prime Minister Modi at the Hyderabad House here.

After the talks, India also handed over 700 social housing units to the Maldives built under the EXIM Bank's buyer's credit facilities.

"Today, we have inaugurated the redeveloped Hanimaadhoo Airport. Now, the Greater Male Connectivity Project will also be expedited. We will also support the development of a new commercial port in Thilafushi," Modi told reporters here with Muizzu by his side.

Modi said India and Maldives have decided to initiate discussion on the Free Trade Agreement to further strengthen economic ties.

The prime minister

To initiate talks on FTA



described Maldives as a "close friend" which had an important position in India's neighbourhood policy and SAGAR vision.

"India has always fulfilled the responsibilities of a neighbour. Today, we have taken up the vision of a comprehensive economic and maritime security

partnership to give our mutual cooperation a strategic direction," Modi said

Earlier, Muizzu was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhawan by President Droupadi Murmu. Prime Minister Modi was also present on the occasion.

Muizzu was given a tri-ser-

VICES guard of honour before he drove down the Rajghat to offer his respects at the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi.

The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November.

GLOBAL OIL PRICES

India watching situation very carefully: Hardeep



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With global oil prices flaring due to widening conflict in the Middle East, India is watching the situation carefully and is confident of navigating any challenges it may pose, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday.

International oil prices have flared to over USD 78 per barrel from about USD 70 per barrel, as the market waited to see if Israel would retaliate against Iran for a missile attack last week.

"We are watching the situation very carefully," Puri said at ExxonMobil Global Outlook 2024 here.

Energy availability, he said, can be affected if there is an escalation in the Middle East.

But supplies are not impacted and India, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, is confident of

being able to navigate any situation.

"I am confident, we will be able to navigate as we did previously," he said.

Puri said there is no shortage of oil and India is confident of sourcing its requirement.

After the Iranian missile attack, it is being speculated that Israel may target oil or nuclear facilities in Iran. And Tehran can choose to respond with either direct attack on Israel or shutting the Strait of Hormuz - the world's most important oil transit point, further flaring oil prices.

The Strait of Hormuz, located between Oman and Iran, connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. A fifth of global oil flows from the Strait. Oil from all major oil producers - Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and UAE - is exported via the Strait.

Will protect Constitution that gives Bahujans their rights: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress will protect that Constitution that gives Bahujans their rights but true inclusion and equality for all in the society will be possible only when every Indian strives with the spirit of brotherhood in their hearts, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Monday.

Gandhi shared a video on his social media handles of his recent interaction at a Dalit household where he helped out in cooking a meal in their kitchen.

"Even today, very few people know about Dalit kitchens. As Shahu Patole said, 'Nobody knows what Dalits eat.' Intrigued by what they eat, how they cook, and its social and political significance, I spent an afternoon with Ajay Tukaram Sanade and Anjana Tukaram Sanade," Gandhi said



in his post in Hindi on X along with the video.

"They honored me by inviting me to their home in Kolhapur, Maharashtra to help out in the kitchen. Together we cooked 'chane ke saag ki sabzi' 'harbharyachi bhaji', and 'tuvar dal' with brinjal," the former Congress president said.

"Drawing on Patole and the Sanade family's personal experiences with caste and discrimination, we discussed the lack of awareness about Dalit cuisine and the importance of documenting this culture," he said.

Buzz over Cong' Haryana CM pick

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of the Haryana assembly poll results, the issue of chief minister-ship has taken centre stage in the Congress with all eyes on its high command's next move as the party expects to regain power after 10 years in the state.

Although the Congress, unlike in 2019, gave the former chief minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda a free hand in finalising majority candidates and formulating election strategy, another heavyweight and Dalit leader from Haryana Kumari Selja has thrown her hat in the ring, queering the pitch for the Jat stalwart.

In a move uncharacteristic of her, AICC general secretary and Lok Sabha MP Selja has publicly staked claim to the CM's post and said the high command will take the final call on who will lead the state should the party win tomorrow.

Hooda on the other hand in his latest remarks has said that the MLAs' opinion will be taken and the final decision of

Bhupinder Hooda ahead in race



the central leadership will be acceptable to all.

Another senior leader Randeep Surjewala, who is also the party general secretary and a Rajya Sabha member, has stated that the party high command will decide the chief minister, even though he has not staked claim.

Bhupinder Hooda's son Deepender Hooda, the Congress' Rohtak MP, is also not ruled as a potential candidate by a section of the party.

If recent trends are anything to go by, the Congress, under party president Mallikarjun Kharge, has cho-

sen to honour mass leaders on the issue of chief minister-ship.

If this trend holds, Bhopinder Singh Hooda, who had a say in selecting over 70 of the 90 party candidates in Haryana, would be the evident choice for the top job should exit poll results translate into reality.

Having learnt the lessons of neglecting regional satraps in the past, the Congress has of late been taking a conscious call to install mass leaders in power positions.

In Himachal Pradesh, the party chose Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu as chief minister despite parallel claims made by state unit chief Pratibha Singh, who reminded the party of her late husband and ex-CM Virbhadra Singh's legacy.

In Karnataka, the party settled for Siddaramaiah, the popular leader of the state, over his more resourceful and financially influential competitor D K Shivakumar, who had to make do with the deputy CM's position.

Coal scam: Delhi court awards jail terms to four accused persons

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday awarded jail terms to four persons accused in a case related to the alleged scam in allocation of two coal blocks in Jharkhand.

Special Judge Arun Bhardwaj awarded a three-year jail term to Rungta Project Ltd's former managing director RS Rungta, Sanjay Rungta and T M Achyutan, and a two-year jail term to Shambhu Nath.

The judge also imposed a fine of Rs 30 lakh on the company and R S Rungta each, while Sanjay Rungta and Achyutan were directed to pay a fine of Rs 40 lakh each.

The judge further directed Nath to pay a fine of Rs 20 lakh.

The case relates to the allocation of Hutar Sector C and Hurlilong coal blocks situated in Jharkhand during the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre.

NGLV development model will be announced soon: ISRO chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The model for the development of the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) will be announced soon and that will provide a huge opportunity for industries to come into the space sector right at the beginning of design itself, ISRO chief S Somanath said on Monday.

Last month, the Union Cabinet approved the development of NGLV. It will be a significant step towards establishing and operating the Bharatiya Antariksh Station, as well as



towards developing capability for Indian crewed landing on the Moon by 2040.

While mentioning about NGLV, Somanath on Monday said ISRO will support the development but the production and

launches will move over to the industry right at the beginning.

The mode for developing NGLV will be announced soon. It is going to be a huge opportunity for industries to come into the space sector right in the beginning of design itself, he added.

The NGLV development project will be implemented with maximal participation from the Indian industry, which is also expected to invest in the manufacturing capacity at the outset itself, an official release said on September 18.

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

ED raids AAP MP Sanjeev Arora's house



PNS ■ JALANDHAR

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday searched multiple locations in Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Gurugram and Delhi in connection with a land "fraud" case against AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjeev Arora and others, official sources said.

About 16-17 locations, including the house of the 61-year-old MP at Ludhiana (Punjab) and Gurugram (Haryana), are being searched, they said.

Premises linked to real estate businessman Hemant Sood and another person, Chandra Shekhar Agrawal, in Jalandhar are also among the locations being searched.

Arora said he doesn't exactly know the reason that warranted the searches. "I am a law abiding citizen, am not sure about the reason for search operation, will cooperate fully with agencies and make sure all their queries are answered," he posted on X.

Sharad Pawar hints at influx from BJP and NCP

PNS ■ INDAPUR

Veteran politician Sharad Pawar on Monday hinted at more desertions from the BJP and the NCP led by his nephew Ajit Pawar ahead of the Maharashtra assembly polls on a day BJP leader Harshvardhan Patil joined the Pawar senior camp.

Addressing a gathering in Indapur town, Pawar appealed to the people to send Patil to the state assembly, virtually declaring his candidature for the upcoming elections.

Pawar also indicated that former state legislative council chairman Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar, currently in the Ajit Pawar camp, may join the NCP (SP) on October 14.

"I received a phone call from someone asking me to come on October 14 just like I have visited Indapur. I asked where and for what purpose. I was told it is for the same purpose as in Indapur. I asked where to visit?...Phaltna...understood? So the next stop is Phaltna. After that most of the month is booked," Pawar said.

Phaltna is the home ground of Nimbalkar who had represented the constituency in 1995 as an Independent and as an NCP (undivided) leader in 1999 and 2004.

Interestingly, Nimbalkar on Sunday said he regretted deserting Sharad Pawar and joining hands with Ajit Pawar in 2023. "I had done so (to join



the Ajit Pawar camp) to ensure the safety of party workers which didn't happen," he had claimed.

A party hopper, Harshvardhan Patil quit the Congress to join BJP in 2019. His exit from the BJP is viewed as a setback to Deputy CM and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis.

Pawar praised Patil, a former state minister, for his "dedication to agricultural reforms and rural development", highlighting the significant contributions made by Patil and his father, former Baramati MP Shankarrao Patil.

"We may have been in different parties, but when it came to the welfare of Maharashtra's farmers, we always worked together. Harshvardhan has always been the first choice whenever new leadership was needed for agricultural reforms. This decision is not restricted to Indapur, this is also important for sugarcane farmers across Maharashtra and for the agriculture sector of the entire country," Pawar said.

In this Lucknow temple, demon king Ravana is worshipped on Vijayadashami

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

While Ravana is killed throughout the country on Vijayadashami or Dussehra, there is a temple in Lucknow where the demon king is worshipped on the occasion.

In the Char Dham temple at Rani Katra in the old city area, the 'Ravana Darbar' is present where he is worshipped by some people, Siyaram Awasthi, a priest at the temple, told PTI Videos. He said that the temple was constructed about 135 years ago.

"The Char Dham temple was built by Kundan Lal Kunj Bihari Lal and now his sixth generation is managing it. In this temple, all four Dhams are there and it is famous as Chhoti Kashi also. We have Ravana Darbar here also," the priest said.

He said that people who come here also visit this darbar, where Ravana is worshipped on Vijayadashami.

"It (Ravana Darbar) is there for people to realise what type of deeds they want to do in their lives which can lead them



to hell or heaven," Awasthi said.

"Here Ravana's entire court is present. While Ravana's ministers are seen sitting on both sides in the court, the demon king is seated at the top," he said.

In this temple, Ram Setu and Lanka have also been built. The way to reach Ravana's court comes only after passing through the Ram Setu.

In the Darbar, near Ravana, Kumbhakaran is lying down next to him, and Meghnad is sitting next to him, the priest said, adding Vibhishana is also

standing there.

The slaying of Ravana by Lord Ram on Vijayadashami is a central part of the Dussehra, which celebrates the victory of good over evil.

Vandana Pandey, a regular visitor to the temple, said that Ravana was a great scholar and his misdeeds led to what happened to him.

"Even after his death, Lord Ram asked his brother to take some insights from him. Praying Ravana means praying for his intellect and also shunning bad deeds," she said.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Strategic balancing act

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu assures India that he would never jeopardise India's security interests

The first state visit of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu to India marks a milestone in the evolving diplomatic relationship between the two neighbouring countries. President Muizzu's visit, represents not only a continuation of the historically strong India-Maldives ties but also signals a renewed commitment to fostering regional stability and cooperation. To put it in perspective, China has made inroads into Maldives much to the consternation of India. Chinese presence in its backyard is a clear security threat. But now things are looking better. President Muizzu has emphasised that while the Maldives follows a 'Maldives First' policy, it remains committed to ensuring that its actions would never undermine India's security interests. The Maldives occupies a key strategic position in the Indian Ocean, making its foreign policy decisions crucial to India's security and regional aspirations. India has long viewed the Maldives as an important ally in maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region. This visit, following a period of political transition in the Maldives, underscores the importance of maintaining a strong bilateral relationship, especially amid concerns over the growing influence of China in the region.



President Muizzu has reaffirmed that its engagements would never compromise India's security which indeed is music to Indian ears. This statement comes at a time when concerns have arisen regarding the Maldives' expanding ties with China, especially in defence and trade. President Muizzu sought to allay these fears, stressing that the relationship with India, built on 'mutual respect and shared interests,' remains a priority. One of the key aspects of the India-Maldives relationship

has always been defence cooperation. Earlier President Muizzu's decision to expel Indian military personnel was seen as a clear sign of Maldives acting on Chinese advice. Though on his part he explained that this move, though sensitive, was aligned with the will of the Maldivian people and aimed at ensuring the sovereignty of the Maldives. But that is diplomacy for you. Historically, defence and economic cooperation has long been a cornerstone of India-Maldives relations. But things changed after President Muizzu took over last year in November. President Muizzu has expressed satisfaction with the progress of key Indian initiatives, including the Greater Male Connectivity Project, which is expected to significantly boost the country's infrastructure and local economy. India has also restructured a line of credit arrangement to facilitate smoother execution of developmental projects, which President Muizzu acknowledged as a positive step. The visit is expected to further strengthen economic ties between the two countries, with discussions centered on boosting trade, tourism and investment. Perhaps shift in Maldives' stance comes with the realisation of perils of aligning with China as many countries like Sri Lanka have paid a heavy price for their dependence on Chinese investments and grants.

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### PICTALK



An artisan gives finishing touches to effigies of Ravana and Meghanad ahead of the Dussehra festival, in Nagpur PTI

## Mitigating heatwaves and floods in rural India

Only by engaging in comprehensive dialogue can India hope to counter the growing threats of climate change and protect its rural population

India is currently facing the severe consequences of climate change. At the very onset of summer, a severe heatwave gripped vast regions of the country. More recently, heavy rainfall and floods have disrupted numerous lives and livelihoods in many states. Owing to a lack of infrastructure and resources, communities in rural areas are the worst impacted. In the face of this crisis, the power of dialogue emerges not just as a tool but as a necessity to formulate effective policies and mitigate the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations.



Impact on Rural Communities

The recent heatwave in India was relentless, with temperatures soaring well above 40 degrees Celsius in many regions. This is now succeeded by an onslaught of floods in various regions, especially in Assam. Rural communities, often more exposed and less equipped to cope with extreme weather events, bear the brunt of these conditions. Agriculture, the backbone of rural livelihoods, suffers as crops wither under scorching tempera-

tures or are submerged during floods, leading to reduced yields and income losses. Many states have implemented State Climate Change Programmes (SCCCs) and Heat Action Plans (HAPs) to deal with the situation. Effective as many of these initiatives are the severity of the problem leaves scope for much more to be done.

**Dialogue as a Way Forward** Dialogic processes and methods often serve as useful mechanisms to address various complex social challenges and can be potentially valuable in addressing extreme weather conditions, both in the short and long run. Dialogue as an idea and a rigorous academic discipline that has found its place across multiple domains ranging from conflict resolution to

policy making and even business and management, involves more than just conversation. Dialogue is essentially an approach that weaves together multiple elements to craft effective and long-lasting solutions.

### Dialogic Approach for Climate Crisis

From its various applications across problem-solving, community mobilization, building policy narratives, and engaging with diverse stakeholders, a dialogic approach may be integral to addressing the challenges posed by heat waves, particularly in rural India. First, by engaging stakeholders—from policymakers and scientists to community leaders and affected populations—dialogue facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and fosters consensus on actionable solutions. It encourages the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and local insights necessary to tailor policies that are responsive to the needs of vulnerable communities. Next, putting dialogic methods into place can also help uncover local solutions and adaptation strategies that can

be built into nationwide policy. Farmers, for instance, possess invaluable traditional knowledge and practices that can complement scientific interventions. Through dialogue, these insights can be integrated into agricultural policies aimed at promoting climate-resilient farming practices, improving water management, and enhancing crop diversity to withstand extreme weather events. Finally, dialogue can enhance community mobilization and self-governance, which can lead to community-driven initiatives to counter the current crisis—from community heat shelters, and water management practices, to creating awareness of related health risks such as heat strokes and increase in vector and waterborne diseases.

**From Discussion to Collaborative Action** Dialogue-driven policies ensure that interventions are inclusive, transparent, and accountable, thereby fostering trust and cooperation among stakeholders. (The writer is CEO of Kshetra Foundation; views are personal)



KRISHNA UDAYASANKAR

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**From Discussion to Collaborative Action** Dialogue-driven policies ensure that interventions are inclusive, transparent, and accountable, thereby fostering trust and cooperation among stakeholders. (The writer is CEO of Kshetra Foundation; views are personal)

# BRICS: Dealing with emerging challenges



SUDHIR HINDWAN

As geopolitical tensions escalate and new security challenges emerge, the upcoming 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan promises to be a critical turning point

The 16th BRICS Summit, set to take place from October 22-24, 2024, in Kazan under Russia's chairmanship, comes at a critical juncture for global affairs. The summit will address pressing issues like the geopolitical tensions caused by escalating regional conflicts worldwide, the need for effective governance in emerging societies, and the evolving challenges of environmental degradation.

With these multifaceted threats becoming more severe, there is a growing urgency for BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, along with newly inducted members Egypt, Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia—to modernise and diversify their security and economic frameworks. A recent BRICS National Security Advisors' (NSA) conclave in St Petersburg underscored the urgency of these challenges. India's National Security Advisor highlighted the critical role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in tackling modern security concerns, particularly the evolving threat of transnational terrorism.

ICT will likely remain a focal point during the Kazan summit as BRICS nations look to leverage advanced technology to mitigate security risks and ensure more effective regional and global cooperation. Russia has expressed its intention to prioritise five key areas of partnership at the summit: politics, security, the economy, finance and cultural and humanitarian ties. In light of the rising number of security threats confronting the BRICS nations, this broad-ranging focus is timely. The inclusion of the five new BRICS members adds to the group's strategic importance. Their cooperation will be vital in addressing the sudden and unpredictable threats that arise from both state and non-state actors. This includes real-time sharing of geospatial data, which will be instrumental in improving border security and countering transnational terrorism. The Kazan summit will likely focus on enhancing cooperation in areas such as



economic development, public health, border security, and geospatial information sharing. These discussions could lead to tangible outcomes in the form of new initiatives for infrastructure development, increased bilateral trade, and innovative technological solutions.

These developments would further strengthen ties between India and BRICS, especially Russia, while fostering a new era of defense cooperation. Given the rise of security challenges across the BRICS countries, particularly concerning border disputes and terrorism, the summit presents an opportunity to improve international coordination on these matters. Satellite data sharing, military intelligence cooperation, and logistical support are expected to be central components of future BRICS security strategies.

For instance, one significant point of discussion could be China's expansionist policies, which have raised concerns about regional stability. Additionally, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is another issue that could dominate the agenda, with hopes for a possible resolution. The summit holds great potential for strengthening global cooperation in fighting transnational terrorism. This cooperation could encompass several key areas, including the financing of terrorist activities, enhancing police cooperation, and



THE SUMMIT MAY EXPLORE STRATEGIES FOR ANTICIPATING AND NEUTRALISING THESE THREATS, FOCUSING ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SECURITY AND DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENTS OF BRICS MEMBERS

addressing cyber threats. The summit may also discuss tightening security measures at borders and maritime zones, alongside the development of advanced communication networks and security management systems. One of the key challenges in counter-terrorism will be dealing with groups motivated by religious ideologies. The summit may explore strategies for anticipating and neutralising these threats, focusing on cooperation between the security and defense establishments of BRICS members. As nations adopt a more pragmatic and bilateral approach to foreign policy, there is less concern that enhanced BRICS cooperation would adversely affect relations with other major powers, such as the United States. Another area requiring immediate attention is the threat posed by chemical weapons in the hands of terrorists.

These weapons, often difficult to detect and transport, pose a significant risk. International collaboration in formulating stricter regulations and preventing the acquisition of such weapons could be vital in managing this growing concern. Furthermore, the BRICS nations could work together to establish a robust mechanism to limit the accessibility of dangerous materials like RDX, Erythritol Tetranitrate (Penta), and advanced weapons such as AK-47s. Efforts to curb drug traffick-

ing are also expected to feature prominently at the summit, particularly in light of the strong nexus between drug cartels and terrorist groups in regions like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Southeast Asia. Enhanced policing cooperation among BRICS members could lead to more effective crackdowns on these criminal networks. India's leadership approach, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Modi in recent international forums like the UN Summit on September 23, 2024, emphasises a human-centric focus. At the BRICS summit, India is expected to push for policies that address economic, technological, and social gaps, thereby advancing the interests of the Global South. India's growing influence on the global stage is also reflected in its strong relationships with both the United States, the world's largest democracy, and Russia, one of its closest strategic partners. These ties place India in a unique position to play a leading role at the BRICS summit. The meeting in Kazan is likely to provide a framework for enhanced security-related information sharing and greater confidence-building measures among BRICS nations. (The author is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award and an expert in strategic affairs; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ESCALATING CONFLICT IN WEST ASIA

Madam — After Iran supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's penchant claim that the "Zionist nation would not last long" and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vow of retaliation, "Whoever attacks, we will attack them," the two countries are closer to a destructive all-out war. West Asia is being pushed into a nuclear firestorm by the challengers in conflict and the proxy groups. Israel is allied with the United States of America and NATO nations, while the Islamic militant groups, Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis, are proxies of Iran. Hamas' failed missile attack gave Israel an opportunity to bomb Gaza indiscriminately. Since then, Israel Defence Force has killed and injured thousands of innocent Palestinians. The mass annihilation of women and children served as a reminder of the genocide committed against European Jews during World War II. The United States seamlessly provides Israel with strategic support, advanced weaponry and manpower. Their occasional counsel for sanity is for the world to hear and not for Israel to heed. Neither side-Israel, America and other NATO nations, or Iran and the proxy groups-is seeking a lasting peace. This war threatens to wreck world peace and economies, with the chance of more countries being sucked into it. India is stuck between two stools.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

### RESERVATION POLICY CRITICISED

Madam— The news report titled 'Removing 50 per cent cap on reservation necessary to protect Constitution: Rahul Gandhi' (October 6) hardly evokes surprise as Rahul Gandhi constantly chants the ridiculous statement "Rights and benefits in proportion to share of population" since several months! What a criminal wastage of time, energy and resource to determine which caste group will receive what quantum of share in job openings, higher education and other rights and benefits in this heterogeneous country—that too through the yardstick of numerical strength only!

### IAF celebrates 92nd anniversary



The clear blue skies over Chennai were incandescent with adventurous excitement last Sunday, as the Indian Air Force (IAF) staged a stunning air show at the famous Marina Beach in celebration of its 92nd anniversary. Much to the pride of the city, the event, which was reportedly attended by 15

lakh people, set a new world record, earning a place in the Limca Book of Records for the largest-ever gathering at an air show. Spectators were treated to a breathtaking display of aerial acrobatics. The highlight of the show was the Rafale fighter jets demonstrated their skills in mid-air refuelling, a sight that added an extra layer of wonder to the spectacle.

Saddeningly, however, the event saw five people have died and many reportedly suffered from dizziness and fainting due to searing heat. Though the air show displayed its pageantry, and the event was a proud reminder of India's growing self-reliance in defence, it raises an important question over the need for IAF aggressively pushing the occasion to set a new world record by aiming to mobilise a crowd much beyond the manageable level.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

When demands should have been raised to treat all downtrodden and economically weak Indians equally in terms of opening the door of opportunities to prosper and flourish by providing food, shelter, education and medical services for free or through nominal service cost and thereafter allowing the best to enter the field of higher education, service and all sectors of the country by according eligibility and merit the sole yardstick, Indians are being continuously fragmented through all sorts of demographic equations, that too by relegating all norms of quality and efficiency to oblivion! Nothing can be more tragic than this mindset. Already the caste-based reservation policy has posed a severe threat to the country as absolutely ineligible candidates are often attaining "pride of place" in government offices and educational institutions with innumerable candidates of merit quality getting scandalously deprived of their rightful seats and jobs despite scoring high marks! Now even private universities are being coaxed to go such a fatal way! Kajal chatterjee | Kolkata

### FINANCIAL AID FOR FARMERS

Madam — The release of the 18th installment of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme is a significant achievement, benefiting over nine crore farmers across the country. Both the central and state governments deserve recognition for their collaborative efforts in supporting the agricultural sector. The Central government's direct financial aid to farmers, particularly the inclusion of 31,51,700 beneficiaries from Odisha, highlights a continued commitment to rural development.

At the state level, the Odisha government's CM Kisan scheme, complementing the PM Kisan Yojana, is another positive step towards ensuring that small and marginal farmers receive much-needed financial assistance. This dual support, reaching farmers through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, is a model for efficient governance.

Manoj | Almor

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN THE GIFT OF ATTENTION

Offering our full attention not only strengthens bonds but also gives us clarity and wellbeing



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

It's paradoxical that in a world where distractions never stop and sincere appreciation of attention is as precious as it is a type of most valuable coin. Notifications echo from every direction, screens compete for our attention, and in our quest to be "present," I fear we have lost sight of who we truly are. Amidst the chaos, there exists a profound reality: the act of giving one's attention may indeed be the most precious gift one can bestow. Think about it. When was the last occasion you experienced someone's full focus—no devices, no interruptions, just an authentic, human connection? If that moment is hard to remember, you're not the only one. The fast pace of modern life has taught us to multitask, to balance discussions with brief looks at our devices, and to believe that speed equals efficiency.

Yet in this pursuit, we have sacrificed something invaluable: the capacity to truly engage with the moment. When we focus on someone, we absorb more than just their words. We are expressing, "I acknowledge your presence." Your existence is significant. In this manner, attention serves as a quiet endorsement of an individual's value—it transcends superficial exchanges and paves the way for a more profound comprehension, fostering empathy, compassion, and genuine connection. Engagement serves as the foundation of confidence in connections. By focusing our attention on our partners, friends, or family members, we convey a powerful message regarding the significance of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. It's no surprise that the depth of our connections often reflects the level of attention we invest in them—the stronger



our bond with those who truly listen and comprehend us. And personal connections are the final aspect of it. Focus holds immense power in the professional realm. Think about a manager who listens to his team or a leader who takes the time to interact with employees, rather than rushing through meetings.

These individuals foster loyalty, ignite creativity and guide collaborative environments. What is the reason behind this? People naturally feel invigorated when they believe their actions hold significance and are appreciated. Focus fosters involvement, and involvement leads to achievement. Yet, perhaps the most significant impact attention has lies in how we relate to ourselves. In our rush to achieve and accumulate, we often overlook the importance of self-care. Mindfulness—the practice of immersing ourselves in the present moment—reveals that genuine wellbeing is at the heart of our experiences: pursuing goals, dedicating time to others and even engaging with our feelings.

By taking a moment to observe, we can discover a profound clarity and tranquility that has the potential to transform our lives. In a realm where time is an actual finite commodity, the gesture of dedicating our complete focus is truly transformative. It requires no expense yet holds immense significance.

As we navigate our daily lives, constantly facing new demands on our time and energy, it's important to remember that the most valuable gift we can offer is not material wealth, but rather our full presence. Next time you're engaged in a conversation, set your phone aside. Pay close attention. Offer your focus willingly and without interruption. It might surprise you that by focussing your attention, you receive something far more valuable in return—a profound and significant bond that enhances the lives of both individuals.

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

# Will the three farm laws be revived?



UTTAM GUPTA

Were the laws a missed opportunity to address the deep-seated issues faced by millions of India's struggling farmers and consumers?

Recently, a BJP Member of Parliament talked of resurrecting the three national Farm Laws. Faced with criticism from the opposition parties, a spokesperson of the BJP clarified that 'her statement does not represent the party view'. Modi - The government doesn't intend to bring back these laws.

### What were those laws?

Enacted in September 2020, the most far-reaching of these laws was the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020. It allowed the Centre to regulate inter-State trade and intra-State trade, providing for freedom of choice to the farmer or trader to conduct trade and commerce while allowing traders to purchase specified farm commodities directly from farmers anywhere in the country, even outside the designated State APMCs (Agricultural Produce Market Committee).

The second law was the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. It provided a legal framework for farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, large retailers etc in a 'fair' and 'transparent' manner.

The third law was the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. It took off pulses, cereals, edible oil, oil seeds, onions and potatoes from the purview of this archaic law. The enactment of these laws triggered prolonged protests - mostly confined to Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. In January 2021, the Supreme Court stayed their implementation and set up a committee to undertake a thorough review. The report of the committee submitted within the set deadline of three months was never made public. Meanwhile, the farmers continued with their stir. On November 19, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced their repeal.

**Was there anything wrong with them?** But, first, we need to ask as to how the subsisting laws on the marketing of farm produce are treating farmers. The widely reported plight of a farmer from Maharashtra's Solapur says it all. Last year, he got a measly Rs 2.49 from the sale of 512 kg of onions to a trader at Rs 1 per kg on sale at the Solapur market yard, the total sale value was Rs 512; after deducting labour, weighing, transportation and other charges adding to Rs 509.5, the net back was Rs 2.5. Let's be clear, it isn't a profit. To arrive at it, we need to deduct from this the cost of producing 512 kg onions which includes the expenses on seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, etc. This would result in a colossal loss. This leads to a mounting debt burden as the farmer is forced to take a loan (often at a high interest rate) to finance the loss. The condition of tens of millions of poor farmers with small land holding sizes of fewer than 2 hectares (they are about 86 per cent of the total number of land-owning farmers) is no different.

**Why does the farmer get a low price?** This is because she can sell her produce only in the 'designated' mandi under the State APMC Act. In the mandi,



THE APMC MANDIS CAN HANDLE ONLY A FRACTION OF THE QUANTITY FARMERS BRING TO SELL. SO, MOST OF THEM ARE FORCED TO COME TO PRIVATE LOCAL MARKETS, WHERE SALES ARE LEGALLY BARRED

arthritis - the local term for commission agents (they arrange for auction and delivery of the produce) - and the licensed trader/buyer rule the roost. The duo exploit her to the hilt by giving a low price, rejections, weighing less, delaying payment, etc. Levies such as market fees, anthias commission, rural development cess (RDC) etc further erode her net-back.

The APMC mandis can handle only a fraction of the quantity farmers bring to sell. So, most of them are forced to come to private local markets, where sales are legally barred.

At these markets, they end up selling their produce to traders at throwaway prices. The latter have the blessings of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians (in many cases, they or their kin also masquerade as traders) and hence, won't face any action for violating the law.

True, the state agencies such as The Food Corporation of India (FCI), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) etc purchase in the mandis specified crops needed for running welfare Schemes such as the distribution of free food under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). They make purchases at the minimum support price (MSP) notified by the Centre. But, their purchases are limited. Except for paddy and wheat where the agencies buy only 30 per cent of farmers' produce, for all other crops their purchase is minuscule. Even so only 6 per cent of farmers - mostly rich with larger land holdings - get the ben-

efit of government procurement. In short, under the existing State APMC laws, most poor farmers have no hope of getting a better price. They are forced to live in abject poverty and run high debt leading to even suicides that have become a national phenomenon.

The millions of consumers too are at the receiving end. They pay high prices for the foodstuff they buy from the market. People getting free food under NFSA 820 million, but that leaves out a mammoth number who buy their needs from the market; even NFSA beneficiaries depend on the market for buying their needs other than wheat/rice. The extra money they pay fills the coffers of the commission agents, traders and middlemen. Retail inflation very often gets out of control primarily because food inflation (it has a share of 40 per cent in the retail basket) remains sticky most of the time. It remains so even when there is a normal monsoon enabling surplus production. This, in turn, has a lot to do with the cartelization of the supply chain by a few middlemen working in collaboration with the political brass in states - abetted by the State APMC laws.

High inflation doesn't let the RBI reduce interest rates and that imposes an additional burden on millions of borrowers whose EMIs remain high; small businesses getting crippled due to the high cost of servicing their loans. Even the government's budget comes under stress due to higher interest payments on its debt. The solution lies in liberating all such stakeholders from the stran-

glehold of the big sharks. The way forward is to give more options to the farmers to sell and more options to consumers to buy. This is precisely what the three laws sought to do. The laws legitimized sales on all non-APMC platforms such as private traders, processors, aggregators, exporters etc without disturbing APMC mandis. These opened up unlimited opportunities for farmers to sell their produce, thereby helping them get higher prices, which could even exceed MSP depending on the demand-supply. They don't have to pay any levies for selling at non-APMC platforms. These enabled the farmers to enter into contracts with enterprises (private companies, cooperatives etc) that would not only give them an assured market at pre-set good prices but also the timely supply of quality inputs viz. fertilizers, seeds, pesticides etc and good agronomic practices for securing higher yield and quality foodstuff. In short, the laws gave a fair deal to millions of poor farmers on one hand and millions of consumers on the other. This would have reined in the unjust enrichment of a few and left more money to the farmers and consumers. Resulting lower inflation would prompt RBI to reduce interest rates helping millions of borrowers at one level and improving the Centre's fiscal health. ALAS! Their withdrawal has restored the status quo. Thanks to the political compulsion of the BJP, it is unable to even talk about those laws; forget resurrection.

*(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)*

## India and UNICEF: Celebrating 75 years of transformative partnership for child welfare

India and UNICEF have worked hand in hand, advancing the health, safety and rights of millions of children across India

For 75 years, India and UNICEF have worked together, advancing the rights and well-being of millions of children. The long-standing trusted and multi-faceted partnership is deeply rooted in shared values and a commitment to children's wellbeing in India and around the world, encompassing child health, safety, protection, equality, rights and wellbeing. An important, but lesser-known aspect of India's partnership with UNICEF is India's role as a key source of procurement of lifesaving supplies around the world. From 2016 to 2023, India supplied to UNICEF, commodities worth \$3 billion, including vaccines, and health supplies essential for



CYNTHIA MCCAFFREY

UNICEF's humanitarian and development response to children's health and nutrition needs, globally. In 2023 alone, India ranked as the third-largest source of essential supplies for UNICEF, with procurements totalling \$483 million. Of this expenditure, approximately 74 per cent was allocated to vaccines, underscoring India's integral role in supporting

global immunisation efforts. India's collaboration with UNICEF in advancing global health was best exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Demonstrating exceptional leadership, resilience, and innovation, India, as the world's largest vaccine producer, played a key role in providing COVID-19 vaccines globally. During 2021 and 2022 in partnership with UNICEF, India supplied 292 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX initiative to 47 countries, all of which were delivered to low and middle-income countries. Efficiently managed supply chains that allow children, adolescents, and mothers access to quality, safe, equi-

table, and affordable health-care and essential services are critical. UNICEF supports the government in establishing and managing these agile, cost-effective, and sustainable end-to-end supply chains. These have also strengthened UNICEF's ability to respond swiftly to emergencies and ensure the sustained availability of essential supplies. During COVID-19, UNICEF supported the government address critical challenges by installing oxygen plants, providing medical equipment, and distributing PPE equipment, strengthening the country's pandemic response. In fact, over the past decades, UNICEF supported the government's efforts



to strengthen immunisation systems by investing in the capacity building of health workers, upgrading and expanding cold chain capacity, and introducing electronic management information systems to track progress.

These efforts have improved the system's resilience, preparing the country for future public health emergencies. Supplies are essential to fulfil children's rights and innovations with sustainable supply chains are important considerations.

By partnering with the private sector, UNICEF promotes product innovation, digital transformation, and sustainable procurement, aligning with national priorities and SDG-12 on responsible consumption. In India, UNICEF works with suppliers to adopt eco-friendly business practices, ensuring essential supplies are sourced ethically, supporting both environmental goals and child welfare. Both India and UNICEF recognise that the well-being of children is inextricably linked to the prosperity of future generations.

India has made significant progress in reducing child mortality, increasing immunisation coverage, achieving high enrolment in primary

education, and improving access to sanitation and clean water. The 75th anniversary of the collaboration between UNICEF and the Government of India this year is a historic milestone that bears evidence of the legacy of progress. India's collaboration with UNICEF has remained steadfast which has accomplished millions of children having been vaccinated, educated, and lifted out of poverty. UNICEF remains committed to supporting India, for every child in the country to have equal access and opportunities that help them realize their dreams and aspirations.

*(The writer is Representative, UNICEF India; views are personal)*



IN BRIEF



Gold jumps Rs 250 to hit fresh all-time high

Gold prices appreciated by Rs 250 to hit a fresh all-time high of Rs 78,700 per 10 grams on Monday on account of consistent buying support from jewellers and firm trends in the overseas markets. The precious metal had settled at Rs 78,450 per 10 grams in the previous close on Friday. However, silver declined Rs 200 to Rs 94,000 per kg from Rs 94,200 per kg on Friday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 200 to hit an all-time high level of Rs 78,300 per 10 grams. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 78,100 per 10 grams in the previous session. Traders attributed the gains in gold prices to an increase in the domestic demand by stockists and retailers.



'Airbus to source more components from India'

Airbus will increase sourcing of components from India, which offers plenty of opportunities, according to the aircraft maker's CEO Guillaume Faury. The European major, which has bagged huge aircraft orders from IndiGo and Air India, doubled its sourcing of components and services from India to 1 billion euros during the period from 2019-2024, he said. The company has more than 100 suppliers in India. At a press briefing in the national capital on Monday, Faury, who is also the Chairman of the French Aerospace Industries Association (GIFAS), said there are plenty of opportunities in India. "We will be continuing to grow (sourcing of components)... We will continue to double around every 5 years, that is in the next decade to come. It is a stable pace," he said.



Hitachi Energy plans Rs 2,000 cr investment

Switzerland-based technology player Hitachi Energy has plans to invest Rs 2,000 crore over the next 4-5 years in India, a company official said on Monday. The investments will be made towards expanding capacity of transformers, talent base and increasing portfolio. N Venu, MD&CEO, India and South Asia, Hitachi energy India said. Hitachi Energy India is an arm of Hitachi Energy. The investment of Rs 2,000 crore will be made over a period of 4-5 years towards building capacity of large and small power transformers, and dry and traction transformers, he said. Besides, the investment will be towards building capacity of insulation and components, strengthening the company's existing HVDC high voltage direct current capacity. It will be focussed on network control solution offerings to customers coming from sectors like industries, utilities, transportation, Venu said. He said the company intends to invest Rs 400 crore every year up to 5 years.

'India, UAE to set up food corridor at USD 2 bn investment'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the UAE will set up a food corridor with an expected investment of USD 2 billion which will cater to the UAE market and beyond and help Indian farmers earn higher income and create more jobs, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday.

Addressing a press conference on the 12th meeting of India-UAE High-Level Task Force on Investment here, Goyal, who is the Minister for Commerce and Industry, said that a small working group comprising central government, state governments involved and the UAE has also been set up to take forward the establishment of food corridor between the two countries on a mission mode basis. "... Another area which was discussed in great detail was the setting up of food parks in India.

The background work is largely completed, (this is) another area which will help

farmers with higher income, provide jobs in food processing to thousands if not lakhs of our youth and will also ensure the food security of UAE," Goyal said.

The minister said that approximately USD 2 billion dollars is the initial commitment that UAE has made to invest in the food processing industry and the food park logistics that can be required to move the material to the UAE.



"We have set up a small working group of Central Government and state governments involved and the UAE to take forward this establishment of a food corridor between the two countries on a mission mode basis," he stated.

Stating that this investment is expected to happen in the next two-and-a-half-year period, Goyal said, "But the overall investment is also a factor of the opportunities that Indian businesses are able to offer."

Status quo on interest rates likely

RBI's panel starts deliberations, decision tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The reconstituted rate-setting panel of the Reserve Bank on Monday started deliberations on the next bi-monthly monetary policy amid expectations of a status quo on interest rates in view of inflationary concerns and the possibility of a flare-up in the Middle East crisis that could jack up commodity prices.

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.

Earlier this month, the government reconstituted the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

It has appointed Ram Singh, Saugata Bhattacharya, and Nagesh Kumar as external members of the MPC. They have replaced Ashima Goyal, Shashanka Bhide, and Jayanth R Varma.

Apart from Governor Shaktikanta Das, the other internal members are the RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy Michael Debabrata Patra and the Executive Director monetary policy department of RBI Rajiv Ranjan.

MPC Chairman Das will reveal the outcome of the three-day discussion on Wednesday (October 9). The central bank 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.

"We expect the RBI to keep the policy repo rate (currently at 6.50 per cent) and stance (withdrawal of accommodation) unchanged in the upcoming October monetary policy meeting, though we feel strongly that the stance should be

changed to neutral, considering the change in global rates cycle and potential risks to India's growth momentum going forward," said Kaushik Das, chief economist, India & South Asia, Deutsche Bank.

The RBI is likely to keep its FY25 real GDP growth (7.2 per cent yoy) and CPI inflation (4.5 per cent yoy) forecasts unchanged in the October policy, though there could be changes made to the quarterly CPI forecasts, particularly for July-Sep'24, he added.

On expectations from the MPC, Radhika Rao, executive director and senior economist, DBS Bank said the central bank's resolve in addressing food price inflation and preventing an un-anchoring in inflationary expectations is likely to see the MPC members lean towards a pause in October, with a softening in stance towards the December rate review. "Geopolitics also warrant attention after the overnight escalation in tensions between Iran and Israel," she added.

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.

The central bank 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



Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 8.9 lakh cr as Sensex tumbles for sixth straight day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Market investors became poorer by Rs 8.90 lakh crore as Sensex extended its losing streak for the sixth straight session and settled sharply lower on Monday dragged down by heavy selling in bellwether stocks amid mixed global trends and outflow of foreign funds.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped Rs 8,90,153.84 crore to Rs 4,51,99,444.70 crore (USD 5.38 trillion) from Rs 4,60,89,598.54 (USD 5.49 trillion).

Falling for the sixth consecutive session, the BSE Sensex tumbled 638.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at 81,050. During the day, it plummeted 962.39 points or 1.17 per cent to 80,726.06.

In the past six trading sessions, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 4,521.85 points or 5.28 per cent. The market capital-



isation of BSE-listed firms plummeted by a massive Rs 25.16 lakh crore to Rs 4,51,99,444.70 (USD 5.38 trillion) since September 27, 2024.

"Indian shares declined on Monday, driven by heightened tensions in the Middle East and subdued quarterly earnings, which dampened investor sentiment.

"Foreign investors withdrew

HDFC Bank, Titan and UltraTech Cement were the major laggards.

Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Tata Consultancy Services and Tech Mahindra defied the trend.

"Even the exit poll outcome of the two states (Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir) are not in favour of the ruling government at the centre, which has further dampened investors' sentiment," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 8,293.41 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 13,245.12 crore, according to exchange data.

A total of 3,493 stocks declined, while 568 advanced and 117 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Hero Motors withdraws Rs 900-cr IPO papers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hero Motors Ltd, the auto-components firm of the Hero Motors Company (HMC) Group, has withdrawn its documents for an initial public offering (IPO) worth Rs 900 crore, an update with markets regulator Sebi showed on Monday.

In its draft papers, the company had proposed to raise Rs 500 crore through a fresh issuance of equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of shares valued at Rs 400 crore by promoters.

Under the OFS, O P Munjal Holdings was offloading shares valued at Rs 250 crore while Bhagyoday Investments and Hero Cycles were selling shares to the tune of Rs 75 crore each.

It had filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) in August with Sebi to seek the regulator's nod to float IPO. Without disclosing the rea-

son, the company said its "DRHP (was) withdrawn on October 5, 2024".

Going by the draft papers, proceeds from the fresh issue was proposed to be used for debt payment and purchase of equipment required for expansion in the capacity of the company's facility in

Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

Hero Motors is India's leading automotive technology company engaged in designing, developing, manufacturing and supplying high engineered powertrain solutions to automotive OEMs in the United States, Europe, India, and the ASEAN region.

The company's product range includes both electric and non-electric powertrains for various vehicle categories, including two-wheelers, e-bikes, off-road vehicles, electric as well as hybrid cars and heavy-duty vehicles.

Tax dept invites public suggestions for I-T Act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax department on Monday invited public inputs for review of the six-decade old I-T Act with regard to simplification of language, litigation reduction, compliance reduction, and obsolete provisions.

Pursuant to the Budget announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for a comprehensive review of the Income-tax Act, 1961, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had set up an internal committee to oversee the review and make the Act concise, clear, and easy to understand, which will reduce disputes, litigation, and provide greater tax certainty to taxpayers.



"The committee invites public inputs and suggestions in four categories: simplification of language, litigation reduction, compliance reduction, and redundant/obsolete provisions," the CBDT said.

A webpage on the e-filing portal

<https://portal.incometax.gov.in/iec/foservices/#/pre-login/ita-comprehensive-review> -- has been launched and the public can access the page by entering their mobile number and validating it via OTP.

Suggestions should specify the relevant provision of the Income-tax Act, 1961 or Income-tax Rules, 1962 (mentioning the specific section, sub-section, clause, rule, sub-rule, or form number), as the case may be, to which the suggestion relates under the aforementioned four categories.

The Finance Minister in the 2024-25 Budget presented in July had proposed that the I-T law review will be completed in six months.

India's domestic air passenger traffic to touch 300 mn: Naidu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's domestic air passenger traffic is projected to touch 300 million by 2030 and about USD 11 billion is being spent to develop airports, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu said on Monday.

The minister also said India and France can work together to develop a robust global SAF (Sustainable Aviation Fuel) supply chain.

He was speaking at a conference organised by the French Aerospace Industries Association (GIFAS) in the national capital.

France, India to set up aeronautics cluster

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

France and India will be setting up an aeronautics cluster as well as developing an Indo-French campus for professional training in aeronautics and space.

French Ambassador to India Thierry Mathou on Monday said the two countries have been strategic partners for a long time, especially in the fields of defence and aerospace.

Speaking at the conference organised by the French Aerospace Industries Association (GIFAS) in the national capital, he said 55 per cent of French exports to India are in the aeronautical sector, amounting to 2.7 billion euros in the first half of 2024.

While noting that the partnership is not just strategic but universal, he said they are currently working on an Indo-French campus for professional training in aeronautics and space.

"We are also working with the civil aviation ministry to set up an aeronautics cluster..." he said.

Specific details about the

cluster proposal could not be immediately ascertained.

According to the Ambassador, France will support India's goal to decarbonise transport and on developing Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

At the event, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu said India and France can work together to develop a robust SAF supply chain.

"Today, our partnership is not just strategic, you should call it universal because it goes literally from the seabed to the outer space," the Ambassador said.

In the civil aviation space, Indian carriers are operating a significant number of Airbus planes.

Also, IndiGo and Air India have placed orders for aircraft with Airbus as they expand their fleets and networks to meet the rising air passengers demand.

Meanwhile, Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury on Monday said aircraft maker will increase sourcing of components from India, which offers plenty of opportunities.



Jio seeks revised paper on satellite spectrum allocation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio has urged telecom regulator Trai to come up with a revised paper on spectrum allocation for satellite communication alleging that it ignores the key point of ensuring level-playing field between satellite and terrestrial services.

In a letter to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) Chairman, Anil Kumar Lahoti, Reliance Jio has sought revision of the consultation paper on recommending rules for "terms and conditions for the assignment of spectrum for certain satellite-based commercial communication services".

"We are surprised that the consultation paper has completely overlooked the critical

issue of ensuring level-playing field between satellite-based and terrestrial access services. This omission has resulted in the lack of any questions addressing the need to create a level-playing field between these services," Reliance Jio (RJIL) said in a letter dated October 4.

Jio said that due to the omission of this point, stakeholders will not be able to adequately consider and provide relevant inputs to Trai which will undermine the fairness of recommendations and the government's intent to promote balanced competition.

On September 27, 2024, Trai floated a consultation process to explore methodology and price for assigning spectrum to satellite compa-



nies to provide calling, messaging, broadband and other services in the country.

The decision on spectrum price and allocation method-

ology will pave the way for satellite-based broadband services from companies like Elon Musk-owned Starlink, Bharti Group-backed OneWeb, and

Jio Satellite Communications, across India.

Jio said the consultation paper does not adequately address competitive fairness and is not aligned with Department of Telecommunications (DoT) reference dated July 11, 2024 which makes the consultation paper and the consequent recommendations vulnerable to legal challenges.

Jio and Vodafone Idea have opposed allocation of spectrum to satellite companies without auction.

Jio alleged that the paper is tilted towards administrative spectrum assignment which undermines norms of the Telecommunications Act, 2023. It said that the Telecommunication Act, 2023

emphasizes auction as the default method for assigning spectrum for commercial services.

"We respectfully urge Trai to reconsider and revise the consultation paper, incorporating specific questions that address the level-playing field issues between satellite and terrestrial networks. Both auction and administrative assignment methods should remain open for stakeholders input, with due consideration given to competitive fairness," Jio said.

Trai has invited comments on 21 points, including a method for determining spectrum charges, frequency bands for the satellite communications services, duration of assignment, and provision for surrendering spectrum, etc.



# what's brewing?

## NEHA RECLAIMS HER THRONE AS GANG LEADER IN ROADIES

In response to overwhelming fan demand, actress Neha Dhupia is making her much-anticipated return as a mentor on *Roadies*. Known for her bold, no-nonsense approach, Neha will once again bring her cut-throat decisions and sharp commentary to the competition, joining the original mentor, Rannvijay Singha.

Following the recent announcement of Rannvijay's return, fans across the nation rallied to bring Neha back and the *Roadies* team listened. With Neha and Rannvijay together, the upcoming season promises to deliver a thrilling experience for audiences, filled with drama, fierce competition and mentorship like never before.

"We've seen an outpouring of love and support from the fans and we couldn't ignore their voices. Neha has been an integral part of the *Roadies* journey and her return is set to shake things up in the best way possible," said a source for the show.

The source further continued, "Neha Dhupia, who became synonymous with her fiery leadership style on *Roadies*, is excited to return to *Roadies* and rejoin the family. The energy, the passion and the journey that we all experience together on this show is unmatched, and I can't wait to see what this season holds."



## Rakul Preet Singh divulges how South was never on her radar

Rakul Preet Singh has been a prominent name in the South Indian film industry with standout performances in films like *Sarrainodu* and *Spyder*. She later made a significant impact in Hindi cinema with films like *De De Pyaar De* and *Runway 34*, showcasing her versatile talent across various genres. However, in a recent conversation at a popular OTT fest, Rakul revealed that she didn't always think she would be doing South Indian films and wanted to exclusively focus on Hindi films. Speaking candidly, she shared her initial mindset and early experiences in the film world, recounting how she initially turned down an opportunity in a Kannada film.

Reflecting on her mindset as a young aspiring actress, she stated, "At first, I had rejected the movie... I was a Delhi girl, 18 years old and I thought I would work in films, but I wanted to do Hindi films only." This aspiration was driven by her goal to work with renowned production houses like Dharma Productions and Yash Raj Films. "And I just want to do Dharma and Yash Raj Films kind of films. I was operating on that level. I was just out of school. That time, as a North Indian, I did not know how big the South industry was," she concluded.

For her fans, Rakul has graced both the South Indian and Hindi film industries with her talent, allowing audiences to experience the best of both worlds. Currently, she is filming *De De Pyaar De 2* alongside Ajay Devgn. With her engaging screen presence and diverse talent, the sequel is highly anticipated and is set to release in summer 2025. Rakul's ability to seamlessly transition between different film industries and genres has solidified her place as a beloved and versatile actress, much to the delight of her fans.



## 'Badla happened because of Taapsee'

Throughout her career, Taapsee Pannu has consistently chosen roles that challenge the status quo, establishing herself as a versatile actress in the Indian film industry. Known for her bold choices, Taapsee has portrayed a variety of characters that showcase her range and depth. In a recent conversation, Sujoy Ghosh, the director of *Badla*, revealed an interesting anecdote about how the film came to be. Sujoy shared that the project was initiated by Taapsee herself, as she had approached Sujoy with the script of *Badla*.

In an interview, Sujoy Ghosh opened up about the film and said, "*Badla* actually happened because of Taapsee; she first came to me with that script and I said no *nahi karna hein* (we are not doing it). Then Akshai and Sunir (producers) came to me with the same thing and were saying they were changing it," Sujoy revealed. Taapsee's determination and belief in the project were instrumental in bringing it to life and Sujoy further elaborated on the conditions he set before agreeing to take on the film, quoting, "So I had one request on the thing, that Amitabh ji and I will rewrite the script. *Toh jab yeh do mil gaya toh mein ne kiya* (when this condition was met, we did the film)."

Released in 2019, *Badla* is a gripping thriller where Taapsee Pannu plays Naina Sethi, a successful businesswoman whose life takes a dramatic turn when she is accused of murdering her lover. Taapsee's portrayal of Naina is both intense and nuanced, capturing the character's complexity and inner turmoil.

## Shehnaz brings her 'Gill Girl Glamour' in Sajna Ve Sajna

Shehnaz Gill is all set to turn heads in the upcoming film *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*, starring Rajkumar Rao and Triptii Dimri in lead roles. The film's latest song, *Sajna Ve Sajna*, promises to be a visual and musical treat, with Shehnaz showcasing her electrifying dance moves that are bound to set the screen ablaze.



Sung by the powerhouse duo Sunidhi Chauhan and Divya Kumar, *Sajna Ve Sajna* has a perfect blend of soulful and peppy vibes. With lyrics penned by Irshad Kamil and music composed by Sandesh Shandilya, the track is all set to hit the music charts this season. Shehnaz's captivating performance, combined with her on-screen charisma, elevates the song to a whole new level, making it one to watch out for!

This eagerly anticipated film marks a powerhouse collaboration between industry titans Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Shobha Kapoor, Ekta R Kapoor, Vipul D Shah, Ashwin Varde, Rajesh Bahl and Raaj Shaandilyaa and Vimal Lahoti. With such a formidable team behind it, *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video* promises to leave an indelible mark on audiences and critics alike. Produced by Gulshan Kumar, T-Series, Balaji Telefilms, and Wakaao Films, in association with Kathavachak Films, *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video* is set to release in theatres on October 11, 2024.



## Singham Again: Mythology meets Rohit Shetty's dram-edy & action

On Monday, the highly anticipated trailer for Rohit Shetty's *Singham Again* was finally revealed. Using X, previously known as Twitter, Jio Studios posted the video that was almost five minutes long. The trailer opened with Ajay Devgn (Bajirao Singham) and Kareena Kapoor (Avni) discussing with their son about the sacrifices Lord Ram made to rescue Goddess Sita. The narrative proceeds with Kareena Kapoor's character getting kidnapped, prompting Bajirao Singham to search for her in various locations including Sri Lanka. Arjun Kapoor plays the role of a chilling villain. Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh transform into action mode as Shakti Shetty and Inspector Sangram Bhalerao, also known as Simmba, respectively. The

pair shares humorous and engaging conversations in the preview. Arjun is determined to ensure Raavan's victory in this current age.



Tiger Shroff's character is also depicted battling against bad guys. Akshay Kumar's Deputy Commissioner of Police, Veer Sooryavanshi, arrives in his unique fashion. Audiences can anticipate seeing Rohit Shetty's trademark features of burning buildings, crashing cars and numerous action sequences in the movie. The movie is created based on the story of Ramayana, with Ajay playing Ram, Kareena as Sita, Tiger portraying Lakshman, Ranveer as Hanuman, Arjun as Raavan and Akshay as Jatayu. The trailer also includes Ravi Kishan, Jackie Shroff and Shweta Tiwari.

### FUN

#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



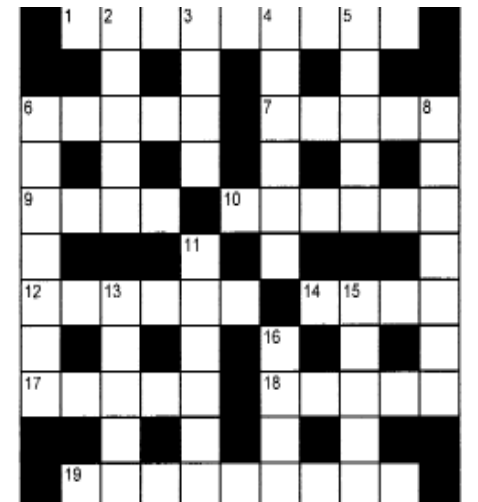
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

#### GINGER MEGGS



**ACROSS**

- Marked with the fingernails
- In front
- A keyboard instrument
- Painful to touch
- Something that is not to be told to anyone else
- A baby's toy
- A hired car
- Have a quarrel
- Incorrect
- Played make-believe
- Vienna is the capital of this country
- Nil
- Opposite of newest
- A large jungle cat
- By yourself
- A brother or sister born at the same time

**DOWN**

- A shout of approval
- Counts up
- Shut
- Very keen, enthusiastic

**SOLUTION**

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



## A life dedicated to popularising Kathak

SHIKHA DUGGAL  
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In addition to being a skilled Kathak dancer and choreographer, Dr. Puru Dadheech is considered the "father of the Kathak education system" and a learned scholar of the 'Natyashastra' and treatises on *nritya*. He has received the Kalidas Samman, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and Padma Shri. And what better chance could there be for us to speak with this virtuoso in an interview?

He begins by narrating to us unseen stories, "The intricate and sometimes disregarded rhythmic cycles, or *Aprachalit* (rare) *taals*, are among my favourite aspects of Indian classical music. I composed songs which correspond to particular *taals* and have their notations included, to make them simpler to interpret. For example, because of its complex structure, *Brahma Taal*, which contains 28 beats, is typically disregarded. I made a lighthearted *dhrupad* with lyrics that draw attention to its rhythms in order to simplify it. This has gained popularity among *Dhrupad* maestros like Gundecha Bandhu in addition to Kathak dancers."

Additionally, he has worked to revive the practically extinct Kathak dance form known as *Dhrupad Nartan*. In 1981, he played this style in honour of Dhrupad Samrat, Chandan Chaudhary's 100th birthday and wrote an article outlining its fundamental ideas. In his opinion, it's critical to introduce these customs to students in a playful manner so they can relate to the intricate narratives that underlie the gestures and motions! "Unfortunately, many people limit their learning to formal education and think that getting a degree means they've mastered their art," the interviewee says, delving deeply into the conversation. "A degree provides a foundation, but it doesn't make you a complete artist," as Vishnu Digambar Paluskar once observed. "I am excited to share with my *dhrupad* the splendour of *Basant Ritu* at the NCPA, honouring the spirit of spring and providing an innovative experience that goes beyond the conventional themes."

Then, as the famous Bharat Muni pointed out in the 'Natyashastra', 'Shastranat Shastram' refers to upholding discipline. This fundamental idea enables our interviewee to explore creatively in modern settings. It's encouraged for artists nowadays to push limits. "I recall taking two hours to do a solo performance of the entire *Ramayana* with just three musicians. In keeping with tradition, that same performance now

Dr. Puru Dadheech is not only a proficient Kathak dancer and choreographer but also an erudite scholar of the *Natyashastra* and treatises on *nritya*, also regarded as the 'father of the education system of Kathak'. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the recipient of the Padma Shri, Kalidas Samman and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, narrates to us some interesting untold stories, the dance form and more

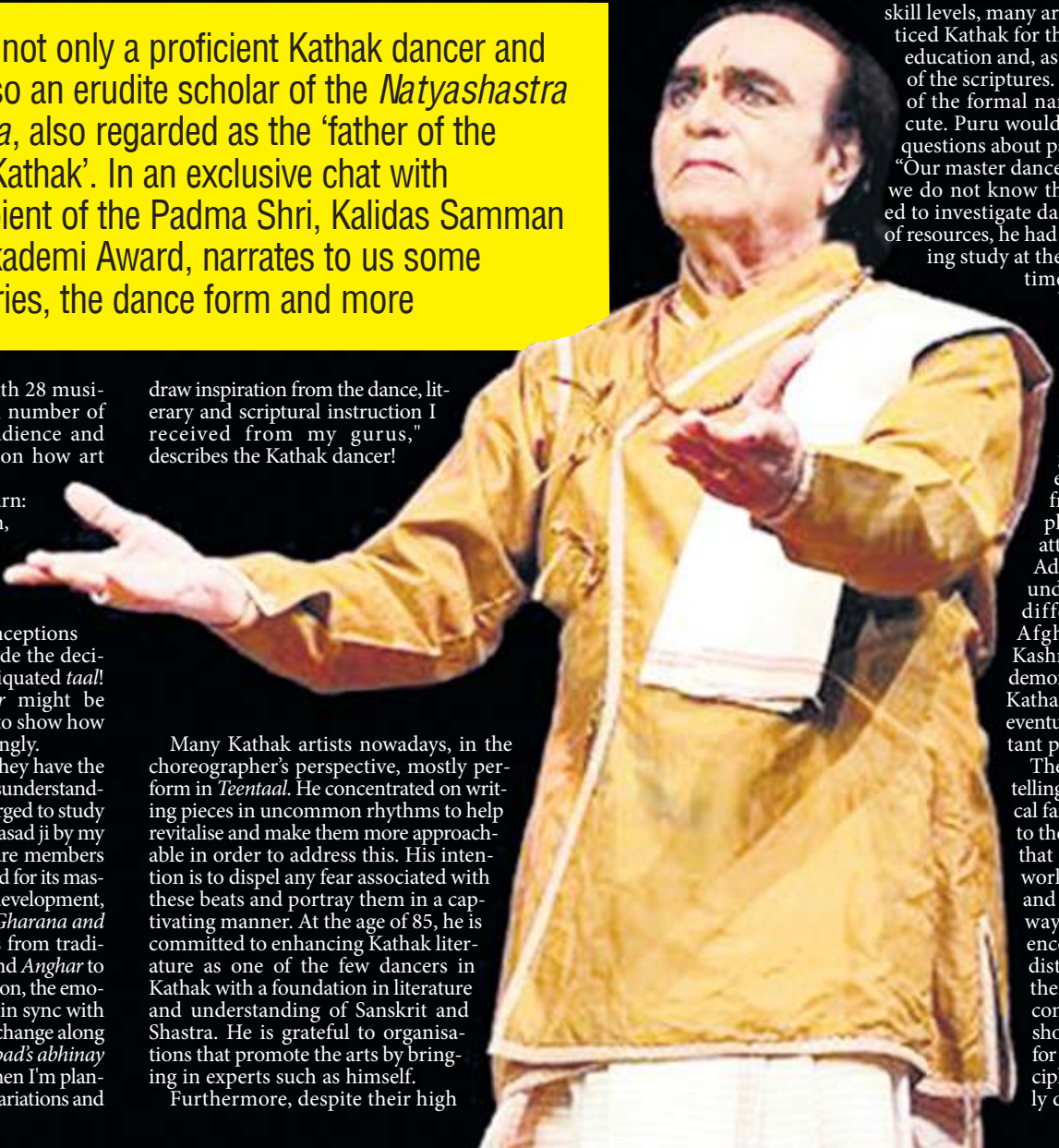
features a complete orchestration with 28 musicians and a troupe of 12 dancers. A number of variables, including time, place, audience and artists themselves, have an impact on how art evolves."

This is where the narrative takes a turn: Upon accepting the NCPA's invitation, he desired to showcase something innovative and exceptional that upheld the reputation of the organisation. Observing that there are few compositions and a lot of misconceptions regarding *Dhrupad* in Kathak, he made the decision to teach *Dhrupad* utilising an antiquated *taal*! Despite the fact that *Taal Shikhar* might be viewed as out of date, his intention is to show how it can be handled casually and amusingly.

"Although my gurus are unrelated, they have the same last name, which could lead to misunderstanding with other Prasad Brothers. I was urged to study under Narayan Prasad ji and Sunder Prasad ji by my first guru, Durga Prasad ji. All three are members of the *Jaipur Gharana*, which is renowned for its mastery of rhythm. In terms of my artistic development, I have combined the *Laikari of Jaipur Gharana* and the *Abhinaya of Lucknow* with aspects from traditional books such as *Mudras*, *Karana* and *Anghar* to create an independent style. In my opinion, the emotional and rhythmic expression that is in sync with the music defines dance. Dance forms change along with musical styles; for example, *Dhrupad's abhinaya* technique is different from *Thumri*. When I'm planning my dance works, I consider these variations and

draw inspiration from the dance, literary and scriptural instruction I received from my gurus," describes the Kathak dancer!

Many Kathak artists nowadays, in the choreographer's perspective, mostly perform in *Teentaal*. He concentrated on writing pieces in uncommon rhythms to help revitalise and make them more approachable in order to address this. His intention is to dispel any fear associated with these beats and portray them in a captivating manner. At the age of 85, he is committed to enhancing Kathak literature as one of the few dancers in Kathak with a foundation in literature and understanding of Sanskrit and Shastra. He is grateful to organisations that promote the arts by bringing in experts such as himself. Furthermore, despite their high



skill levels, many artists and teachers who have practiced Kathak for the past millennium lacked formal education and, as a result, were frequently ignorant of the scriptures. It's possible that they are unaware of the formal names of the dance steps they execute. Puru would frequently respond to his guru's questions about particular dancing styles by saying, "Our master danced like this and we dance like that; we do not know this scripture." Puru was motivated to investigate dance science by this. Due to a lack of resources, he had a lot of difficulties when conducting study at the time. For instance, it took a long time and there were times when books could not be found in Tanjore!

The first doctorate holder in Kathak classical dance continues the conversation, saying, "Kathak is the only classical dance style that does not have a designated government research institution, even after seventy years of India's freedom. The texts are still incomplete, despite my and a few others' attempts to advance Kathak science. Additionally, there is an abundance of undocumented historical data about different dance traditions from Afghanistan to Nepal and from Kashmir to Bihar and Bengal. This demonstrates the enormous potential for Kathak research and I hope that it will eventually be acknowledged as an important professional course."

The Padma Shri bearer concludes by telling us that he came from a non-musical family and that he decided to adhere to the teachings of any guru or gharana that he found inspiring. Through his workshops, candidates can observe and learn from a variety of specialists' ways. He gives them advice and encouragement on how to develop a distinctive personal style and accept their preferences. They can only be considered a true artist if they can showcase their originality. It is crucial for aspiring artists to exercise both discipline and creativity, as was previously discussed.

## Misters Kuru and art of fixing families: Trisha Das spills all

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Trisha Das, the popular author behind *Ms Draupadi Kuru: After the Pandavas* and its sequel, *The Mistery Kuru: A Return to Mahabharata*, *Kama's Last Sutra* and *The Mahabharata Re-imagined*, among other well-received books, speaks to *The Pioneer* about her latest novel *The Grand Samara*, her filmmaking background and more

Trisha Das, the award-winning filmmaker and best-selling author, is a master of reinvention and her latest book, *The Grand Samara*, proves it once again. *The Never Meant to Stay* author has written everything from documentaries to rom-coms and has tackled topics as vast as the *Mahabharata* and as lighthearted as a love story. But at the heart of *The Grand Samara* is something more universal: the search for "home."

Samara Mansingh, the protagonist of *The Grand Samara*, is a wedding photographer, who's more comfortable behind the camera than in front of it. Home has always been a fleeting concept for Samara, a diplomat's daughter who's lived all over. When asked if Samara's journey mirrors her own, she admits, "I can absolutely relate to Samara. For me, home was always about people rather than places. Like Samara, I've felt that sense of belonging and non-

belonging simultaneously. The difference is, I always had my family, whereas she's been fending for herself."

Her background in filmmaking shines through in her writing style. *The Grand Samara* actually started as a screenplay back in 2003, only to be shelved for twenty years before making its way into readers' hands. "I think my background in film shows up in my books, many readers say they feel cinematic. I think in terms of scenes, not chapters and focus on showing rather than telling," she says.

Samara finds herself thrown into the chaos of the Khanna family—a household rife with grief, unspoken emotions and societal expectations. How does one balance these heavy themes in a rom-com? She has a simple answer: "The appeal of any kind of art lies in its relatability. Every human experiences grief, which makes moments of happiness stand out. Humour isn't funny without grief and laughter isn't special without tears." It's this mix of struggle and silliness that makes *The Grand Samara* more than just a rom-com; it's a relatable slice of life.

Why did she choose wedding photography for Samara's profession? "A camera makes a wonderful boundary wall between the subject and the taker. A wedding photographer always remains an outsider, observing happy moments but never truly being part of them. That's Samara always looking at happiness from behind a lens until she meets the Khannas."

One of the key tensions in *The Grand Samara* is between tradition

and modernity, especially concerning arranged marriages and individual choice. "Arranged marriage has changed in bigger cities," says the *Kama's Last Sutra* author. "There's still pressure to marry by a certain age, but the traditional constraints aren't what they used to be. Nowadays, it's more like an extended date arranged by your parents, and it's a lot safer than swiping, right?"

Her wit and humour have always been standout features of her writing and it's no different in *The Grand Samara*. How does she create characters that are both personal and relatable? "To me, my characters are real people, they might do funny things, but they're never caricatures. I can't cook to save my life, but I can read people." And she reads them well, creating a rich tapestry of characters, like Samara and the Khannas, that stay with you long after the book ends.

Samara's role in the Khanna household is that of a disruptor; think Mary Poppins or Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Khoobsurat* and *Bawarchi*. She was inspired by Georgette Heyer's *The Grand Sopley*, where a young woman arrives in Regency England and proceeds to fix everyone's problems. "The disruptor is a popular theme in books and movies. I thought I could do a modern, Indian take on it."

And what about Sharav, the eldest son of the Khanna family? He's no cookie-cutter rom-com hero. "Sharav is good-looking, rich, and a family man," she says. "But the more important thing is that he's good for Samara. He's the Yin to her Yang. Writing men is the same as writing women when you treat them as individuals. Gender is a societal construct, but humans are humans."

Having found success in both film and writing, she often finds herself straddling these two creative worlds. "I still use filmmaking techniques to craft outlines for my books. Mood boards, film bibles—they all find their way into my writing process. The two mediums live side by side in my head."

And has she found her creative "home"? After all, she's worked across a dizzying range of creative industries, from filmmaking to PR. "Safe to say, I've found my creative home—it's in books. I have two more rom-coms on the way. No matter what genre I write, books are my passion and I can see myself writing many more in the years to come."

Her comedic voice is all her own, despite the fact that her brother, Vir Das, is a well-known comedian. "We developed our comedic voices separately," she says. "Our interests and styles are quite different, but we support and appreciate each other's work."

The world of publishing and filmmaking is changing, especially in the digital age. How does Trisha Das stay creatively energised and what's her advice for emerging authors and filmmakers? "Creative inspiration can be found anywhere these days, but so can competition. It can be overwhelming for a newbie. My advice? Be focused and selective about where you hang out online. Educate yourself in how professionals do things. Be original, patient, and consistent. Don't create art for the eyeballs, create it because you love it. Once it's finished, then you can worry about the eyeballs."

Trisha Das's *The Grand Samara* is more than a rom-com. It's a story about finding where you belong, and as Samara learns, that might be in the last place you'd think to look, in a chaotic household full of grief, humour and love. And maybe that's the ultimate lesson: home isn't a place; it's the people who make it feel like one.

## Rise to homeownership!

The dream of owning your own home forms a cornerstone of economic aspiration across India. However, rising interest rates and fluctuating affordability require careful navigation by 2024's homebuying hopefuls for turning vision into reality through optimal property decisions. This guide examines prudent purchase journeys against a shifting backdrop where real estate introspection outranks infatuation.

"Astute home seekers keeping meticulous budgets will discover value even with higher rates," Director, Fortea Realty Pvt Ltd, Manoj Goyal reminds that cycles ebb and flow. "Rather than timing markets, prioritise your lifestyle needs, preferred locations and financial plans first."

### Navigating complex Indian market landscape

India's divergent property ecosystem all too often perplexes novice buyers unfamiliar with regional norms and jargon. Expand your knowledge first through the wide array of educational materials now available both online and via credible agencies. Arm yourself about prevailing rates in localities meeting your needs.

While we all hope for the elusive bargain, realistic budgeting must reflect current market forces rather than wishful thinking. Optimal locations suiting daily commutes and family priorities then determine choices, not unrealistic expectations of space or luxury features.

LC Mittal, Director at Motia Group says, "The current environment calls for pragmatic buying based on need not greed." Mittal advises first-timers to build future equity by focusing more on land and location now, adding space judiciously over time.

### Keep an eye on interest rates and regulatory changes

Property buying depends tremendously on home loans and rates, so track RBI and bank trends diligently before finalising plans. Mittal notes, "With interest rates inching up since mid 2022, prudent purchasing means sticking to budgets that leave breath-

ing room if EMIs increase." Smaller starter units or pushing out timelines help reduce pressures. Also stay updated on policy changes impacting real estate at both central and state government levels. Entry of institutional capital, RERA implementation, GST rate revisions, green incentives etc. all impact dynamics.

### Leveraging bank tie-ups to access best deals

Builders today partner with banks and NBFCs to offer direct home financing support and customised rates for projects to boost sales. Anurag Goel, Director at Goel Ganga Developments explains how buyers gain: "Tie-ups allow us to offer attractive incentives like processing fee waivers or reduced EMIs to home buyers waiting for possessions."

So beyond location and budget, finding projects with active channel partner promotions enhances overall savings too. This helps new buyers stretch funds further through subsidised pricing and limited-period offers.

Anurag added, "Bank relationships helping developers offer direct finance are a huge plus, often with preferential home loan rates, but read terms carefully." Scrutinise any contractual penalties on exiting before finalising.

### Key takeaway: Patience and agility are prime

According to Aman Gupta, Director of RPS Group, "First-time home shopping in India rewards not the impatient but those willing to take some time and effort in understanding local dynamics. While current volatility sparks unease for new entrants, opportunities still abound for savvy buyers open to adjusting criteria to tap good deals as rates and inventory fluctuate."

The key is aligning expectations to market realities, not outdated perceptions. Work closely with developers aware of ongoing changes in rates, regulations and promotional financing to secure optimal gains as you turn renter woes into property-owner pride!





# OUR BATTERS DON'T KNOW HOW TO SCORE 180 RUNS, SKIPPER SHANTO

PTI ■ GWALIOR

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has candidly admitted that his team doesn't know how to consistently post 180 plus totals in a T20 game. Batting has been Bangladesh's weak link for a while, especially their approach in the powerplay. They struggled to 39 for two in six overs on Sunday night before managing a below par 127. India chased that down in just 11.5 overs to go 1-0 up in the series. "We have the ability, but we have room for improvement in our skills. We have been batting in this way for the last 10 years. Sometimes we do well. We have to make some changes, perhaps where we practice back home." Shanto feels that tracks in Bangladesh aren't conducive for big scoring games of T20 and that has affected their collective batting performance. "We play on 140-150 wickets at home. Our batters don't know how to score 180 runs. I won't blame just the wickets, but we have to consider skills and mentality," Shanto said following the crushing loss. The batters' shot selection was also questioned with the likes of Litton Das falling to ordinary shots. "I wouldn't say we played badly. We are a better team than this. We haven't done well in this format for a long time, but I don't believe we are such a bad team," said Shanto. "I don't want to talk about any individual player. I think the batting unit didn't do well today. There will be aggression in the way we approach our scoring, but sometimes we have to select the

deliveries correctly. We will think about it, but we can't rush in changing our approach." Shanto went on to say that their powerplay approach needs to be reviewed with the opening stands having contributed only 69 runs in the last eight innings. "Powerplay is definitely a worry. The approach we talked about (before the game), it will be successful if we make a good start with the bat. "We have to keep the wickets in the first six overs, and score runs in those. Otherwise those coming in next, it becomes too challenging for them. We have struggled in the powerplay. Those batting in the power play must take more responsibility," said the southpaw. Rookier Indian pacer Mayank Yadav made a promising debut on Sunday, generating speeds close to 150kmph in his first competitive game in five months. He hurried the batters but Shanto said they are used to facing such speed in the nets. "We have some similar fast bowlers in the nets. I don't think we were too worried about (Mayank Yadav). But he is a good bowler," he added. Surya gives you freedom, he is a calm captain: Debutants Mayank, Nitish Gwalior, (PTI) Mayank Yadav and Nitish Kumar Reddy were expectedly nervous ahead of their India debut in the first T20 International against Bangladesh here but the newcomers said skipper Suryakumar Yadav helped them stay calm with his comforting words. Mayank, the 22-year-old pace sensation, made his debut here on



Sunday after recovering from a recurring abdominal strain after playing only four matches in this year's IPL. He impressed in the first match returning with figures of 1/21 from his four overs. Nitish, 21, also made instant

impact by remaining unbeaten on 16 off 15 balls, to help India register a commanding seven-wicket win in the series-opener. "He (Suryakumar) gives you freedom. When I was taking the run up, he was telling me 'do what

you feel, what you feel best'. So that's very important for any fast bowler, specially when you making your debut," Mayank told BCCI.TV. Nitish added: "He is very calm and cool. He is doing fabulous

captaincy, not giving any pressure to us. We were debutants, obviously we will have nervousness and pressure. He gave that license to us. Any youngster would like to get it from the captain."

Taking about his debut after the long injury layoff, Mayank became emotional. "It's a great moment because I am coming from an injury. I was a bit nervous, like I was telling myself don't stress yourself. "When I got to know I am going to play my first match, making my debut, complete flashback of last four months came in front of my eyes," he said. The speedster started his international career with a maiden over on Sunday and credited bowling coach Morne Morkel for shaping him. "It felt good. I was not like thinking that I am going to bowl a maiden over. Just wanted to live in that moment, enjoy that moment," Mayank said. "It's very comfortable for me, I am with him (Morkel) for the last three years. I know him, he knows me very well. So, it's very easy for me to work with him. He knows which things are better for me." Nitish too was satisfied with his debut performance, saying it was a dream-come-true moment for him. "For any cricketer in India it's a big moment. Playing for Indian cricket team is a dream-come-true moment. Obviously, there was nervousness but I enjoyed that. It was a very proud moment for me and my family as well," he said. "There are senior players and I got a lot of experience as well from the coaching staff. Even in bowling as well getting some keen points. I love this kind of atmosphere in the dressing room." The second T20 of the three-match series will be played in New Delhi on Wednesday.



## Jayasuriya appointed full-time head coach of Sri Lanka till 2026 T20 WC

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Former captain Sanath Jayasuriya was on Monday appointed as full-time head coach of the Sri Lankan cricket team until the end of the 2026 T20 World Cup. The former left-handed opener was Sri Lanka's interim coach since early July, and after he impressed in the role against India and England, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has decided to hand him full-time responsibility. Under Jayasuriya's guidance, Sri Lanka won their first bilateral ODI series against India in 27 years, and then defeated England in an away Test for the first time in 10 years. Most recently, Sri Lanka

defeated New Zealand 2-0 in a Test series at home. "The Executive Committee of Sri Lanka Cricket made this decision taking into consideration the team's good performances in the recent tours against India, England, and New Zealand, where Jayasuriya was in charge as the interim head coach," SLC said in a statement. "The appointment came into effect on October 1, 2024, and will remain until March 31, 2026." Jayasuriya had been a chief selector in the past and his first assignment as full-time head coach will be the limited overs series against West Indies, starting in Dambulla on October 13.

## I have completely shifted to overspin from sidespin: Varun Chakaravathy

PTI ■ GWALIOR

Mystery spinner Varun Chakaravathy says he is reaping the rewards of putting over-spin on the ball instead of side-spin following his successful India comeback. The 33-year-old, whose India career came to an abrupt halt after an underwhelming debut in the 2021 T20 World Cup, took three wickets against Bangladesh in the series opener. As the great Nathan Lyon has shown over the years, putting over-spin on the ball generates sharp bounce and turn, which aided Varun on Sunday night. His googly to get rid of Jaker Ali showed the former architect's total control over his craft.

"I used to be a side-spin bowler, but right now, I have completely shifted to being an over-spin bowler," said Varun after playing a part in India's seven-wicket win. "It's a minute technical aspect of spin bowling, but it took me more than two years. I gradually tested it in TNPL and IPL. While the mental aspect also had to be worked on, the major chunk of effort I put in was on my technical side." Despite doing well in the IPL and domestic cricket over the past two seasons, Varun did not get a recall to the Indian team and that only made him hungrier. Now that he is back in blues, it feels like a rebirth. "Whenever there was a squad that was announced, I used to



feel like, 'Why is my name not there?' and I used to keep thinking about that. So that kind of brought the motivation within me that I should not leave this.

"I should go all out and make a comeback, so I started playing a lot of domestic games and giving importance to it. That kind of helped me," said the soft-spoken

cricketer. A catch was dropped in Varun's first over that eventually went for 15 runs with Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hasan Shanto and Towhid Hridoy going on the offensive against spinner in the powerplay. However, skipper Suryakumar Yadav trusted Varun to bounce back in the following over and he did that by having Hridoy caught at long-on. "Yes, in the first over the catch could have gone my way but that's how T20s are played. I felt the reverse-sweep six was a good ball but it still went for a six, so it's all mixed emotions." He played the series opener of leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi who

too has had done well fairly well in the limited opportunities that he has got after the T20 World Cup, reflecting India's robust bench strength. Varun acknowledged the fierce competition. "There is good competition and there is good camaraderie also. And the person who was cheering me was Ravi Bishnoi; he was coming and telling me messages, so I can't ask for more. "It's actually good to have such competition so that people will keep pushing each other. Someone will be better than others at one point of time and he will definitely get the Cup for India, so that competition is very required," Varun added.

## Gulveer Singh finds place in eight member senior squad for Asian Cross Country in Hong Kong

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games medalist long distance runner Gulveer Singh was on Monday named in the eight-member Indian senior team that will take part in the Asian Cross Country championships to be held on October 20 in Hong Kong. The 26-year-old Army man had won a bronze medal in the men's 10,000m race in the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. Singh had an excellent run on the track this season. In September, he improved his national 5,000m record to 13:11.82 seconds during a World Athletics Continental Tour event in Japan. Athletics Federation of India (AFI) selection committee has also named the national senior and junior teams for the South Asian Cross Country Championships to be held on November



24 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The national team that will compete at the Asian Cross Country will also get the

opportunity to compete at the South Asian Cross Country in Pakistan in November. "The participation of the athletes at the South Asian Cross-Country Championship in Pakistan will be subject to fitness," AFI president Adille Sumarwalla said. "Any athlete who is unfit will be dropped from the national squad," he added. **TEAM FOR ASIAN CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS:** **Senior Men:** Gulveer Singh, Karthik Kumar, Abhishek Pal, Arun Rathod. **Senior Women:** Ankita, Seema, Sanjivani Jadhav, Sonika. **Junior Men:** Amardeep Pal, Kripashankar Yadav, Vinod Singh, Gaurav Bhaskar Bhosale. **Junior Women:** Ekta Dey, Sunita Devi, Shilpa Dhiora, Prachi Ankush Devkar.



## PCB chief 'confident' that Champions Trophy would be held in Pakistan

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday expressed confidence that the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy would be held in the country and all teams, including arch-rivals India, would participate in the tournament. The 2025 edition of the Champions Trophy is scheduled to start on February 19, and the final is on March 9, Lahore, Karachi, and Rawalpindi have been earmarked as the venues. India hasn't sent its team to Pakistan since July 2008 due to tense political relations between the two countries. "The Indian team should come. I don't see them cancel or postpone coming here and we are confident we will host all the teams in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan," Naqvi said. He also said that Pakistan was prepared to host all the teams including India and preparations were on schedule.

"The stadiums will also be ready to host the matches on schedule and any remaining work would be completed after the tournament," he added. Naqvi said the stadiums would be "definitely" be in a much better shape to host the tournament in February-March. Asked about Babar Azam's resignation from captaincy and who is going to replace him, the PCB chief said he had told the selection committee to take their time and make a long-term decision. "I have told them to take a decision after careful consideration because the captain's position is important." Naqvi also said he had inquired from the selection committee including the captain and head coach of the teams whether it was the right time to introduce some fresh blood in the national sides. "They said they are okay with the current set-up of players so I told them 'fine, it is your call'" he added.

## India win team gold in men's 50m pistol event

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The troika of Deepak Dalal (545), Kamaljeet (543) and Raj Chandra (528) won the men's 50m pistol team gold medal on the concluding day of the Junior World Shooting Championship at the Peruvian capital of Lima. Indian shooting team won the yellow metal with a combined tally of 1616 points beating Azerbaijan by a point. Armenia came third. In all, India's junior shooters finished the championship on top with a rich haul of 24 medals which included 13 gold, three silver and eight bronze. Italy finished second with five gold and four silver and bronze medals each while Norway was third with four gold and a total of 10 medals. On Sunday, Mukesh Nelavalli also won an individual bronze in the event, his sixth medal of the competition, shooting a total of 548 over 60-shots. Azerbaijan's Imran Garayev won the gold with a score of 552. In the junior women's 50m



pistol, Parisha Gupta won an individual silver with a score of 540. She could not get past Hungary's Miriam Jakó's effort of 546, which was a junior world record. Sejal Kamble (529), Ketan (525) and Kanishka Dagar (513) also combined to win India a team silver in the event, finishing behind Azerbaijan. Divanishi, the fifth Indian in fray, shot 523 to finish eighth. In the other event of the final day, Shardul Vihan and Sabeera Harris combined to give India a bronze in the junior mixed team trap competition, played over 75 targets each. Shardul (71) and Sabeera's (67) shot a total of 138, which was not enough to get past gold winners Czech Republic (141+8) and silver medalist Italy (141+7). Zuhair Khan and Bhavya Tripathi, the second Indian pair in the event, shot a total of 134 to finish joint sixth. The ISSF bandwagon will now move to New Delhi for the final stop of its 2024 calendar, the prestigious season-ending ISSF World Cup Final Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun.





# Sudheer Babu on his scarring experience on sets of *Maa Nanna Superhero*

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After an action film like *Harom Hara*, Sudheer Babu is back with an emotional film, *Maa Nanna Super Hero*. The story revolves around a father-son relationship, and Sudheer Babu is confident in its success, as the plot focuses entirely on the bond between the two. "There are many films about the father-son relationship, but they are usually limited to a certain point. In my film, that relationship carries through the entire story," said Sudheer Babu. In the film, he has two fathers, one biological and one who raises him. "There have been many love triangle stories, but in this film, it's a love triangle between a son and two fathers. There are many interesting situations as the son tries to take care of both fathers. You don't need to come up with new ideas because they're already there. When a son gets angry with his father, you have to explain it, but when you love

him, no explanation is needed," Sudheer Babu explained.

The actor shared that he didn't have to put much effort into the role, as each scene was very relatable to him. "It was very easy for me to emote while doing this film. For some roles, you need inspiration or real-life examples for better performance, but for this film, it was easy. Portraying this character was natural for me and it didn't require much effort. What's interesting is that my performance has no reference to any of my previous films or other films. In *Maa Nanna Super Hero*, you won't find any comparisons; it feels fresh," he said.

Sudheer Babu also spoke about how he fully immersed himself in the role, saying, "I completely turned off my phone and kept my distance from family and friends. I didn't want any distractions, as I wanted to focus solely on my role."

Speaking about the film *Animal*, where the protagonist expresses love for his father in a bold and aggressive way, Sudheer Babu noted, "They presented a larger-than-life portrayal and audiences accepted it. In my film, we showed the father-son love with tenderness. We didn't want to use a formulaic approach; it's very real and relatable. There are many intense scenes, but you'll also find moments that make you smile."

Sayaji Shinde and Sai Chand play the father roles in *Maa Nanna Super Hero*. Sudheer Babu praised them, saying,

"Both are fantastic actors. Sayaji Shinde's role in this film is definitely a surprise. Initially, I had doubts about whether people would accept him in this role because he has mostly played funny, serious, or negative roles. But the director was confident in him and now, after completing the film, I feel he's completely fresh in this role. Not only is he a great actor, but also a good human being who does a lot of social work."

About Sai Chand, Sudheer Babu said, "He's a great actor with many films to his credit. Generally, character artists accept three or four films at a time, but Sai Chand is different. He takes one film at a time, which shows his dedication to acting."

Sudheer Babu also shared a bit about his real-life father, who was neither too strict nor too friendly. "He's more of a disciplined person who never gets angry. My sister and I used to look forward to weekends because he'd bring chocolates on Saturdays and take us to lunch on Sundays. His lifestyle is an inspiration to us." He added, "If he likes something about me, he never tells me directly. He hasn't commented on any of my films till now, but once, he forwarded someone's message that he liked my film."

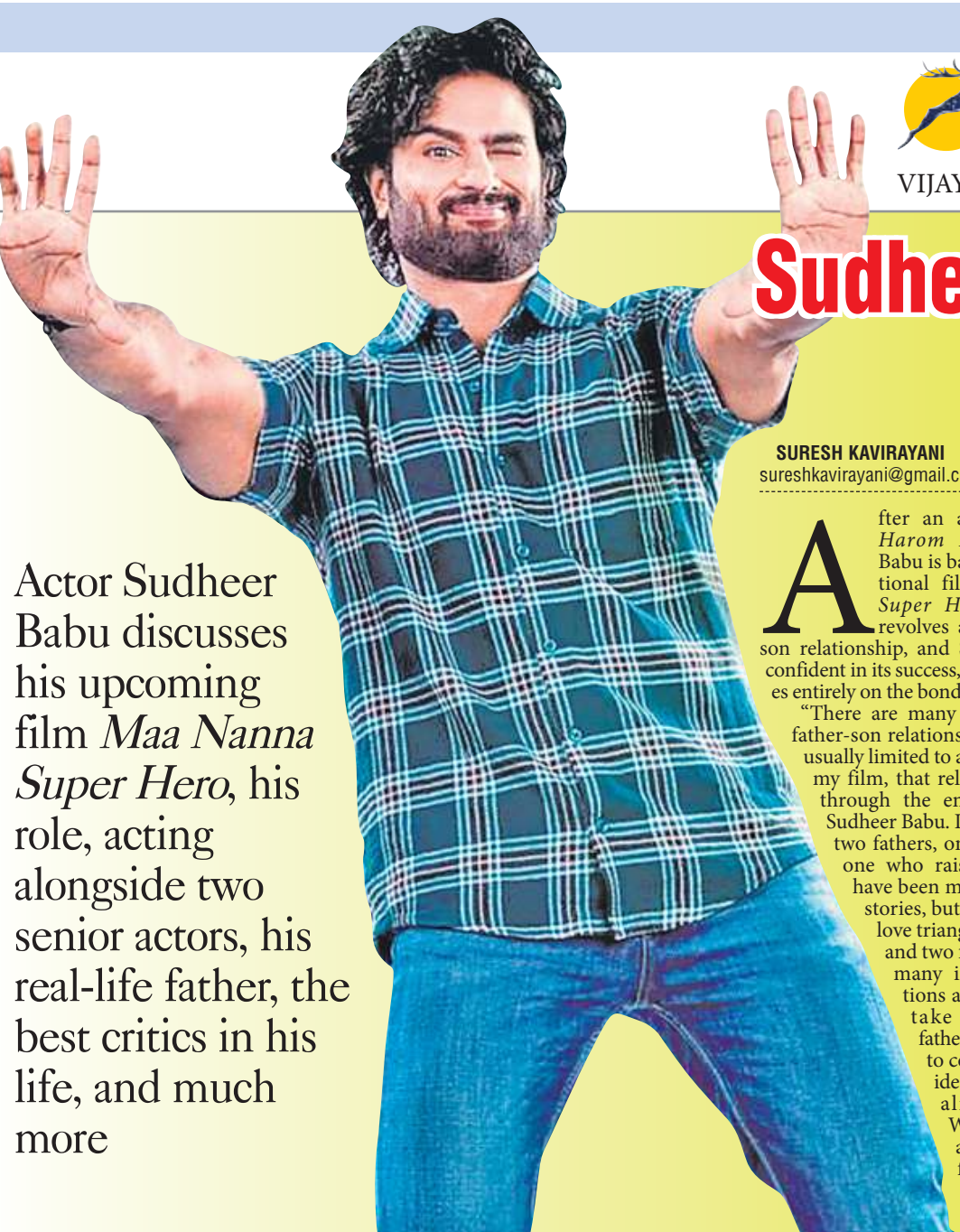
When asked about his best critics, Sudheer Babu said, "My sons, wife and friends are my best critics. My sons talk about the film, but they never point out anything negative. My wife, however, is

my most honest critic." He also shared a memory from the film, mentioning, "I got a small injury during an action sequence, which left a scar, something I won't forget."

Sudheer Babu also spoke about his upcoming film *Jatadhara*, calling it an interesting storyline. "It's a big film, not in terms of budget, but conceptually. This is the first time a Bollywood production house is making a film with me, which is exciting. The story is a mix of mythology and science and we start shooting in November. There's a lot of preparation involved," he said, adding that he has also signed another film with director Rahul Ravindran.

Sudheer Babu spoke candidly about his film choices: "I believe in all the films I do, and I never feel I'm experimenting with them. The only film I consider an experiment is *Hunt*. Many other films didn't do well, but people claim I experimented with those too." Addressing the failures at the box office, he added, "Some stories are great on paper, but there can be issues when they're translated on-screen."

Sudheer Babu also did a negative role in the Hindi film *Baaghi*, but he isn't particularly keen on doing more negative roles. "If I say I'm ready for negative roles, filmmakers from all industries start calling me. But I didn't like many of the roles offered. If something really good comes up, I might consider it," he concluded.



Actor Sudheer Babu discusses his upcoming film *Maa Nanna Super Hero*, his role, acting alongside two senior actors, his real-life father, the best critics in his life, and much more

## Sneak peek into *Euphoria*



A new cinematic journey is about to unfold with *Euphoria*, a film that promises raw emotions and untamed chaos, luring audiences into a gripping narrative. Directed by Gunasekhar, the movie's teaser gives viewers a glimpse into a powerful story that resonates with intensity and depth. The teaser, which was recently unveiled on YouTube, hints at a world that is both visually stunning and emotionally turbulent, promising an unforgettable experience.

The teaser features glimpses of Bhumi Chawla, capturing raw performances that connect instantly, accompanied by Kaala Bhairava's evocative score. This combination of breathtaking visuals and emotionally charged music sets the tone for what is expect-

ed to be an immersive narrative.

Gunasekhar's latest directorial venture seems poised to capture audiences with a blend of drama, passion, and visual poetry. Supported by talented producers like Neelima Guna and a dedicated team that includes Vignesh Reddy and Yalamanchili Likitha, *Euphoria* is shaping up as a film to watch out for.

*Euphoria* has already sparked curiosity with its intense teasers and collaboration of exceptional talent, aiming to take viewers through a roller-coaster of feelings. The film appears to be more than just entertainment; it's a dive into the emotional chaos and richness of human experience, something that Gunasekhar and his team have carefully crafted.

## Kartik Subbaraj curates quirky thriller with *Snakes & Ladders*

On Monday, Prime Video had announced the premiere date of the Tamil original series, *Snakes & Ladders*. Curated by Kartik Subbaraj, produced by Kalyan Subramanian (A StoneBench Production), the Tamil Original series is created by Kamala Alchemis & Dhivakar Kamal and directed by Ashok Veerappan, Bharath Muralidharan and Kamala Alchemis. The edge-of-the-seat thriller boasts a stellar ensemble cast, including Naveen Chandra, Nandha, Manoj



Bharathiraja, Muthukumar, Srinda, Sreejith Ravi, Samrith, Surya Ragaveshwar, Surya Kumar, Tarun and Sasha Bharen in pivotal roles.

Set in the mid-2000s, this quirky yet gripping dark-humour thriller truly celebrates friendship in all forms. The story follows the adventures of four school friends, Gilly, Irai, Sandy and Bala, who find themselves inadvertently entangled in a conundrum. As they navigate various challenging situations and personal struggles, leaving inevitable trails and making questionable choices along the way, their journey ultimately leads them on an unexpected path of self-discovery.

Curator of the series, Kartik Subbaraj said, "It has been an absolute pleasure to work on *Snakes and Ladders*. Bringing the story of these four friends to life has been an incredibly exhilarating experience. Each character in the series is unique, with their own distinct personality and complex relationships that reflect the ups and downs of teenage life. The journey of unraveling a mystery that intertwines their lives will keep the audience hooked from beginning to end. We aimed to craft a narrative that entertains while also tapping into the nuances of friendship, personal growth, and the meaningful bonds and lessons that will resonate with viewers."

## ANAND SAI TIPPED FOR KEY TTD MEMBER?

Not long ago, Pawan Kalyan, the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, paid a visit to Tirupati and stayed there for a few days. Accompanying him are renowned director Trivikram Srinivas and acclaimed film art director Anand Sai. The art director has been a close friend to the AP Deputy CM since the start of his career. Trivikram Srinivas has a strong bond with Pawan Kalyan as well.

Pawan Kalyan was offlate spotted with these two individuals in Tirupati, sparking various speculations. Some sources indicate that Anand Sai will potentially be appointed as a board member of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD). Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu recently revealed several appointed positions, excluding the announcement of TTD Chairman and board members.

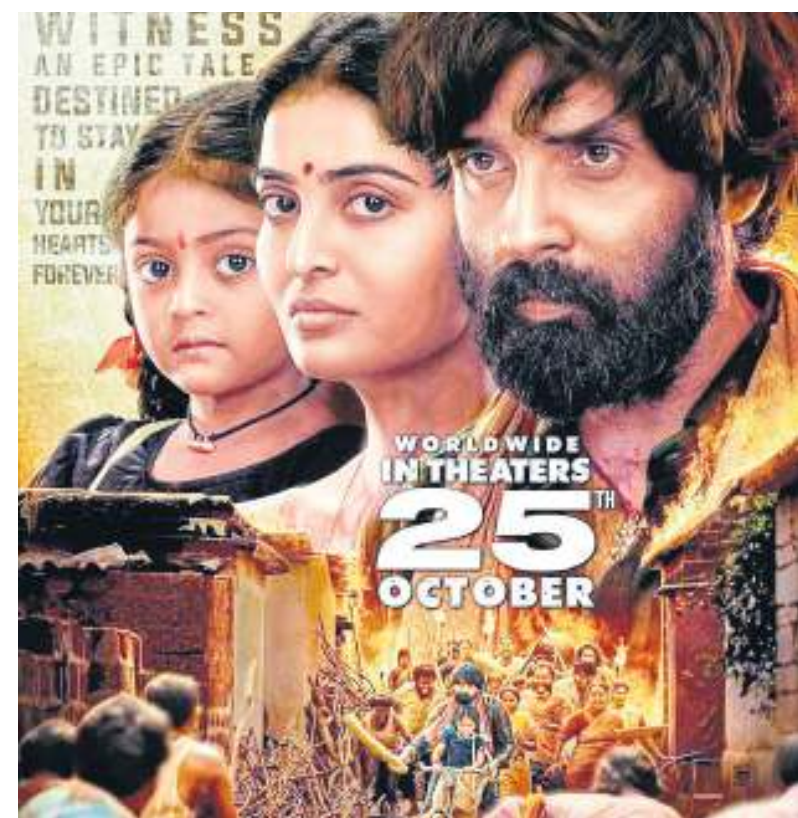
"Anand Sai is one of the finest art directors and he also worked many years to rebuild the Yadadri temple in Telangana State. So, Pawan Kalyan suggested his name to the Chief Minister," says a source. Despite Trivikram Srinivas being mentioned, the director intended to emphasise his film career, the source disclosed. The reports came close to verifying that Anand Sai is a member of the TTD board. Reports suggest that Chandrababu Naidu may bring in well-known speaker Chaganti Koteswara Rao, famous for his talks on Sanatana Dharma and Puranas.

"It is still not known whether Chaganti wants to accept it or not, but the government is seriously considering his name for the TTD Chairman post at this time," said the source.

## Pottel set to illuminate Diwali

The movie *Pottel* finished production a while ago and they began advertising a while ago as well. However, the release date wasn't announced due to several major movies. Sahit Mothkhuri directs this film, featuring Yuva Chandraa Krishna and Ananya Nagalla as the lead pair. The release date of this film was officially announced by the makers as October 25. Nishank Reddy Kudithi and Suresh Kumar Sadige serve as the producers. The makers aim to take advantage of the festive season by scheduling Diwali festival on October 29. The promotional videos of the movie are already generating excitement due to their promising nature.

The film's narrative takes place in a secluded village in Telangana, centered on Gangadhar's motivational journey. He desires to provide his daughter with an improved future by offering her better education. The film will emphasise on culture and traditions in rural areas of Telangana.



## Malavika Mohanan shoots challenging action sequence for *Sardar 2*

After the success of her recent films *Thangalaan* and *Yudhra*, Malavika Mohanan is already diving into her next project. Currently, she is in the midst of shooting for the highly anticipated *Sardar 2*. In a recent conversation, Malavika described her role in this sequel as very "different and challenging." This description has been made more evident in a social media post by Malavika, where she gives fans a behind-the-scenes look at the demanding nature of her new character.



In her Instagram post, Malavika shared images and insights from a particularly intense stunt sequence, captioning it, "Shot some really challenging stunt sequences for *Sardar 2* and thought I'd show you guys what the harness we wear inside our costume looks like. These are meant to hold us on the ropes when we jump off a height/float in the air or get lifted up to do a really high kick. I used to find rope work so tricky and tough the first few times I had to do it for some sequences in *Thangalaan*, but now with practice, even though some sequences can get nerve wrecking (I had to jump off a 100-meter height recently which wasn't so much fun) I've got the hang of it for the most part and it's such an adrenalin rush and so gratifying when you get the technicality and the shot right! Why should boys have all the fun, no?"

In her post, Malavika gives a glimpse into the physical and mental challenges of performing high-stakes stunts, while wearing intensive stunt gear. From mastering rope work to executing high kicks while suspended in the air, she's pushing her limits and honing her skills. The adrenaline rush and satisfaction she feels when nailing these complex sequences is evident, showcasing her dedication and growth as an actress.

In *Sardar 2*, Malavika joins the cast in a new and undisclosed role, adding an intriguing layer to the film. While details of her character are still under wraps, her involvement has certainly piqued the interest of fans, who are eager to see how she will complement Karthi's dual roles as Agent Chandra Bose Sardar and Inspector Vijay Prakash. The film, slated for release in 2025, promises an exciting dynamic between Malavika and Karthi, with her character set to bring a fresh and thrilling element to the sequel.



## Manchu Lakshmi celebrates b'day with *Adiparvam*'s first look

On the occasion of the birthday of talented actress Manchu Lakshmi, the first look of her character from the movie *Adiparvam* is released, the movie is coming to a grand theatrical release on 31st of this month. Presented by Raoula Venkateshwar Rao, the movie *Adiparvam* is produced under the banner of Anvika Arts in association with AI Entertainments. Manchu Lakshmi is playing the lead role in this movie. Another key role is played by Adityam Om. Director Sanjeev Megotti is making the film *Adiparvam* with graphics, mainly a periodical love story woven around Amnavari in the background of Erragudi. *Adiparvam* movie is going to have a grand theatrical release on 31st of this month after completing the censorship process. Talented actress Manchu Lakshmi released the first look of her character in the film *Adiparvam* on her birthday. The first

look of her character is interesting and impressive. Manchu Lakshmi is going to entertain the audience in a new role, which she has not done till now.

Director Sanjeev Megotti speaking on the occasion, firstly wished Manchu Lakshmi for her birthday and said, "With the collaboration of Anvika Arts and AI Entertainments, I am satisfied that I have made *Adiparvam* a great film. Manchu Lakshmi, Adityam Om, Shiv Kanthamaneni and Esther's roles are praised by people. Their performances are memorable. I have made this movie as a collection of real events that happened between 1974-90. This movie is a battle between evil power and divine power, similar to Ammoru and Arundhati films. A movie like this has not come out in recent times. Graphics will be highlighted in our movie."