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**'Turn towards Indian talent for sourcing workforce'**



**BANKS MUST RIDE ON ADVANTAGES OF AI AND BIGTECH: SHAKTIKANTA DAS**



**Navigating chaos, cinema and confidence: NEW ROLES**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

Expanding the Cabinet as well as appointing the TPCC Executive Committee will be done soon. The BRS is using social media without any social sense. The BRS's social media wing has been spreading lies against the government through social media. This campaign will give temporary happiness to the BRS, but in the long run, it will certainly harm the BRS



- B. Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC chief P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Heavy rains disrupt normal life in...**

Heavy rains, triggered by low pressure, have severely disrupted normal life in various districts of the Rayalaseema region and Prakasam district on Monday. Control rooms have been established at district headquarters to monitor the situation. In Nellore district, heavy rainfall led to flooding in several busy localities, including Padmavati Centre, Current Officer Centre, Ayyappa Temple Centre, and other low-lying areas, which were submerged under two feet of water. Vehicular traffic in the city was severely affected, with many...

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**Indians have highest...**

The ethnic group with the highest concentration of professional workers in the UK is Indian and considering ethnic minorities as a monolithic group for public policy purposes is now increasingly meaningless in the country, a new think-tank analysis concludes on Monday. 'A Portrait of Modern Britain: Ethnicity and Religion' published by the Policy Exchange reflects an in-depth examination of the demographic, educational, health and economic situation of different ethnic groups in the country. The report...

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**Exports to be major job creator for...**

US-India Strategic Partnership Forum President and CEO Mukesh Agni on Monday emphasised that exports are going to be a major job creator for India as the country moves towards becoming a US\$ 5 trillion economy. Agni, who was speaking at an event organised by the USISIP, also stressed that India and the US should continue to strengthen their economic engagements and increase the bilateral trade to US\$ 500 billion going forward. He said creating nearly 1.2 million jobs per month is going to be a...

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**It may have been different if we...**

A disheartened India head coach Amol Muzumdar rued the missed opportunities that could have altered the game's outcome after his team's hopes of reaching the women's T20 World Cup semifinals were dashed by a loss to Australia. In a bid to control their own destiny, the Indian team delivered a lackluster performance on the field, ultimately resulting in a nine-run loss to defending champions Australia in their must-win game on Sunday. "I think we were right in the game, right till the last over. Just that..."

-SPORTS

## Allotment of liquor shops in AP peaceful

SHOP OWNERS LIKELY TO STOCK THEIR OUTLETS BY THIS EVENING

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The allocation of liquor shops across Andhra Pradesh concluded smoothly on Monday through a lottery system, with a total of 89,882 applications submitted for 3,396 shops. The process began at 8 AM and was completed by 3 PM, with no major disruptions reported.

In some areas, the atmosphere resembled the intensity of election vote counting, as applicants from various states including Delhi, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh participated, resulting in a diverse group of licensees.

Notably, female applicants had a strong showing, securing a significant number of licenses in districts like Visakhapatnam, NTR (Vijayawada), and Krishna. Women secured 16 shops in NTR district, 7 in Krishna, and 11 in Visakhapatnam.

Supporters of ruling party MLAs were reported to have secured three to five shops each, while larger syndicates, who applied for multiple shops, were less successful, with many receiving only five to ten licenses. Some syndicates that aimed for 10 to 30 shops expressed disappointment at the outcome.

**A total of 89,882 applications submitted for 3,396 shops.**

- The lottery process began at 8 AM and concluded by 3 PM.
- Female applicants secured more number of licenses in several districts.
- Supporters of ruling party MLAs secured three to five shops each.
- Larger syndicates applying for multiple shops received fewer licenses.
- Some syndicates expressed disappointment at their lottery

**Excise authorities begin to issue provisional licences to successful applicants after collecting fees.**

**Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra assured strict measures against violations of liquor regulations.**

**Liquor shops will not be permitted within 100 meters of temples or schools.**

**Police vigilance has been strengthened to prevent illegal 'belt' shops.**

Following the lottery, excise authorities began issuing provisional licenses to the successful applicants, after collecting the necessary fees. Shop owners are expected to

begin stocking their outlets by tomorrow evening, and the new liquor shops will open to the public on October 16. Government-run liquor shops will remain operational until the evening of October 15.

Continued on Page 2



**Power utilities gear up to face rain threat**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In light of the heavy rains expected to hit various parts of the state, particularly Rayalaseema and South Coastal Andhra regions, the Andhra Pradesh power utilities have been placed on high alert. The districts likely to be affected include Tirupati, Annamaya, Chittoor, Nellore, Prakasam, Sri Satya Sai, and others, with the forecast predicting heavy rains over the next three days, until 17th October 2024, according to the State Disaster Management Department.

Special Chief Secretary for Energy, K Vijayanand, has instructed the power utilities to be fully prepared for any potential emergencies. During a telephonic review with the CMDs of DISCOMs on Monday, Vijayanand stressed the need for complete readiness and swift restoration of power in case of damage to infrastructure.

He directed the DISCOMs to ensure that foolproof arrangements are in place to restore power in affected areas as quickly as possible.

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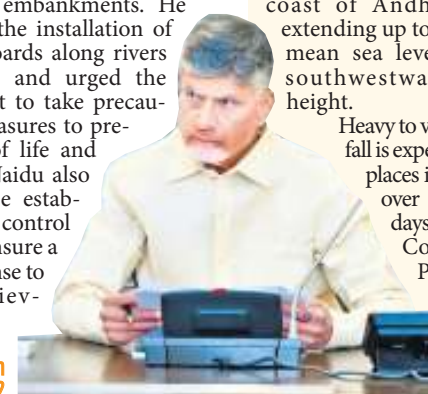
## CM reviews rain preparedness

Asks officials to protect canal, tank bunds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has stated that the IMD has forecast four days of rain in the State and advised people to remain vigilant near ponds, canals, and other water bodies. He made these remarks during a teleconference with collectors, ministers, and officials regarding the anticipated rainfall.

Chandrababu reviewed the preparedness of government officials and departments. He suggested sending alert messages to people's mobile phones about the impending rains and emphasised the importance of protecting pond and canal embankments. He instructed the installation of warning boards along rivers and canals and urged the government to take precautionary measures to prevent loss of life and property. Naidu also directed the establishment of control rooms to ensure a swift response to public grievances.



Continued on Page 2

**Well-marked low pressure area likely today**

NS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The low pressure area over the southeast Bay of Bengal continued to persist in the same region as of 8:30 AM on Monday. It is likely to move west-northwestwards and develop into a "well-marked low-pressure" area over central parts of the south Bay of Bengal by Tuesday.

According to the daily weather report, a cyclonic circulation is located over the west-central Bay of Bengal, off the south coast of Andhra Pradesh, extending up to 5.8 km above mean sea level and tilting southwestwards with height.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected at isolated places in Rayalaseema over the next four days and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next three days.

Continued on Page 2

**Ratan Tata Innovation Hub in Amaravati soon**

NS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, will soon be home to the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub, Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu announced on Monday. During a review meeting on policies for industrial development, MSME, and food processing, the Chief Minister reiterated that job creation is the top priority of his government. He emphasized that the state's industrial policies should align with this goal and promote a "Speed of Doing Business" environment by attracting investments.

The Chief Minister highlighted the need for further deliberation on the policy regarding private industrial parks and stated that three other policies would be presented to the Cabinet in its upcoming meeting.

After officials submitted policy drafts on these matters, Chandrababu Naidu conducted an in-depth analysis and shared his insights and experiences with the team.

The Chief Minister also announced that the innovation hub to be established in Amaravati will be named after the renowned industrialist, the late Ratan Tata. He expressed confidence that this initiative will significantly boost the state's industrial sector.



**'PALLE PANDUGA' PROGRAMME**

## 30,000 development works in progress: Dy CM Pawan

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj Pawan Kalyan has emphasised the importance of various government departments working in a coordinated manner to implement development projects across the state. He announced that 30,000 development works are currently underway.

Pawan Kalyan participated in the 'Palle Panduga' programme held at Kankipadu on Monday, where he laid the foundation stone for road construction and a mini-Gokulam at a cost of Rs 95.15 lakh, as well as the construction of two internal roads at Punadipadu for Rs 52 lakh and a health centre for Rs



54 lakh. In response to a request from Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad, he sanctioned the reconstruction of the Kankipadu-Royyuru road via Gokavaram.

Continued on Page 2

## AP unveils 'Employment First' policy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu asserted on Monday that 'Employment First' is the policy of the State government and directed officials to develop strategies to attract investments to Andhra Pradesh.

During a review meeting on draft policies related to industrial development, food processing, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) at the State Secretariat, the Chief Minister emphasised the need for the government to act as a friendly facilitator for industrialists looking to invest in the state. He shared his insights and experiences with the attending ministers and officials.

Chandrababu is making every effort to draw significant investments to the state and is currently working on formulating new poli-



cies for various departments. The meeting resolved to present these new policies to the Cabinet at its next session. It was also decided to extend subsidies to those who commit to investing in the state once the new policies come into effect.

The draft policies indicate that the first 200 companies to submit their Consent of Establishment and Date of Commercial Production may receive additional incentives. Companies that create more job opportunities will be eligible for an

extra 10% incentive. The Chief Minister mentioned that the state government is considering innovative methods of providing industrial incentives through escrow accounts, which he believes will foster industrial growth and create better employment prospects.

"Such critical decisions will facilitate faster job creation. Officials should conduct an in-depth study on the feasibility and necessary procedures," the Chief Minister stated.

Continued on Page 2

**Special court to try gang-rape case?**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to take strict action against those involved in crimes against women. He emphasised the need for swift punishment for perpetrators to instill fear among criminals and prevent such offences.

Continued on Page 2

## AP best destination for industries: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister for Education and Information Technology Nara Lokesh stated on Monday that Andhra Pradesh boasts of the most favourable environment and offers superior incentives for establishing industries.

Speaking at the prestigious US-India Strategic Partnership Forum Leadership Summit held at a promi-

nent hotel in New Delhi, Lokesh emphasised that "start-up" is not just a slogan for Andhra Pradesh but a transformative tool for governance. He praised the support provided by start-ups during the recent cyclonic storm that impacted the state and expressed confidence in achieving the target of providing 20 lakh jobs to the youth with active cooperation from the private sector.

Continued on Page 2



**Mumbai actress case transferred to CID**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The investigation into the case involving Mumbai actress Kadambari Jathwani has been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), following orders from State DGP Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao.

Until now, the Vijayawada police were handling the case, but the government deemed a deeper probe necessary to uncover the mastermind behind the alleged illegal arrest of the actress during the tenure of the previous Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

Kadambari Jathwani has accused the authorities of wrongful confinement and harassment, claiming that she and her parents were falsely implicated in a fabricated case. The investigation also pointed to the involvement of three senior IPS officers—PSR Anjaneyulu, Kanthi Rana Tata, and Vishal Gunni—along with an inspector, an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), and a leader from the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP).

remains a contentious issue, with several officials taking legal action against the Centre.

The DoPT, after considering the recommendations of the Khandekar Commission set up in March 2024, reissued its orders and mandated a report from Andhra Pradesh by mid-October. Consequently, many officials are challenging these orders through the CAT.

Ronald Rose also went to CAT

## NIJJAR MURDER ROW WORSENS India recalls top envoy from Canada

EXPELS 6 CANADIAN DIPLOMATS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Monday announced withdrawing its high commissioner and other "targeted diplomats and officials" from Canada after strongly dismissing Ottawa's allegations linking the envoy to an investigation into the killing of Sikh extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in a major escalation of tensions amid the already frosty ties between the two nations.



India's decision came shortly after the Canadian Charge d'Affaires Stewart Wheelers was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and was told bluntly that the

baseless "targeting" of Indian High Commissioner Sanjay Verma and other diplomats and officials was "completely unacceptable".

New Delhi described the charges against Verma as "concocted" and "preposterous imputations" and ascribes the allegations to the "political agenda of the Trudeau government that is centred around vote bank politics".

The MEA said India received a "diplomatic communication from Canada yesterday suggesting that the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats are 'persons of interest' in a matter related to an investigation in that country".

## IAS officers move CAT over DoPT orders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Four IAS officers Vakati Karuna, Vani Prasad, Amrapali Kata, and Srijana Gummalla have approached the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) challenging the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) decision to assign them to the Andhra Pradesh cadre.

This move comes as they try to continue their services in their respective states. The petitions will be heard on Tuesday.

Earlier, these officers held a meeting with Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari at the Secretariat. After extensive discussions, they decided to take the matter to the CAT. All four officers are women, with three hailing from Telangana and one from Andhra Pradesh.

This challenge follows the DoPT's recent rejection of 11 IAS officers' requests to remain in the



The DoPT's orders also affect IPS officers like Anjani Kumar, Abhilash Bist, Abhishek Mohanty who have been assigned to the Andhra Pradesh cadre.

The DoPT's orders also affect IPS officers like Anjani Kumar, Abhilash Bist, Abhishek Mohanty who have been assigned to the

Andhra Pradesh cadre. This issue stems from the 2014 division of IAS and IPS officers between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The division of officers



# Control room set up at Guntur amid rain alert

PNS ■ GUNTUR

In response to heavy rainfall warnings, Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu announced on Monday that a 24-hour control room has been established at the GMC headquarters. Citizens of Guntur facing any rain-related issues can contact the control room at 0863-2345105 for immediate assistance.

The commissioner emphasised that the control room is designed to provide a quick response to public complaints, and GMC is taking precautionary measures to address potential problems caused by the downpour.

Staff has been assigned to work in three shifts, and key officials including the SE, CMOH, and MHO will coordinate efforts to resolve complaints. The ADH has been



**The Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) Commissioner emphasised that the control room is designed to provide a quick response to public complaints, and GMC is taking precautionary measures to address potential problems caused by the downpour.**

instructed to have teams on standby to clear fallen trees from roads, while engineering officials have been directed to arrange generators to ensure uninterrupted

water supply in case of power outages at drinking water pumping stations. Srinivasulu added that preparations are being made to pump out excess water and relocate residents to rehabilitation centres if heavy rains cause flooding in low-lying areas.

## VMC CHIEF URGES STAFF TO BE VIGILANT

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In light of the heavy rainfall warnings issued for the city, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra has instructed all staff to remain vigilant and ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the public. He directed officials to identify blockages and initiate desilting operations in advance to prevent waterlogging on the roads.

He instructed secretariats to inform the public in their respective areas about the situation and



identify choke points where floating garbage, plastic, and other debris need to be cleared to allow rainwater to flow smoothly. Desilting work should begin before the rains arrive and continue in waterlogging-prone areas to prevent any accumulation.

Once the rains begin, Dhyanaachandra emphasized that staff must be on the ground, ensuring there is no stagnation of rainwater. Zonal commissioners were directed to monitor their areas closely. He reminded the team that while we cannot control the rain, proactive measures

can prevent inconvenience to the public.

The Commissioner praised the VMC staff for their excellent work during the Budameru floods and Dussehra celebrations. He called on them to maintain the same level of vigilance to safeguard public safety and comfort amidst the current rainfall warnings.

NTR District Assistant Collector Shubham Nokwal, Corporator Chennupati Usharani, Executive Engineer Samrajyam, and other officials participated in the inspection.

## Don't appoint politicians to temple panels: VHP to AP govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Monday said only "practising Hindus" should be appointed to temple committees in Andhra Pradesh and there should be no political representation in these panels.

It also demanded that only "practising Hindus" be appointed as employees at these temples and the "non-Hindu or non-practising Hindu" appointed as temple staff immediately relieved of their duties.

"Politicians during their election campaigns not only say that they are secular and treat all the religions equally but also participate in prayer programmes in different religious places of worship," the VHP said in a statement. "In this case, if there are political leaders in the temple committees, there is a possibility that they will give priority to their secular feelings rather than the welfare of Hindus," it added. "Hindu temples are not secular centres.... They are spiritual Hindu religious centres and only Hindus should be in their committees," it said.

## Allotment of...

Continued from Page 1

AP Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra assured that strict measures would be in place to prevent any violations of liquor regulations. He criticized the liquor policy of the previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, accusing it of monopolizing liquor production and sales, and promoting its own brand.

The minister explained that the current administration's sub-committee had reviewed the previous policies and introduced reforms to ensure the availability of quality liquor at affordable prices. He stressed that all brands will be promoted equally in the new shops.

Ravindra also mentioned that the large number of applications received, even from international applicants, reflects public confidence in the government's policies. He reiterated that liquor shops would not be allowed within 100 meters of temples or schools, with any violations resulting in immediate closure. Police vigilance has also been intensified to prevent the operation of illegal 'belt' shops.

The minister warned that any violation of liquor regulations would result in severe consequences, and the government would take strict action where necessary.

## AP unveils 'Employment...

Continued from Page 1

He added that the MSME policy should aim for the concept of 'One Family, One Industrialist.'

The meeting resolved to establish an industrial hub in the state, named after the renowned industrialist, the Late Mr. Ratan Tata, to advance the industrial sector. The Ratan Tata Innovation Hub will serve as a centre for skill development, start-ups, facilitation, and innovation.

These hubs will be set up in five locations across the state, with a major company designated as the mentor for each hub.

The review meeting also explored strategies to enhance the food processing sector, including the aqua and poultry industries, and approved an additional 5% incentive for women entrepreneurs in the MSME and food processing sectors.

## Disaster management plan in Tirumala reviewed

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

A virtual review meeting on the Disaster Management Plan was chaired by the TTD Executive Officer (EO) along with Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary and other officials on Monday.

During the meeting, the EO emphasised that all departments in Tirumala should be on high alert and fully prepared, as the Meteorological Department has issued warnings of heavy rainfall in the next 36 hours. He stated that while the 700-page Disaster Management Plan of TTD is well-designed, certain areas require further refinement.

The EO announced that he would serve as the chief of the Disaster Management Executive Committee, and as the plan primarily concerns Tirumala, the Additional EO will act as the Chairperson of the Disaster Management



Coordination Committee. A Disaster Management Response Force has also been established, with ground-level staff from various departments in Tirumala working in coordination under the supervision of the Additional EO.

Reflecting on past experiences, the EO mentioned that a Hazard-Specific Plan was created last year. He instructed officials to develop a Hazard-Specific Handbook covering floods, lightning, landslides, and other risks. The Chief Engineer of TTD was directed

to set up a WhatsApp group for efficient communication between departments.

The EO further noted that Channel 10 of the communication (Manpacks) system would be exclusively used for disaster management, and he urged the CVSO to ensure that all necessary communication equipment is ready.

The EO also directed key departments—including Temple, Fire, Medical, Health, Transport, IT, Engineering, and Vigilance wings—to remain extra vigilant and have their

equipment ready for emergencies.

He stressed the importance of maintaining a strong power backup system and ensuring that diesel stocks are available. The IT department was instructed to have alternative mechanisms in place to continue issuing darshan tickets, accommodation, prasadam, and other services in the event of power outages caused by heavy rains.

He further directed the Engineering wing to inspect dam gates and be prepared to handle any boulders that might fall on the Ghat Roads.

Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary underscored the importance of public awareness, urging that, based on past experiences and in the interest of devotees, information be widely disseminated through SVBC, the Public Relations Department, and social media platforms.

## New Electronics Policy to be discussed in next Cabinet meet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu held a review of the policies on Information Technology (IT), Electronics, and Drones at the Secretariat on Monday. During the review, the officials briefed him on the new policy framework being introduced after consulting experts from various states and sectors.

The CM expressed satisfaction with the proposed Electronics Policy and recommended that it be introduced in the upcoming cabinet meeting. Additionally, he reviewed the IT and Drone policies and suggested further improvements to ensure effective implementation.

The officials also discussed the upcoming Amaravati



Drone Summit, scheduled for October 22 and 23, organized in partnership with the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation and the AP Drone Corporation. The summit is expected to witness the participation of around 400 delegates, including representatives from central and state governments, professionals, students, and technology experts. Drone manufacturers and users will showcase their products and services.

A special drone show featuring 5,000 drones is planned, making it a highlight of the event. The summit will cover various themes such as Agriculture, Disaster Management, Urban Planning, Public Safety, Healthcare, Natural Resource Management, and Logistics. Additionally, a special hackathon is being organized as part of the event, and registrations are underway.

## TJR flays CM over sand policy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA TJ R Sudhakar Babu has vehemently condemned Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and leaders of the TDP coalition for devising a "master plan" to exploit the state's mineral resources, including sand. He claimed that the new sand mining policy was systematically designed to benefit a select few while disregarding the public interest.

Speaking to the media at the party's central office on Monday, Sudhakar Babu highlighted that while the public was celebrating the Dussehra festival, TDP leaders were busy profiting illegally from sand and liquor tenders. He questioned why the government had failed to deliver on its promise of providing free sand, alleging that corrupt tender processes were being used to enrich party leaders. He specifically men-



tioned the disappearance of half of the 80 lakh tonnes of sand stored by the previous YSRCP government, accusing the TDP of selling it in the black market.

Sudhakar Babu expressed concerns regarding the sand tender process, noting that while the base price per tonne of sand was set between ₹90 and ₹120, bids were submitted at significantly lower prices, ranging from ₹50 to ₹60 in many districts.

He asserted that these price discrepancies were clear indicators of corruption, claiming that TDP leaders were submitting low bids and resorting to intimidation and vio-

lence to gain control of the sand tenders.

In East Godavari district, he pointed out that tenders for 17 sand reaches were finalised in just 48 hours, with only TDP leaders allowed to submit bids. He also mentioned that a bid in Kurnool was approved without any official notification.

Sudhakar Babu further accused leaders from the TDP, BJP, and Jana Sena of hoarding sand stocks and selling them illegally on the black market, circumventing the official booking system in several districts, including YSR and Palnadu.

He demanded the immediate cancellation of all sand tenders and urged the government to fulfil its promise of providing free sand. He warned that if the tenders were not cancelled, there would be direct protests against the government's policies.

## Special court... AP best destination for...

Continued from Page 1

The CM held a review meeting with the Director General of Police (DGP) and other senior officials regarding the gang-rape case involving a woman and her daughter-in-law in Sri Sathya Sai district, discussing measures to ensure such incidents do not recur.

During the meeting, the CM highlighted the need for immediate punishment of the accused and proposed the establishment of a special court to expedite the case. He mentioned that the government would request the High Court to set up this special court. The CM reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining law and order in the state and creating a safe environment for women. He also referenced a previous group assault and murder case in Bapatla district, calling for similar swift justice through a special court.

Continued from Page 1

The summit, chaired by Forum Chairman and JC-2 Ventures founder John Chambers, focused on the accelerated development of Andhra Pradesh in social and economic sectors. Lokesh informed the attendees that the Economic Development Board has been revived to expedite permissions for industries, and an advisory council comprising private sector experts has been established.

"We are now implementing a Single Point of Contact system for granting permissions to industries, with regular updates provided on a dedicated website regarding permissions and upcoming projects," Lokesh said. He noted that for the first time in the country, the state is undertaking a skill census, gathering household and education data at the micro level. Lokesh expressed optimism

that the skill census will aid in achieving the goal of providing 20 lakh jobs to youth over the next five years. "Aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India, we are striving for a developed Andhra Pradesh by 2047," he added.

Highlighting that Andhra Pradesh has the longest coastline in India, Lokesh mentioned that the state government aims to alleviate poverty by generating wealth. He emphasized that the state is progressing rapidly with its "Speed of Doing Business" initiative to facilitate industrial development, noting the crucial role of the Telugu community in the IT sector.

The IT Minister remarked that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has encouraged the establishment of numerous engineering colleges, contributing to Hyderabad's rapid growth in the IT sector, particularly during the Y2K boom.

## Well-marked low...

Continued from Page 1

Additionally, heavy rain is likely at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on October 17.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are also predicted at isolated locations in Rayalaseema and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next four days, and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next three days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at many places or a few places or just one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Heavy rainfall has already been reported in Prakasam district of South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Tirupati district of Rayalaseema, with rainfall occurring at many locations in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at a few places in Rayalaseema over the last 24 hours, the report added.

## 30,000 development works in progress...

Continued from Page 1

He also instructed officials to address the drinking water contamination issue affecting 43 villages in Nandiwada, Gudivada, and Gudlavalluru mandals in Krishna district. Pawan Kalyan assured that he would discuss the Machilipatnam-Repalle railway line issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating he would not misuse his proximity to the Prime Minister for personal gain.

During a public meeting, the Deputy Chief Minister highlighted that over 30,000 development projects had been initiated at a cost of Rs 4,500 crore across the state. He stressed that for effective implementation of Panchayat Raj and rural development projects, ten departments need to collaborate efficiently.

He emphasized the need for the funds provided under the MGNREGA scheme to be utilized effectively to ensure work opportunities for all eligible individuals, noting that Andhra Pradesh is set to receive over Rs 10,000 crore under MGNREGA. He also acknowledged the full cooperation extended by the Narendra Modi-led central government for

the development of Andhra Pradesh.

"The government aims to create 25.50 crore workdays for 8 lakh families under MGNREGA. Plans include the construction of 3,000 km of CC roads, 500 km of BT roads, compound walls for 120 primary schools, and rooftops for government offices," Pawan Kalyan stated.

Responding to concerns raised by Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad about the poor condition of the Royyuru-Godavaram road, Pawan Kalyan ordered officials to take necessary steps for its reconstruction.

Collector Balaji reported that the roads in the island villages of Edurumondi and Gollamandala were in dire condition and required repairs. Pawan Kalyan approved the necessary repairs for these roads.

Gudivada MLA Venigandla Ramu brought the issue of drinking water contamination in 43 villages of Gudivada and Gudlavalluru mandals to the Deputy Chief Minister's attention. Pawan Kalyan showcased a bottle of the contaminated water during the meeting and directed officials from the rural protected drinking water supply department to visit the villages and resolve the issue.

## Power utilities gear up to face...

Continued from Page 1

Vijayanand also instructed the DISCOMs to keep essential materials and transport ready for deployment in districts vulnerable to heavy rains. He emphasised the need for small generators to be available for emergency use and for a sufficient number of de-watering pumps to be ready. He also highlighted the importance of ensuring proper feeder switching during storms to prevent electrocution accidents.

In preparation for the anticipated heavy rains, Vijayanand ordered the establishment of control rooms in rain-prone districts and the appointment of nodal officers for each district to coordinate field operations. He advised the power utilities to ensure the availability of manpower, generators, JCBs, cranes, power saws, and pole drilling machines. Teams equipped with power saws and gas cutters for clearing trees and conducting iron fabrication work should also be arranged in every division. Additionally, detailed computerized maps of Extra High Tension (EHT) and 33/11 KV substations, along with feeders and poles, should be readily available.

Vijayanand urged all staff, from linemen to chairpersons, to closely monitor the situation and maintain a 24x7 presence, with no holidays during this critical period. He noted that Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar are particularly concerned about public safety and power supply, calling for efforts to be on a war footing during the upcoming heavy rains.

## CM reviews rain...

Continued from Page 1

Officials informed the Chief Minister that rain is expected in the districts of Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor, YSR, and Anantapur. They reported that NDRF and SDRF teams are on standby. Due to sudden floods, nearby railway lines and residents are facing difficulties, prompting Chief Minister Naidu to emphasize a focus on streams and ponds.

After the review meeting, Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu stated that CM Naidu discussed projects like Tungabhadra, Srisailem, and Somasila with officials. The minister noted that officials suggested assessing floodwater in the catchment areas of streams and canals in various districts, including Nellore, Prakasam, Satya Sai, Anantapur, and Chittoor, and taking appro-

appropriate measures accordingly. They highlighted the need to strengthen the floodwater management system.

Minister Ramanaidu remarked, "We have alerted district collectors about the precautionary measures to be taken in light of the heavy rains. Some districts still need to fill their reservoirs. Many projects have not been properly maintained over the last five years. The Jagan government has not allocated even Rs 3 lakh to Rs 4 lakh. Starting in November, we will prioritize the repair of projects and other works. We are developing a work calendar for the Polavaram project, and diaphragm wall works will also commence in November. We aim to complete the Earth-cum-Rockfill Dam as soon as possible," clarified the minister.



# Draw of lots held smoothly for liquor shops allotment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As per the new liquor policy, Krishna and NTR district administrations conducted the lottery process in Machilipatnam and Vijayawada, respectively, on Monday to allot liquor shop (A4) licences for 2024-26. The lottery process was held peacefully and no untoward incidents were registered. As many as 236 are to be set up in the Krishna and NTR districts, for which 8,767 applications were received, earning the government an income of Rs.175.34 crore.

In Krishna district, applications for 123 shops were invited. However, 2,942 bids (Rs.2 lakh non-refundable amount) were filed and the Prohibition and Excise Department received Rs.58.84 crore in income. Similarly, in NTR district, Rs.116.50 crore was received from the 5,825 bidders for 114 shops.

As many as 1,932 applications were received for the 39 shops in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation while 493 tenders were filed for 10 shops under Mylavaram Circle, and 908 tenders for 16 shops under Nandigama Circle. Shop number 96 in Vatsavai mandal received the highest number of 132 applications while shop number 97 received 120 applications. Shop number 117 in Tadigadapa municipality received 57 applications.

Officials of the Prohibition and Excise Department conducted the lottery process transparently at their respective district headquarters. Police provided tight security. The entire lottery process was conducted under the surveillance of CC cameras.

The NTR District Prohibition and Excise Department conducted the process at a private hall at

## Rs 175.34 crore earned through applications for 236 shops in Krishna, NTR districts



NTR District Collector Dr. Srijana, along with Joint Collector Nidhi Meena and Excise Deputy Commissioner Srinivasa Rao, conducting the lottery process to allot liquor shop licences, at Gurananak Colony in Vijayawada on Monday

**In Krishna district, applications for 123 shops were invited. However, 2,942 bids (Rs.2 lakh non-refundable amount) were filed and the Prohibition and Excise Department received Rs.58.84 crore in income. Similarly, in NTR district, Rs.116.50 crore was received from the 5,825 bidders for 114 shops.**

Gurananak Colony in Vijayawada. District Collector Dr G Srijana, Joint Collector Dr Nidhi Meena, Excise Deputy Commissioner T Srinivasa Rao, and Distilleries Wing Assistant Commissioner B Swathi conducted the lottery process following the shop-wise gazette number by allotting tokens in the presence of applicants.

During the draw of lots, the authorities awarded the shop

licence to the first winner. However, they also selected Reserve 1 and 2, in case the first winner fails to pay the first instalment (1/6th amount) of the total licence fees. Collector Srijana claimed that the entire lottery process was conducted transparently. Shops were allotted to the lucky winners and they have to complete the payment system as per the guidelines, she said.

Meanwhile, Krishna District Joint Collector

Geethanjali Sharma conducted the draw of lots at the Hindu College Auditorium in Machilipatnam in the presence of the Prohibition and Excise Department officials and those who filed tenders for the shops. Interestingly, a person from Karnataka and another from Uttar Pradesh bagged two shops, i.e. 1 and 2 in Machilipatnam. Mahesh A Bathe from Bengaluru bagged shop no.1 and Mahesh Chand from Uttar Pradesh secured shop no.2.

Geethanjali Sharma added that the winners should pay 1/6th of the total licence fees immediately. If they fail to pay the amount, the next chance will be given to the Reserve 1 winner. As per the government guidelines, all lottery winners should start liquor business from October 16, she explained.

# Bhavani devotees throng Durga temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Even after the conclusion of Dasara festivities with 'Poornahuthi' at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam on Saturday, the rush of Bhavane devotees continued on Monday. A large number of devotees thronged the temple to relinquish their Deeksha. The Durga Temple authorities provided the facilities for the Bhavani Mala Deeksha holders to have Durga Devi darshan.

The Bhavani devotees started their Deeksha relinquishment on the last two days of the festivities. A sea of devotees was seen on the day of the Vijayadashami. A large number of Mala Deeksha holders came from North Coastal

## Rush leads to traffic congestion on several roads in city



Bhavani devotees waiting in queue lines at the Kanaka Durga Temple in Vijayawada on Monday, to relinquish their Deeksha

districts and relinquished their Deeksha. The rush continued for the third consecutive day.

Bhavani Deeksha holders conducted the Giri Pradakshina after taking the holy bath in River Krishna.

Later, they relinquished their Deeksha. All routes leading to the Indrakeeladri were seen in red colour and 'Jai Bhavani Jai Jai Bhavani' and 'Durga Matha Ki Jai' chanting reverberated in the air. Due to the rush, traffic congestions were seen on many roads in the city. The NTR district police took measures to clear traffic jams. The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation staff distributed drinking water to the devotees.

Meanwhile, Kanaka Durga Temple Executive Officer KS Rama Rao supervised the arrangements and gave appropriate instructions to the temple staff and police.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a major step towards addressing the growing concern of heart disease among the youth, Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha inaugurated the 'Apollo Chest Pain Clinic' at Health City in Visakhapatnam on Monday. The Minister underscored the alarming rise in heart attacks, particularly among younger populations, on the occasion. "In recent times, we have seen an unfortunate increase in heart attacks among our youth," she said. "It is crucial that individuals with any heart-related symptoms seek specialist care immediately. This clinic is a vital addition to the city and will undoubtedly help in reducing cardiac fatalities."

The Apollo Chest Pain Clinic, established under the aegis of Apollo Hospitals, aims to provide timely and specialised care for cardiac issues. The clinic is poised to play a pivotal role in providing early diagnosis and intervention.

Minister Anitha also emphasised the importance of expanding healthcare access to underserved areas. "Apollo should extend its services to rural regions where healthcare infrastructure is limited," she stated. "Awareness about health is just

# Home Minister inaugurates Apollo Chest Pain Clinic



as important as access to treatment, and it is our responsibility to ensure both." She also requested Apollo Hospitals to collaborate with the Police Department to conduct health screenings for the force. Responding to this, Apollo's management expressed their

readiness to support such initiatives. Y Subramaniam, Regional CEO of Apollo Hospitals, emphasised that the new facility will significantly improve cardiac care in Visakhapatnam by offering specialised services and fostering a healthier future.

"Anyone with chest pain can quickly access life-saving treatment at our clinics," he said, highlighting the cutting-edge technology and 24/7 specialist care. "Our goal is to make heart care accessible to all, without the worry of financial burden," Subramaniam added.



# Postcard movement launched against VSP privatisation

## Campaign will see postcards sent from every household across the region to Central Govt

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an effort to safeguard the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) from privatisation, the convener of Uttarandhra Prajasamstha and chairman of the Visakhapatnam Writers' Academy (VWA), VV Ramana Murthy, has announced the launch of a nationwide postcard movement. Addressing a gathering of various organisational representatives in Visakhapatnam, Ramana Murthy outlined plans to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people to protest the proposed privatisation.

"We will not stand idly by as the livelihoods of over 10 lakh individuals hang in the balance," declared Ramana Murthy. "Our movement will culminate in a massive protest on January 27, 2025, where we will make our voices heard loud and clear!"

The ambitious campaign will see postcards protesting the privatisation sent from every household across the region to the Central government. "This movement will not be limited to a single rally," emphasised Ramana Murthy. "We will dispatch 10 lakh postcards from every corner of the State to the Centre, demanding an immediate aid package of Rs. 10,000 crores to rejuvenate the

Visakhapatnam Steel Plant." Ramana Murthy condemned Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for his conspicuous silence on this critical issue, despite his frequent jaunts to Delhi. "Chandrababu promised to engage with Central leaders, yet we have witnessed no tangible results," he asserted. "Instead, the Modi government is covertly maneuvering to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant for the benefit of corporate behemoths like Adani and Jindal."

Drawing a parallel to the privatisation of Gangavaram port, Ramana Murthy warned that the steel plant's privatisation would unleash widespread exploitation on the people of Uttarandhra. "The Centre must not treat the citizens of Uttarandhra as expendable commodities," he added. "We stand united in our resistance, and this postcard movement will showcase the indomitable strength of our cause."

INTUC State vice-president M. Venkateswarlu, Indian Atheist Samaj State president Sri Ramamurthy, national committee member Ravi, along with representatives from various labour unions and civil society organisations were present on the occasion.

# Tribal coffee farmers to benefit from price hike

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) in Visakhapatnam has announced an increase in coffee procurement prices for the 2024-25 season, a move aimed at improving the livelihoods of tribal coffee farmers amid growing global demand. The new rates are Rs 285 per kg for both Arabica parchment and Arabica cherry, and Rs 150 per kg for Robusta cherry, up from last season's Rs 280, Rs 145, and Rs 70, respectively. The equal pricing for Arabica varieties marks a notable improvement.

Kalpna Kumari, Vice-Chairperson and Managing Director of the GCC, stressed the importance of these revisions for tribal farmers' welfare. "The increase in purchase prices is directly aimed at improving the livelihoods of our tribal coffee growers," she said. "We are determined to ensure that no farmer in the Paderu Agency sells their coffee for less than the announced rates. Our team will make every effort to educate the farmers on the new prices and

assist them in maximising their income."

The GCC has introduced several initiatives to further streamline the coffee procurement process. Staff will visit remote areas to collect coffee directly from farmers' doorsteps using electronic weighing machines for accuracy. Payments will be deposited into the farmers' bank accounts within 24 hours.

Last year, the GCC collected 565 metric tonnes of coffee from tribal farmers. This season, the target has been set at 2,000 metric tonnes. "We are confident that this target can be achieved through collaborative efforts and the support of tribal communities," Kumari added. The meeting was attended by Director of the Tribal Welfare Department S Bhargavi, ITDA Paderu Project Officer V Abhishek, Coffee Board of India representative Dr. DR Babu Reddy, and Araku MLA Regam Matsya Lingam. They discussed strategies to boost coffee production and ensure that tribals reap the full benefits of the revised pricing structure.



Each month, a familiar routine unfolds as villagers embark on a long journey to the nearest ration depot, situated eight km away. This trek is more than just a shopping trip; it tests their endurance and serves as a stark reminder of their seclusion. The villagers often contemplate this challenging monthly journey, which highlights their resilience but also underscores their struggles. "The journey to get our essentials is exhausting, and it's a constant reminder of how isolated we are," shared Raju, a village elder. "Every step feels heavy when we know it doesn't have to be this way."

The lack of road access can become a matter of life and death when illness strikes. Simple health issues can escalate into emergencies without

# Citizens urge police to enforce 'No Helmet, No Petrol' rule for bikers

## 'Stricter regulations necessary to drive home the point'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The people of Visakhapatnam are urging the police to enforce the "No Helmet, No Petrol" rule for motorcyclists to reduce accidents involving two-wheelers. This initiative has garnered unanimous support from the city's residents, who emphasise the need for law enforcement to adopt this measure.

Local residents shared their concerns and experiences with The Pioneer. Ramesh Kumar, a businessman, lamented, "I've seen too many young lives lost because they weren't wearing helmets. It's heartbreaking. If the police can strictly enforce this rule, it will save lives." Dr Priya Reddy, a neurosurgeon, added, "As a doctor, I've treated numerous cases of head injuries that could have been avoided with proper helmet use."

Others, like school teacher Lakshmi Menon, highlighted the importance of education and awareness, saying, "Sometimes, stricter regulations are necessary to drive

home the point. This rule will ensure that wearing a helmet becomes a habit, not an option." Anil Sharma, a college student, shared a personal experience. "After seeing a friend's accident, I realised how important helmets are. If petrol stations refuse service to those without helmets, it will make a big difference."

The "No Helmet, No Petrol" policy has been successful in other Indian cities, leading to fewer road accidents and injuries. The Visakhapatnam police have welcomed the suggestion and are committed to enhancing road safety. A senior police official stated, "We appreciate the public's concern. Enforcing this rule aligns with our road safety objectives."

To ensure the rule's success, local NGOs and community groups are planning awareness campaigns, educational programmes, and subsidised helmet distribution.



# Villagers of Nakkalamamidi struggle without proper road

## The village, home to 60 tribal families, feels worlds apart from modern amenities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Residents of Nakkalamamidi, a remote village in Kivarla gram panchayat of Ananthagiri mandal, are facing challenges due to poor road access, which greatly affects their daily lives. This village, home to 60 families from the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, feels worlds apart from modern amenities. The lack of a proper road has become a central aspect of life for these families, shaping their present and casting uncertainty over their future. Although the village boasts clean air and pure water, progress has largely eluded Nakkalamamidi. This isolation, while appealing to the occasional visitor, presents a harsh reality for its residents.

The difficult journey to medical assistance often stretches for hours, and every jolt along the way feels like a potential setback. "The fear of losing a loved one because help is too far away is something we face every day," Lakshmi shared. "We're not asking for much—just a road, a way to connect with the world beyond us." Her words resonate with her fellow villagers, who echo her feelings in unison, pleading for recognition and support. "This path has witnessed too much suffering. It's time for the government to listen to our cries," she added. "We have endured this hardship for generations, but our children deserve better."

Despite exercising their right to vote, the villagers remain on



Tribals of Nakkalamamidi in a remote village in Kivarla gram panchayat protesting for roads

prompt medical care. The villagers often turn to traditional remedies, but serious health problems leave them with no option but to use a makeshift stretcher called a Doli, made from bamboo and cloth. "It's terrifying to think about what would happen if one of us got seriously ill," said Lakshmi, a mother of two. "When someone is sick, we have no choice but to carry them on our backs to the nearest hospital."

"We fight not just for ourselves but for our future generations," Lakshmi emphasised. "We want our children to live with dignity and have the opportunities they deserve."



# Heavy rains disrupt normal life in several districts

PNS ■ NELLORE

Heavy rains, triggered by low pressure, have severely disrupted normal life in various districts of the Rayalaseema region and Prakasam district on Monday. Control rooms have been established at district headquarters to monitor the situation.

In Nellore district, heavy rainfall led to flooding in several busy localities, including Padmavati Centre, Current Officer Centre, Ayyappa Temple Centre, and other low-lying areas, which were submerged under two feet of water. Vehicular traffic in the city was severely affected, with many vehicles stranded on waterlogged roads.

Roads in Kavali, Bogolu, Dagadathi, and Alluri mandals were inundated, causing significant inconvenience to commuters. The Nellore district Collector, Anand, announced a holiday for schools and colleges, and fishermen were advised against venturing into the sea.

In YSR Kadapa district, heavy rain began lashing the area early in the morning. Several low-lying localities in the Railway Kodur constituency of Annamaya district were flooded, with all thoroughfares submerged, disrupting



vehicular traffic. The situation was similarly dire in Badvel town, where crops across hundreds of acres were marooned in rainwater in Obulavaripalli, Pullampet, Chitveli, and Senakuluru mandals.

In Prakasam district, main thoroughfares in Ongole were inundated with two to three feet of water. The RTC bus stand area and Kurnool Road in the city were also flooded, severely disrupting normal life. Heavy rains were reported in Giddalur, Markapuram, Tangutur, Kondapi, and Santhanthalapadu constituencies, leading to a complete

halt in regular activities. The Gundlakamma canal is overflowing with floodwater, prompting the District Collector to declare a holiday for all educational institutions tomorrow.

Minister for Endowments Anam Ram Narayana Reddy reviewed the situation with officials on Monday, instructing revenue and police personnel to take all necessary precautions to prevent loss of life. Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanyulu urged people to remain indoors unless absolutely necessary.

Minister for Transport M. Ramprasad Reddy advised caution, warning that heavy rain is expected to continue for the next three days.

Prakasam Collector Thameem Ansariya inspected a relief centre established at the ZP High School campus in Alakurapadu. Tahasildar Anjaneyulu informed the Collector that 35 individuals from 11 tribal families were accommodated in the relief camp. The Collector later visited the control room, directing officials to maintain constant vigilance over the situation.

# Centre okayed ballistic launching pad at Nagayalanka: I & PR Minister Kolusu

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathy has announced that the Central government has given green signal to establish a ballistic launching pad at Nagayalanka.

The Minister participated in the 115th birth anniversary of former director of DRDA and former advisor in science and technology to the Defence Ministry Dr. Suri Bhagavantham organised on the premises of Sri Sobhanadri Lakshmi Narasimha Vedic school at Agiripalli in Nuzvid constituency on Monday.

The Minister unveiled the bronze statue of Dr. Suri Bhagavantham flanked by MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad and former director of DRDA Dr. G Satish Reddy.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Minister Parthasarathy disclosed that the Centre approved the setting up of ballistic launching pad at Nagayalanka which had been in pending for several years. The Minister said that the former President of India late Abdul Kalam, Dr S Bhagavantham laid the foundation for Indian defense technology.

Parthasarathy said that a memorial center for Suri Bhagavantham would be estab-



lished, adding that information will be made available so that people can know the biography of Suri Bhagavantham and his achievements in the fields of defense science and technology.

Those who have made special contributions in the fields of science and technology would be selected every year. He underlined the need of forming a trust to announce awards in the name of Suri Bhagavantham to present those

who strive hard in the field science and technology every year. The Minister announced that he would donate Rs 5 lakh for the trust.

MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad lauded DRDA former director Satish Reddy for the vital role he played to set up ballistic launch pad at Nagayalanka. Dr Satish Reddy recalled the efforts of Suri Bhagavantham in placing India at the forefront of the world in the fields of defense science and

technology. He said that 25 laboratories were set up during Bhavantham tenure. Dr. Dr. Suri Bhagavantham has taken steps towards strengthening the national defense system with a lot of foresight, India has moved from the level of importing defense equipment to the level of exporting it. In the year 2023-24, weapons worth Rs 24,000 crores have been exported to foreign countries from India, he added.



## 144 liquor shops allotted in lucky dip in Eluru district

PNS ■ ELURU

The process of allotting liquor shops concluded on a peaceful note as 144 liquor shops were allotted to successful bidders here on Monday.

The lucky dip process for allotting liquor shops was held under the supervision of the Collector, JC P Dhatri Reddy and excise officers.

Collector K Vetri Selvi said that 5,499 applications were received for 144 liquor shops.

The lucky dip was conducted in the presence of applicants. The process of lucky dip and allotting of liquor shops began at 8 am and concluded at 4 pm. The entire process was held transparently, the Collector added. Excise and Prohibition deputy Commissioner B Sripatha, excise superintendent A Avulaiah, Additional SP N Suryachandra Rao and RDO Acyut Ambarish were among a host of officials who were present.

## 175 liquor shops allotted in WG through transparent process



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The allotment of 175 liquor shops in West Godavari district was conducted peacefully and transparently on Monday, according to District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani.

Speaking to the media, the Collector said the lottery process for allocating liquor shops began at 8 a.m. and concluded by 2 p.m. She emphasized that the entire process was carried out smoothly and without any irregularities.

The first phase of the lottery was conducted for liquor shops within Bhimavaram

town limits. In total, the district received 5,627 applications for 175 shops, with each applicant required to deposit ₹2 lakh. A total of ₹112.54 crore was collected as the deposit amount, and the 175 successful applicants, who were allotted shops through the lottery, deposited ₹19.25 crore.

The Collector provided further details on the number of applications received from different towns in the district: Bhimavaram town limits saw 1,287 applications for 40 liquor shops, Tanuku received 877 applications for 33 shops, TP Gudem had 1,224 applica-

tions for 36 shops, Palakollu received 873 applications for 19 shops, Narasapuram received 958 applications for 24 shops, and Akividu saw 408 applications for 23 liquor shops.

The Collector reiterated that the entire allotment process was conducted under live video streaming to ensure full transparency. Joint Collector T Rahul Reddy, Excise Assistant Commissioner Prabhu Kumar, District Additional SP V Bhima Rao, District Excise Superintendent RS Kumareswaran, and RDO Bhavani Shankari oversaw the proceedings.

## 2 drowned in Gollapalli reservoir



PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

In two tragic incidents, two persons, including a student, drowned in the Gollapalli reservoir near Penukonda in Sri Sathya Sai district. BC Welfare Minister S. Savitha consoled the grieving families.

According to the police, 19-year-old Chandrasekhar Reddy, a second-year degree student from a private college in Anantapur, had returned to his native village of Ammanavaripalle in Penukonda mandal for the Dasara holidays. On Sunday evening, he went to the Gollapalli reservoir with his friends for a swim but slipped and drowned. His body was

recovered on Monday, and the police have registered a case. The body has been sent to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for post-mortem. Minister Savitha visited the reservoir, saw Chandrasekhar Reddy's body, and offered her condolences to the bereaved family, assuring them of all necessary support.

In another incident, 42-year-old Anesh Khan, who was on a holiday trip with his family, drowned while attempting to board a boat at the Gollapalli reservoir. His body was also recovered on Monday. The police have registered a case, and his body has been sent to the GGH for post-mortem.



## One killed, 15 injured as RTC bus overturns

PNS ■ ELURU

A woman passenger was killed and 15 others were injured when the APSRTC bus in which they were travelling overturned at Potunur village in Chintalapudi mandal in the early hours on Sunday.

Police said that the RTC super luxury bus was going to

Eluru from Hyderabad. The bus overturned and fell across the road.

A woman passenger Pendurthi Kamalabai was killed in the mishap while 15 other passengers suffered various degrees of injuries. The injured were shifted to the GGH in Chintalapudi and Eluru in ambulances.

## 5k street dogs to be sterilised: Collector

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In the backdrop of increasing street dog menace all over, the district administration has chalked out a ten-day action plan to sterilize street dogs.

Announcing this at the video conference on Monday with the municipal commissioners along with Kakinada commissioner Bhavana Vasista, the district Collector Shanmohan



said in the first phase spanned for ten days 5,000 street dogs

in seven municipalities including Kakinada, Tuni, Pithapuram, Peddapuram Gollaprolu, Samalkot, Yeseweram would be sterilised.

He said the state government had constituted a special agency 'Sneha' to undertake the job of sterilising the street dogs.

The Collector further instructed the Municipal and

animal husbandry department officials to work in liaison and effectively implement the street dogs sterilization programme.

Municipal Health officer Dr Prudhvi charan, district Animal Husbandry Department joint director S Suryaprakasarao, DD Krishnamurthy, Sneha agency representative Hemantha were among those who took part in the deliberations.

## World Standards Day celebrated



BIS Vijayawada Branch Head and Senior Director MAJ Vinod addressing the World Standards Day celebrations in Vijayawada on Monday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Vijayawada Branch celebrated World Standards Day (WSD), Manak Mahotsav, with a technical seminar at the Hotel Hyatt in Gunadala. The theme of the seminar was 'Our Shared Vision for a Better World—Sustainable Development Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure'. The event saw participation of over 170 representatives from various industries, academic institutions, consumer organisations, and government departments.

BIS Vijayawada Branch Head and Senior Director MAJ Vinod outlined the objectives of the BIS during the programme. He emphasised that the primary goal of BIS is to ensure the availability of quality goods to consumers. Operating under the

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, BIS is responsible for the standardisation, marking, and quality certification (ISI) of goods, as well as management system certification.

MAJ Vinod highlighted BIS's role in contributing to the national economy by ensuring safe, reliable quality products, reducing health risks for consumers, and promoting both exports and import substitutes. He stressed the importance of consumers verifying the BIS quality standards of products and encouraged them to report any defects to seek compensation.

BIS State Deputy Director D Vivek Vardhan Reddy, alongside officials Koushik, D Akhil, SVBS Bhavan Narayana, S Padmalatha, and Krishna Veer were present.

## Cabinet expansion soon, says Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cabinet will be expanded and the TPCC Executive Committee will be appointed soon, TPCC President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

Speaking to the media on Monday at the party office in Nizamabad, Mahesh said that local body elections will be conducted as soon as possible after the caste census.

He said the dispute between former Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and former MLA Enugu Ravinder Reddy in Banswada will be resolved soon and the responsibility for solving

this issue has been given to the DCC President.

Criticising BRS's social media wing, he said that the BRS uses social media without any social sense. The BRS's social media wing has been propagating lies against the TG government and ministers. This campaign will give them temporary happiness but in the long run, it will certainly harm the BRS, he said.

Mahesh said the BRS social media wing is confusing people in regarding the farm loan waiver scheme. One should compare the loan waiver scheme of the BRS during its 10-year rule and Congress's



nine-month rule, he said.

He said that KCR destroyed the once economically strong Telangana and that there is a need to introduce a Smart City scheme in Nizamabad city and that the Skill India College is

coming to Nizamabad district.

Mahesh said the Congress government is also implementing schemes not promised during elections.

Responding to the clash between the followers of Minister Konda Surekha and MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy, he said that the problem arose due to the over-enthusiasm of the followers but there is no dispute between the leaders.

He said the issue is over as he had spoken to both leaders and that he doesn't know the issue of Surekha sitting on the chair of the CI of Geesugonda Police Station.

## Protect SRR & CVR College land from encroachers: Alumni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The alumni of SRR & CVR Government Degree College (Autonomous) in Machavaram, Vijayawada, have urged the State government to take action to protect the college's land from encroachment. They said that around 6.67 acres of land, valued at approximately Rs. 300 crore, has been encroached upon, and neither the college management

nor the State government has taken significant steps to address the issue.

The alumni visited the encroached land near the BRTS road in Vijayawada on Monday. Alumni leaders Donepudi Kasinath, Donepudi Sankar, Cherukuri Krishna Kumar, and others addressed the media, expressing their concerns. They

pointed out that a court ruling from 2009 prohibited any construction on the disputed land, yet private individuals have continued to buy and sell it. Besides, they criticised the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) for granting construction permissions despite the court order.

The alumni reported that some individuals recently



The alumni members of the SRR & CVR Government Degree College visiting the encroached land beside BRTS road in Vijayawada on Monday

attempted to lay a foundation stone for new construction on the encroached land. After bringing this issue to the attention of NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana, the Revenue officials intervened and halted further construction activities.

During the visit to the college's encroached land, one of the encroachers tried to level the land by using a tractor, but the alumni obstructed the move.



ACROSS THE STATES



**Eight Bangladeshis held for illegal stay in Karnataka**

Eight Bangladeshi nationals who were staying illegally in Udupi district here were apprehended, police said on Saturday. They were residing in Hoode village in the district for the past three years without valid passports or visas. According to Udupi Superintendent of Police Arun K, the arrest came after one of the accused, identified as Mohammed Maniq, attempted to flee to Dubai from Mangaluru airport using a fake passport. Suspicion from immigration officials led to his arrest at Bajpe airport in the neighbouring Dakshina Kannada district, he said. "Upon interrogation, Maniq revealed that seven other Bangladeshi nationals were staying with him illegally in Hoode village." The information was relayed to the Udupi police, who subsequently conducted a raid in the area. Police detained the seven individuals on Friday and initiated a detailed inquiry into their illegal stay. During the investigation, it was discovered that the accused possessed fake Aadhaar cards.



**Court rejects bail plea of Kannada actor Darshan**

A sessions court here on Monday denied the bail petitions of Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and his friend Pavithra Gowda in connection with the murder of 33-year-old Renukaswamy, a fan of the actor. Renukaswamy was abducted from his hometown Chitradurga and tortured to death allegedly by Darshan and his gang members. The victim had allegedly sent obscene messages to the prime accused of the case and the actor's friend Pavithra Gowda, which enraged the actor. This alleged provocation is said to have led to Renukaswamy's murder. His body was discovered near a stormwater drain close to an apartment complex in Sumanahalli, Bengaluru, on June 9. In September, the Bengaluru police filed a comprehensive 3,991-page charge sheet implicating 17 people, including Darshan and Gowda, in the case.



**Durga Puja: 50 lakh people travel on Kolkata Metro**

Over 50 lakh people travelled on the Kolkata Metro during the six days of Durga Puja, a statement said on Monday. The passenger count was marginally higher, 1.77 per cent, than the previous year, it said. In the Blue Line between Dakshineswar and New Garia, 44.19 lakh people travelled from October 7 and October 12. The Green Line 2, Howrah Maidan-Esplanade, a total of 3.79 lakh passengers travelled, while in Green Line-1 between Sector 5 and Sealdah, 2.53 lakh people travelled. The Dum Dum metro station in the northern fringes of the city recorded the highest footfall of 4.43 lakh people, followed by Kalighat (3.61 lakh) and Sovabazar-Sutanuti (3.11 lakh). The Kolkata Metro extended its service hours and ran special services to handle the festive rush on the two corridors during the period.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE AGAINST BRIJ**

**Delhi court records statement of witness**

A Delhi court on Monday recorded the statement of a witness in a case of alleged sexual harassment of female wrestlers by former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Priyanka Rajpoot recorded the statement of the witness and posted the matter on October 19 for further proceedings. The court on May 10 ordered framing the charge of sexual harassment and other charges against Singh, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, in the case lodged on a complaint from six female wrestlers, observing that there was "sufficient evidence" against him. It had directed framing of charges against Singh, a six-time former Lok Sabha MP, under Indian Penal Code sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment) and 506 (criminal intimidation). The magistrate framed the charges on May 21 after Singh pleaded not guilty.

**'Turn towards Indian talent for sourcing workforce'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said the need for a "well-trained workforce" in different geographies is only going to grow further, and urged friendly nations to turn towards the Indian talent for sourcing workforce requirements in their countries.

In his keynote address after launching the eMigrate V2.0 portal and a mobile app here, he also said the government shall remain steadfast in the efforts to create safer and legal channels of emigrating abroad.

Union Minister of Labour and Employment, Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita also joined on dais, while ambassadors of several countries, among others, were present among the audience.

Mandaviya in his address said efforts are underway to integrate the eMigrate V2.0 portal with other digital platforms of his ministry to provide seamless access of relevant documents and profiles of skilled workers by potential employees sitting abroad.

The revamped version of eMigrate portal is more than just a digital platform, "it is a beacon of hope, a symbol of our commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of our workers in foreign lands", Jaishankar said.

**EAM Jaishankar to friendly nations**



The revamped version of eMigrate portal is more than just a digital platform, "it is a beacon of hope, a symbol of our commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of our workers in foreign lands", Jaishankar said.

The enhancements in the portal reflect new realities and transformation that is being witnessed in so far as global migration dynamics are concerned, the external affairs minister underlined.

"There is a global need for workers who have domain specific knowledge in their particular fields. For several reasons, this need for a well-

trained workforce in different geographies is only going to grow further," he said.

This is clearly reflected in the pace at which "we have undertaken negotiations with different countries" on migration and mobility since 2015, and also in how the mobility ecosystem in India itself is taking shape, the EAM said.

In his address, Jaishankar

said the government shall remain steadfast in the efforts to create safer and legal channels of emigrating abroad.

"I am sure that all the Protectors of Emigrants, empowered with technology and through their collective experiences, will gear to work relentlessly towards fulfilling our commitments to the public and to the nation," he said.

"I urge all the participants and particularly the ambassadors who have joined us today, in this inauguration programme, to turn towards the Indian talent and the demographic dividend that India has to offer, for sourcing workforce requirements in your particular countries" the EAM said.

The eMigrate Version 2 portal has also been integrated with DigiLocker, and that is also a big step in digital transformation. This will enable the emigrants to submit various documents for obtaining clearances through DigiLocker in a paperless mode, as well as to store them securely, all their important documents like passports, employment contracts, are actually secured, he added. The Ministry of External Affairs has leveraged the use of technology and digital systems to enhance the efficiency and efficacy of this portal.

**Opposition MPs boycott Waqf committee meeting over allegations against Kharge**



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several opposition MPs on Monday boycotted a meeting of the parliamentary committee examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill alleging that the panel is not functioning in accordance with rules, after Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was accused by a depositor of being involved in Waqf land scams.

The lengthy meetings of the Joint Committee of Parliament have been marked by the exchange of heated words between its BJP and opposition members, and things turned especially stormy on Monday as the latter questioned the rationale behind calling members of Hindu groups for deposition on a law concerning Muslims.

Opposition MPs walked out in protest against the submission of Anwar Maniappady, a former chairman of the Karnataka State Minorities Commission and the Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation. He

is also a former Karnataka BJP vice-president.

Maniappady named several Congress leaders from Karnataka, including Kharge and Rehman Khan, and others for their alleged involvement in embezzling Waqf properties.

The opposition MPs cited rules regulating the parliamentary committees' proceedings to claim that "unproven allegations" against "high dignitaries" cannot be made at the meetings of these panels. Maniappady, they said, also made an appeal to Muslims not to oppose the Bill, which too was out of line.

An opposition MP said allegations cannot be levelled against someone who is not there to defend himself.

The chairperson of the committee, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Jagdambika Pal, however, overruled their objections and allowed the deposition to continue.

A BJP member said the deposition was relevant to the Bill as Maniappady's claims pertained to Waqf properties.

**Congress's top leadership involved in 'land grab': BJP**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday alleged that the entire top leadership of the Congress is involved in corruption relating to land transactions and said they should resign on moral grounds after being "exposed".

BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi's sharp attack on the Congress came after a trust linked to its president Mallikarjun Kharge's



family withdrew its request for the allotment of five acres of civic amenity site in Bengaluru to set up a 'Multi-Skill

Development Centre, Training Institutes and Research Centre".

The move by Congress president Kharge's son Rahul Kharge, who heads the trust, comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi returning the 14 sites to the Mysuru Urban Development Authority after the Lokayukta police registered a case against Siddaramaiah, his wife and brother-in-law.

**Can finish off Lawrence Bishnoi's network in 24 hours: Pappu Yadav**

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar MP Pappu Yadav said he could "finish off within 24 hours" the network of Lawrence Bishnoi who is suspected to be behind the assassination of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddiqui.

The Purnea MP made the boastful statement in a post on X, on Sunday, when he called Gopalganj-born Siddiqui "a son of Bihar" and trained his guns at the NDA government in the

western state.

"Has the nation become an army of eunuchs? A criminal sitting in jail gets people bumped off at will and all remain mute spectators," wrote Yadav, himself known for strong-arm tactics in politics.

He added, "Maha jungle raj prevails in Maharashtra. The proof is the murder of Baba Siddiqui, who

enjoyed Y security cover and was known to be supportive of the government."

The MP, who redeemed himself politically in the recent Lok Sabha polls after remaining in the wilderness for a long, also said "if law permits, I can finish off within 24 hours the entire network run by this two-bit criminal called Lawrence Bishnoi".

**India to launch updated biodiversity plan at UN conference**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has updated its national plan to protect biodiversity in alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, officials said on Monday.

They said the updated plan will be released at the biannual UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16), scheduled to take place in Cali, Colombia from October 21 to November 1.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), adopted in 1992 to protect the world's biodiversity, requires

countries to create a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), which is a key tool for safeguarding and utilising biodiversity at the national level.

An official said India updated its NBSAP to align it with the new goals and targets set by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), adopted at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Canada.

One of the main goals of the KM-GBF is to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's land and oceans by 2030.



**LAUNDERING CASE**

**ED raids IAS officer, minister's aides in Jharkhand**

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Enforcement Directorate Monday conducted searches against a senior IAS officer, persons linked to a cabinet minister and some others as part of a multi-crore money laundering probe into alleged irregularities in the water and sanitation department of poll-bound Jharkhand, official sources said.

The sources had earlier said that the raids were linked to the Jal Jeevan Mission, a scheme of the central government.

They said alleged illegal commission payments at the rate of 10 per cent was prevalent in the works awarded by the water and sanitation department and these kickbacks were shared among politicians in power, bureaucrats and department officials.

A total of 23 premises in state capital Ranchi and Chaibasa in West Singhbhum district were searched by the officials of the



federal agency.

The ED team was provided security cover by the CRPF, the sources said.

Premises linked to secretary rank IAS officer Manish Ranjan, Harendra Singh, a personal staffer of drinking water and sanitation minister Mithilesh Kumar Thakur, Thakur's brother Vinay Thakur, some government officials, contractors and businessmen were searched by the agency, the

sources said.

Ranjan is the secretary of the land, road and building department, and has been questioned by the ED earlier in a separate money laundering case in which he arrested former minister Alamgir Alam.

Reacting to the department, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said "these are not unexpected" and will "continue as assembly elections are approaching".



**Odisha forms task force to check distress migration**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has set up a high-level task force under Deputy Chief Minister K V Singh Deo to recommend comprehensive measures to address the issue of distress migration in the state.

Other members of the task force include another Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, Chief Secretary, Development Commissioner, and secretaries from relevant departments, the state government said on Monday.

The task force may also co-opt experts of national or international repute, as well as academics, development practitioners, and representatives from UN agencies, who will be invited to attend meetings as needed.

This task force will thoroughly examine the challenges faced by migrant workers, aiming to prevent distress migration and determine actionable solutions. It will recommend steps for various government agencies to address and alleviate the difficulties experienced by Odisha's migrant labourers, it said.

The Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Department will serve as the headquarters for the task force, which will convene at least once every six months to review progress.

**Indians have highest concentration of professionals in UK: Report**

PNS ■ LONGDON

The ethnic group with the highest concentration of professional workers in the UK is Indian and considering ethnic minorities as a monolithic group for public policy purposes is now increasingly meaningless in the country, a new think-tank analysis concludes on Monday.

"A Portrait of Modern Britain: Ethnicity and Religion" published by the Policy Exchange reflects an in-depth examination of the demographic, educational, health and economic situation of different ethnic groups in the country. The report calls for a new government-led national integration strategy, with children in Britain taught to be proud of their national heritage in an inclusive manner that reflects the country's history and traditions.

"The ethnic group with the highest concentration of professional workers was Indian - with British Indians also having the highest rate of home ownership - with 71 per cent living in a property which is either owned outright or owned with a mortgage/loan or shared ownership," the report notes.

"The diversity contained within the term 'ethnic minority' is now so broad - both within each minority and between minorities - that considering ethnic minorities as a monolithic group for public policy purposes is now



increasingly meaningless," it states.

"Categories such as 'South Asian' do not only serve to mask

that very real forms of diversity within these sizeable groupings at times go unrecognised," it cautions.

The report analyses the 2021 UK Census data and other statistical resources, combining this with polling conducted by Redfield and Wilton. Besides a nationally representative sample of 2,000 people of all ethnicities, "booster" samples were used of 1,400 ethnic minority respondents - 200 each from the Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Mixed-Race ethnic groups.

over noteworthy economic and social disparities between Britain's Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis - but also mean









## FIRST COLUMN

## THE CHANGING FACE OF RAM LEELA

As traditional values blur, concerns grow about the erosion of cultural heritage of Ram Leela



VINOD TAKIAWALA

The connection between Delhi's residents and Ram Leelas is a deeply rooted tradition, with the historic Ramlila Maidan serving as a living testament to this cultural bond. Stories linked to the venue continue to be shared even today. During the Ram Leela performances, the atmosphere in Delhi and the NCR resonates with the chants of "Jai Shri Ram" and "Har Har Mahadev." As evening falls, families eagerly set out to partake in the festivities. I, too, had the opportunity to witness some of these performances. However, to my disappointment, the portrayal of Ram's story often appeared distorted, with dialogues sounding jarring and performances lacking in choreography. It seemed as though the actors, much like the director and scriptwriter, had little familiarity with the original Ramayana.

The Ram Leela I watched during my younger days has transformed into a commercial event, with little regard for the religious and cultural essence of this annual festival. It has become more of an entertainment spectacle than an exploration of the Ramayana's teachings. For some, it's a means to profit, while others use it as a platform to pursue their personal agendas. In the capital, the celebrations—including the enactment of the Ram Leela and the ritual of burning Ravana's effigy—frequently feature prominent figures such as politicians and businessmen as guests of honour. It often feels as though the Ram Leela is being staged to honour them, as the announcements from the stage are filled with praises for their greatness and importance.

Yet, I couldn't help but wonder whether any of them truly embodied the



virtues of Maryada Purushottam Ram. Whether ministers, political leaders, social workers, or other distinguished personalities holding official positions, none struck me as being worthy of comparison to Ram. I kept asking myself, "Is there anyone among them who genuinely understands Ram or upholds his ideals?"

Moreover, the management of the Ram Leelas raises several concerns. From the chaotic parking outside the venues to the giant advertisements plastered on temporary boundaries, the arrangements leave much to be desired. The presence of high-ranking officials, Delhi police, and businessmen with their families often overshadows the experience of the common people. Organisers are granted access to public spaces with government support, including subsidised electricity, water, security, and other amenities. Despite this, substantial funds are collected through donations for staging the Ram Leelas, though there is no clear accounting or auditing of these finances. Only God knows where the money goes.

At one Ram Leela in Delhi, the organisers spared no expense in creating luxurious settings for themselves, while visitors had minimal or no facilities. A statue of Lord Ram was placed in an open field, and the idols of other Hindu deities were carelessly laid out on the ground. Meanwhile, the organisers and their close circle enjoyed lavish facilities in opulent tents with exclusive arrangements for food, photoshoots, and private promotions. Ordinary visitors, who came with their families to enjoy the performance, often struggled to gain entry. Once inside, they were met with private security guards employed to serve the organisers' guests, who sometimes treated the common people poorly. Ram Leelas have now become major attractions and money-making opportunities, with little consideration for the people who come to witness them. The entire event is chaotic, and all one can hope for is that it concludes without any unfortunate incidents. The ideals of Ram seem to be the last thing on the minds of those who organise these events. The essence of Ram Leela has been overshadowed by the spectacle of wealth and status. Even the story of Ram is distorted, and the dialogues are awkward—but that is the reality of modern-day Ram Leela. (The writer is a freelance journalist; views are personal)

## Why RBI should not look at food inflation



UTTAM GUPTA

Concerns over persistent food price volatility and the need for economic growth support have prompted the Reserve Bank of India to keep its options open



On October 9, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das announced the decisions taken by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its fourth bi-monthly meeting of the current financial year (FY). It has kept the policy rate (the interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) unchanged at 6.5 per cent. However, it has altered its policy stance from "withdrawal of accommodation" to a neutral stance. In 2016, the Union Government put in place an institutionalised framework to enable the MPC to formulate monetary policy and determine the key interest rates including the policy rate for inflation targeting. It mandated the RBI to fix the policy rate in such a manner as to maintain the Consumer Price Index or CPI (it corresponds to a basket that includes food, fuel, manufactured goods and select services) within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). The RBI decides the policy rates once in two months during each FY. The mandate initially given for five years ending March 31, 2021, has since been extended till March 31, 2026. The other crucial policy instrument the banking regulator uses for targeting inflation is Liquidity - a jargon for the quantum of credit available in the banking system. Pumping more liquidity along with a reduction in the policy rate represents a scenario which in jargon is described as an 'accommodative' policy stance. The terminology was coined by Das in June 2019 when he started going for aggressive cuts in the policy rate and an increase in credit availability. Since June 2022 the RBI changed its stance to "withdrawal of accommodation" and has since stuck to it till date. From October 9, 2024, it has decided to go for what it terms a "neutral" stance. A "neutral" stance connotes that the RBI has vowed to keep its options flexible meaning it will neither squeeze liquidity by restricting credit availability and keeping policy rates high nor go



AS LONG AS FOOD (WHOSE PRICES ARE FUNDAMENTALLY AFFECTED BY SUPPLY-SIDE FACTORS) REMAINS A PART OF THE CPI BASKET, INFLATION TARGETING WILL ALWAYS REMAIN A PROBLEM

for unrestrained lending at low interest rates.

At the time of taking charge in December 2018, Das was confronted with a legacy of policy rate at a peak of 6.5 per cent, courtesy of a tight stance taken by his predecessor Urjit Patel. In February 2019, he initiated a process of aggressive cut that led to its plummeting to a low of 4 per cent by May 2020. It stayed at that level for over two years. Beginning May 2022, the RBI delivered a hike of 1.4 per cent during the first half of FY 2022-23 and another dose of 1.1 per cent during the second half.

A total hike of 2.5 per cent thus restored the policy rate to its earlier peak of 6.5 per cent by February 2023. Since then, the rate has remained unchanged to date.

Why hasn't RBI reduced the rate? Look at the trajectory of the CPI inflation. It had scaled to a high of 7.8 per cent in April 2022. During FY 2022-23, it hovered around 8 per cent. In the following FY, it started decreasing from 7.4 per cent in July 2023 to 5 per cent in September 2023, 4.8 per cent in October 2023 and 5.1 per cent during January/February 2024. For the whole of FY 2023-24, it was 5.4 per cent. During the current FY also, the CPI inflation has kept low; 5.08 per cent in June 2024 and 3.54 per cent in July 2024. During FY 2024-25, the RBI expects the CPI inflation to be 4.5 per cent. Given the above, from the third quarter of FY 2023-24, the CPI inflation has remained well within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). Moreover, as per RBI's assessment, this position will be sustained till the end of the current FY.

There was thus a strong case for reducing the repo rate. This would have given a boost to economic

growth besides helping millions of borrowers reduce their EMIs and helping industries, especially MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) reduce the cost of servicing their loans. Yet, the RBI remains unfazed and has stuck to its stance of 'not reducing the policy rate'. This has to do with a mindset that was reflected in Das's observation while announcing the first bi-monthly policy of the current FY. He had said "The elephant has now gone out for a walk and appears to be returning to the forest. We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis." Put simply, he meant there was no need to start reducing interest rates until inflation reached the target of 4 per cent and stayed at that level. If, that figure of 4 per cent was so sacrosanct, then why keep (+/- 2 per cent)?

The short point is the RBI is clamoring for a scenario that is unlikely and even if it is reached, it won't be possible to stay there for long. A potent reason for this is food inflation which has a weight of around 40 per cent in the overall CPI and is impacted predominantly by supply side/seasonal factors whereas monetary policy instruments work on the demand side.

Invariably, food inflation maintains an upward trend even as a small disruption in supply caused by seasonal factors can lead to spiralling prices. This, in turn, lifts the CPI inflation more so because of its high weight of 40 per cent. In July 2023, food inflation was 11.8 per cent which led to CPI inflation of 7.4 per cent. In October 2023, the former decreased to 6.6 per cent, and so did the latter to 4.8 per cent. At the start of the current year, food inflation spurted to around 8 per cent and by June 2024, it had fur-

ther moved up to 9.4 per cent. As long as food (whose prices are fundamentally affected by supply-side factors) remains a part of the CPI basket, inflation targeting will always remain a problem. There is an urgent need to exclude it while setting benchmark interest rates, an idea that was mooted by the Chief Economic Advisor in the Economic Survey (ES) for 2023-24. The CEA argued that monetary policy has no bearing on the prices of food items, which are dictated by supply-side pressures. For instance, during 2021-22, wheat output was affected by unusually high temperatures. During 2022-23, rains accompanied by hailstorms acted as a spoiler. During the first half of FY 2023-24, food inflation went up due to a spike in the prices of vegetables caused by seasonal factors. The current inflationary trend in food prices also has to do with supply-side pressures only. The RBI can achieve little to control them by keeping the policy rate high.

The RBI should take the idea mooted in the ES - 2023-24 on board. Meanwhile, it should consider reducing the weight of food inflation in CPI to reflect the contemporary reality. The current 40 per cent weight is based on the Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) of 2011-12 whereas Summary Statistics from the 2022-23 CES point towards a significant reduction. While formulating its monetary policy, the RBI's prime responsibility is to ensure macro-economic stability its pivotal focus being on keeping inflation within reasonable bounds. However, it can't be oblivious of the dire need to support economic growth which could be adversely impacted if it keeps the interest rates high.

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

## Laapataa Ladies: India's Oscar entry poised to captivate the world

This year's selection for Oscar marks a bold statement about the future of Indian cinema and its universal appeal

India is ready to stun the world once again, not only with its glamorous presence but also with its captivating storytelling at the 2025 Oscars. With Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies chosen as India's official entry for Best International Feature Film, the global stage is about to witness a film that exemplifies the power of Indian cinema where tradition meets modernity, and women's stories are told with gradation, strength and authenticity. From the grand stages of Cannes and TIFF to the prestigious halls of the Oscars, India's cinematic journey continues to break boundaries, capturing hearts across the globe. The selection of Laapataa Ladies



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

stands out as a justified move that speaks volumes about the direction the Indian cinema will take in the future. It signifies not just a bold statement but also a deeper narrative that India aims to convey to the world. The decision has stirred passionate discussions about the nature of Indian cinema, the evolving landscape of

global filmmaking, and the art of storytelling that resonates universally. It signifies not just a bold statement but also a deeper narrative that India aims to convey to the world. One characterised by powerful storytelling and emotional depth, laced with cultural authenticity that delves into the unique yet universally relatable experiences of women.

Kiran Rao's return to the director's chair after more than a decade has proven to be nothing short of a cinematic triumph of her evolution as a filmmaker. 'Laapataa Ladies' offers more than a film, it's an experience that beautifully blends humour and poignant social commentary and a fresh perspective on the complex-

ities of Indian womanhood. Set against the backdrop of rural India, the story revolves around two brides mistakenly swapped due to their veils, igniting a whirlwind of confusion and identity crisis. But beneath the surface, the film tackles deeper societal themes, portraying the often unspoken struggles women face while navigating tradition and personal identity. Rao's masterful storytelling elevates this from a simple narrative to a cultural dialogue, one that resonates with both Indian and global audiences. It's this jugalbandi of emotion, drama, and humour that makes 'Laapataa Ladies' stand out as a universal story about women's empowerment.



The film doesn't just reflect the plight of Indian women, it taps into the global consciousness of gender roles, the subtle acts of defiance, and the resilience required to reclaim one's identity in a patriarchal society. By sending 'Laapataa Ladies' to the Oscars, India is presenting the world with a film that balances entertainment with a serious undercurrent. This

is the kind of storytelling that Hollywood needs to see an authentic narrative that reflects the socio-cultural realities of a nation while remaining universally relatable. With well-written characters, immersive performances, and a storyline that oscillates between light-heartedness and gravitas, 'Laapataa Ladies' will serve as a testament to Indian filmmaking talent. The performances of Nitanshi Goel and Pratibha Ranta shine, their portrayals brimming with vulnerability and strength, making their characters relatable on a universal scale. This film is not just a story about two women but about the entire spectrum of Indian womanhood—its beauty, complex-

ity, and contradictions. The landscape of global filmmaking is undergoing a revolution. The world is slowly waking up to the storytelling brilliance that many nations like South Korea, China, Turkey and India have always possessed but are now showcasing with greater confidence and finesse. India's selection of 'Laapataa Ladies' is part of this global wave of cinema that is redefining the narrative structure, giving voice to local stories with universal appeal. Much like South Korea's Parasite, which used the backdrop of class disparity to tell a universally compelling story, 'Laapataa Ladies' uses rural India's traditions to explore gender,

identity and empowerment in a way that transcends cultural boundaries. As 'Laapataa Ladies' makes its way to the Oscars, it carries with it the hopes of millions who believe in the power of authentic storytelling. The film's emotional depth, paired with Rao's visionary direction, is set to make waves on the international stage, showing Hollywood and the world what Indian cinema is truly capable of. With 'Laapataa Ladies', India has not just sent a film—it has sent a message. (The writer is a former additional DG, DFF, and festival director at IFFI. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan; Views are personal)



IN BRIEF



**HCLTechnet profit rises to Rs 4,235 crore**

Services company HCL Technologies on Monday reported a 10.51 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 4,235 crore in the July-September quarter of the current fiscal. It had reported a net profit of Rs 3,832 crore in the year-ago period. Revenue came in at Rs 28,862 crore during the reporting quarter, 8.21 per cent higher than Rs 26,672 crore in the year-ago period. HCLTech CEO & Managing Director C Vijayakumar said that the company's pipeline is very strong, including data & AI, digital engineering, SAP migration and efficiency-led programmes. "Revenue growth has come with an improved profitability. Our EBIT margins in Q2 rose to 18.6 per cent, up 149 bps sequentially. LTM Return on Invested Capital (ROIC) stands at solid 35.7 per cent at company level and 43.5 per cent at services, an expansion of 353 bps YoY and 403 bps YoY respectively," said HCLTech CFO Shiv Walia.



**Gold revisits all-time high of Rs 78,700 per 10 grams**

Gold prices rose Rs 200 to revisit the all-time high of Rs 78,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday on persistent buying by stockists and traders even as the precious metal lost steam globally, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The silver metal had closed at Rs 78,500 per 10 grams on Friday. Yellow jumped Rs 500 to Rs 93,500 per kg on the back of fresh industrial demand. It had ended at Rs 93,000 per kg in the previous close. Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed by Rs 600 to reclaim its all-time high level of Rs 78,300 per 10 grams. The metal had finished at Rs 78,100 per 10 grams. Earlier, gold prices hit a record Rs 78,700 per 10 grams on October 7. Despite a weak trend overseas, the precious metal gained in the domestic market, mainly due to an increase in demand from jewellers, traders said.



**BSE launches World Investor Week**

Leading stock exchange BSE Ltd on Monday announced the launch of globally popular event World Investor Week 2024 with special focuses on educating investors about technology, digital finance and cyber security. World Investor Week (WIIW), a global initiative by the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), is being observed in India from October 14 to 20 under the leadership of Sebi and other Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs). This year's theme "Technology and Digital Finance" focuses on educating investors about online safety, with a sub-theme highlighting the prevention of cybercrimes and frauds. BSE said in a statement. The exchange inaugurated the World Investor Week 2024 with a ceremonial bell-ringing event at its International Convention Hall. As part of the celebrations, BSE is organising various digital, print and on-ground activities to engage a broad spectrum of investors. Key initiatives include a nationwide quiz for the public as well as competitions inviting participants to create jingles and storytelling content centred around the WIIW theme.

**Banks must ride on advantages of AI and Bigtech: RBI Governor Das**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned over the high reliance on AI and machine learning in the banking space, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said lenders ought to ride on the advantages of big tech and not the other way round.

Stressing that the latest technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have opened new avenues of business and profit expansion for financial institutions, he said, these technologies also pose financial stability risks.

"The heavy reliance on AI can lead to concentration risks, especially when a small number of tech providers dominate the market. This could amplify systemic risks, as failures or disruptions in these systems may cascade across the entire financial sector," he said in his keynote address at a conference organised by the RBI here.

Moreover, he said, the growing use of AI introduces new vulnerabilities, such as increased susceptibility to cyberattacks and data breach-



**"The heavy reliance on AI can lead to concentration risks, especially when a small number of tech providers dominate the market. This could amplify systemic risks, as failures or disruptions in these systems may cascade across the entire financial sector," he said in his keynote address at a conference organised by the RBI here**

es. Additionally, AI's opacity makes it difficult to audit or interpret the algorithms that drive decisions, he said, adding that this could potentially lead to unpredictable consequences in the markets.

"Banks and other financial institutions must put in place adequate risk mitigation measures against all these risks. In the ultimate analysis, banks have to ride on the advantages of AI and Bigtech and not allow the latter to ride on them," he said.

Growing digitalisation of financial services has enhanced the efficiency of the financial sector across the globe but has also brought in several challenges that central banks have to deal with.

For instance, in the modern world with deep social media presence and vast access to online banking with money transfer happening in seconds, rumours and misinformation can spread very quickly and can cause liquidity stress. Banks have to remain alert in the social media space

and also strengthen their liquidity buffers.

Talking about the risk of digitisation, the RBI Governor said in the modern world with deep social media presence and vast access to online banking with money transfer happening in seconds, rumours and misinformation can spread very quickly and can cause liquidity stress.

Banks have to remain alert in the social media space and also strengthen their liquidity buffers, he said.

**Cement industries growth to slow down to 7-8 pc: Crisil**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The cement industry is expected to record slower growth of 7 to 8 per cent to 475 million tonnes this fiscal, impacted by lower growth in the first half after registering a double-digit growth from the last two financial years, according to a Crisil report.

The cement demand grew only 3 per cent in the June first quarter of FY2024-25, owing to an extended heatwave and shortage of labour during general elections and is estimated to have grown at a similar pace in the second quarter due to seasonal weakness.

However, the second half is likely to bode well for the sector, the agency in its report said, adding that the margins would be better this fiscal.

"Cement demand is set to grow slower at 7-8 per cent year-on-year to 475 MT this fiscal, after clocking a compound annual growth rate of 11 per cent between fiscals

2022 and 2024," the report said. However, the operating profitability of cement players is likely to sustain at Rs 975-1,000 per tonne, above the decadal average of Rs 963 per tonne, said the report, which is based on an analysis of 18 cement makers, accounting for over 85 per cent of domestic sales volume.

It expects the growth in the housing segment, which accounts for 55-60 per cent of cement demand, will see a likely revival in rural housing demand supported by the healthy monsoon this year.

"Similarly, the government spending on infrastructure development, which accounts for 30 per cent of cement demand, will support demand too," it said, adding that "though actual spending was sluggish until July, the government's capex is likely to accelerate from the third quarter of this fiscal, which will boost cement demand from the infrastructure segment".

**Domestic passenger vehicle sales to grow: SIAM**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic passenger vehicle wholesales are expected to grow by 3-5 per cent this fiscal with the industry pinning hopes on strong performance in the festive period after witnessing a flatish first half, automobile industry body SIAM said on Monday.

At the start of the current fiscal, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) had pegged the passenger vehicle (PV) sales to grow between 5-8 per cent this fiscal. For the April-September period this fiscal, PV sales stood at 20,81,143 units, registering a marginal growth from 20,70,960 units in the same period of 2023-24. SIAM President Shailesh Chandra said the industry was expecting to post growth in the April-September period.

**Retail inflation hits 9-month high of 5.49 pc**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soaring vegetable prices pushed the retail inflation rate to a nine-month high of 5.49 per cent in September, according to government data released on Monday.

The consumer price index (CPI)-based retail inflation rate was 3.65 per cent in August and 5.02 per cent in September 2023. The previous high inflation rate was witnessed in December 2023 at 5.69 per cent.

As per data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), the inflation rate in the food basket rose to 9.24 per cent in September compared to 5.66 per cent in August and 6.62 per cent in the year-ago month.

"It is likely that the increase in inflation rate for the month of September 2024 is due to high base effect and weather

unchanged earlier this month, has been asked by the government to ensure the CPI inflation rate remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The annual inflation rate in the vegetable basket in September was nearly 36 per cent and in 'pulses and products' it was 9.81 per cent. Fruits, too, were dearer. However, inflation in spices was in the negative in September, compared to the year-ago month.



to clean energy by 2070. The expanding renewable energy sector offers promising growth prospects.

Panda, who is also the Managing Director of Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys, said, "Enhancing local manufacturing and R&D investment will open new avenues for innovation. Extending ISTS waivers and strengthening the transmission and power evacuation system will further boost sector growth, creating numerous opportunities for investors and businesses".

The minister also launched the National Electricity Plan (Transmission), developed in consultation with various stakeholders.



conditions," NSO said. According to another data released on Monday, the wholesale price inflation (WPI) rose to 1.84 per cent in September as food items, especially vegetables, turned costlier.

The wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation was 1.31 per cent in August. It was (-) 0.07 per cent in September last year.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which kept the key short-term lending rate

at 6.5 per cent, has been asked by the government to ensure the CPI inflation rate remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The annual inflation rate in the vegetable basket in September was nearly 36 per cent and in 'pulses and products' it was 9.81 per cent. Fruits, too, were dearer.

However, inflation in spices was in the negative in September, compared to the year-ago month.

**Jio Platforms net profit jumps 23.4% to Rs 6,539 crore**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jio Platforms on Monday reported a 23.4 per cent year-on-year rise in its consolidated net profit for Q2 FY25 to Rs 6,539 crore, as average revenue per user surged to Rs 195.1 per month.

The revenue from operations of Jio Platforms - which houses Reliance Industries' telecom and digital businesses - rose 18 per cent to Rs 31,709 crore in the just-ended September quarter.

The gross revenue stood at Rs 37,119 crore in Q2FY25, 17.7 per cent higher than the corresponding period of the previous year.

ARPU - a key metric for telcos - increased to Rs 195.1 with the partial follow-through of the tariff hike and a better subscriber mix.

**'Research on ethanol blending in diesel in advanced stages'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday said that the research around blending 15 per cent ethanol in diesel is in advanced stages, and the government is exploring ways to prioritise it based on sound evidence.

Addressing the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) Bio Energy Summit 2024, Gadkari further said according to government data, ethanol blending in India has surged from 1.53 per cent in 2014 to 15 per cent in 2024.

Spurred by this progress, the government has set an ambitious target of reaching 20 per cent blending in petrol by 2025, the road transport and highways minister said.



Gadkari said the progress on building an ethanol ecosystem -- where ethanol pumps can complement ethanol production and launch of vehicles that can run on ethanol are on fast-track in four states -- Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

"We are meeting automakers as well including Suzuki, Tata, and Toyota.

"These automakers have decided to launch flex-engine cars," he said.

According to the minister, other vehicle makers like TVS, Bajaj, and Honda are ready with ethanol bikes and are waiting for the ethanol pumps to come to launch their bikes.

He said the country has moved from the era of 'knowledge to wealth', to a 'waste to wealth'.

On CNG, the minister said, "Over 475 projects are in pipeline in CNG, and over 40 projects have already started across Punjab, Haryana, western UP, Karnataka among others." Gadkari emphasised on the need to explore further technologies of conversion of municipal solid waste into bio-CNG, where the cost of raw material becomes zero.

**Sensex rises 592 pts, Nifty settles above 25K on gains in IT, banking**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex jumped nearly 592 points while Nifty reclaimed the 25,000 level on Monday following gains in IT and banking shares amid a firm trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 591.69 points or 0.73 per cent to close at 81,973.05. During the day, it surged 690.81 points or 0.84 per cent to hit a high of 82,072.17.

The NSE Nifty rose 163.70 points or 0.66 per cent to settle at 25,127.95. In the intraday trade, the benchmark indices climbed 195.5 points or 0.78 per cent to 25,159.75.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan and HCL Technologies were among the gainers. Maruti Suzuki India, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, UltraTech Cement, Nestle India, Axis Bank and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) were among the laggards.

Market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by nearly Rs 1.35 lakh crore to Rs 4,63,62,781.71 (USD 5.51 tril-

lion). "The Indian market is demonstrating resilience, with subdued Q2 earnings expectations seemingly priced in and oil prices declining. The IT and financial sectors are attracting buying interest after recent corrections," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge rose 0.28 per cent and smallcap index by 0.06 per cent.

Sector-wise, Realty surged the most by 1.53 per cent. Bankex (1.03 per cent), IT (1.01 per cent), Financial Service and Teck by 0.88 per cent each, Consumer Durables (0.69 per cent) and Telecommunication (0.68 per cent) were among the gainers.

Commodities slipped by 0.31 per cent, followed by Metal (0.14 per cent), Oil & Gas (0.06 per cent) and Services (0.04 per cent). On the BSE, Avenue Supermarts, which owns and operates retail chain D-Mart, plunged over 8 per cent to settle at Rs 4,184.45 apiece, after the company's September quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.



**Exports to be major job creator for India: USISPF**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US-India Strategic Partnership Forum President and CEO Mukesh Aghi on Monday emphasised that exports are going to be a major job creator for India as the country moves towards becoming a USD 5 trillion economy.

Aghi, who was speaking at an event organised by the USISPF, also stressed that India and the US should continue to strengthen their economic engagements and increase the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion going forward.

He said creating nearly 1.2 million jobs per month is going to be a challenge, highlighting the importance of job

creation to ensure there is no social unrest among the youth.

"As India's economy goes from 4 to 5 trillion dollars, one of the biggest job creators is going to be exports because we have a challenge and the challenge is how do we create 1.2 million jobs (in India) a month and unless we are able to meet that objective we will start seeing some kind of social unrest among the youth itself..." Aghi said.

"So I think it is important to keep on driving the (bilateral) trade objective of USD 500 billion moving forward," he added.

The USISPF President and CEO shared that 5 million Indian Americans currently reside in the US, comprising



**"As India's economy goes from 4 to 5 trillion dollars, one of the biggest job creators is going to be exports because we have a challenge and the challenge is how do we create 1.2 million jobs (in India) a month and unless we are able to meet that objective we will start seeing some kind of social unrest among the youth itself..." Aghi said**

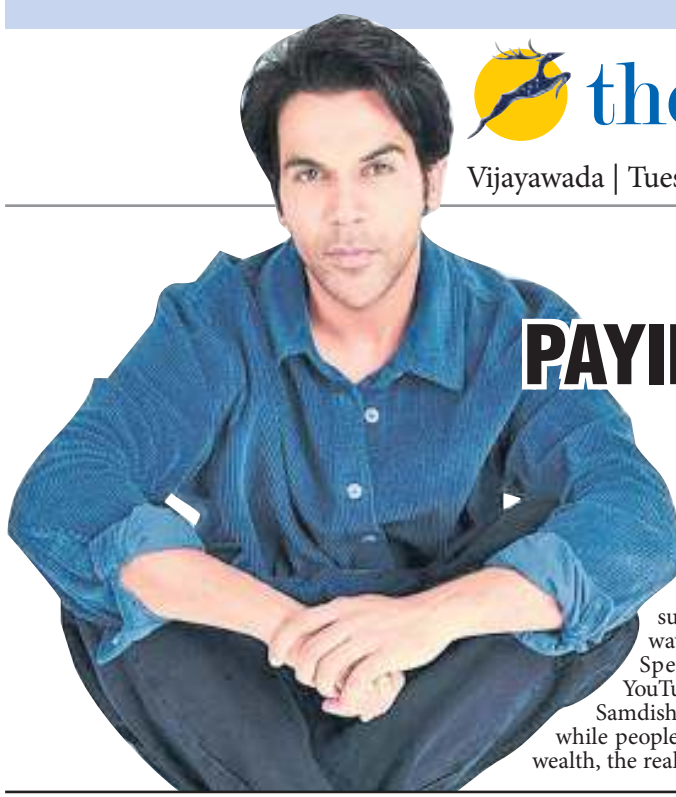
roughly 1.5 per cent of its population. However, they contribute nearly 6 per cent to the nation's GDP.

"So in every aspect, from people to people, economic, technologically and also geopolitically, these two countries (India and the US) are aligned. Yes, we have our

road bumps, we have our challenges, but we keep on working with that and what we see with this government, last 10 years they have stepped up. They have basically working with us to make sure that there is much more ease of doing business," Aghi asserted.

The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at USD 118.3 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23. However, China emerged as the largest trading partner of India with USD 118.4 billion two-way commerce in 2023-24, slightly edging past the US, according to the data of economic think tank GTRI.





# 'I DON'T HAVE ₹100 CRORE, JUST PAYING MY EMIS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE'

Despite the massive success of *Stree 2*, which became the only Bollywood film to gross over 600 crore in India, Rajkumar Rao revealed that the riches people associate with such success haven't made their way into his bank account. Speaking candidly on the YouTube channel Unfiltered with Samdish, Rajkumar shared that, while people may think he's rolling in wealth, the reality is quite different.

"Honestly, I don't have as much money as people might think. I don't have 100 crore. I'm still paying a hefty EMI for the house I bought," Rajkumar explained. He joked about how it's not like he can walk into a showroom and casually buy a car worth 6 crore.

When asked if he could buy a car worth 50 lakh, Rajkumar laughed and said, "I could, but there'd be a discussion about it first. A 20 lakh car would be more comfortable right now." He also admitted that actors receiving too much money too quickly can negatively affect their mindset, which is why he's glad to keep things balanced.

Following the success of *Stree 2*, Rajkumar Rao has taken on a variety of roles. His latest release is *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*, a sex comedy directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa, where he stars alongside Triptii Dimri, Vijay Raaz and Mallika Sherawat. The film revolves around a newlywed couple whose honeymoon tape gets stolen. Produced by T-Series, the movie is already generating buzz. Up next, Rajkumar will star in the action-packed thriller *Malik*, where fans will get to see him in a full-fledged action role for the first time.



## Rajkumar Hirani honoured with 'Rashtriya Kishore Kumar Samman' for screenwriting

Renowned filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani, known for crafting some of Indian cinema's most cherished films, was awarded the prestigious Rashtriya Kishore Kumar Samman for screenwriting. The honour, which was presented on Sunday, holds special significance for Hirani, who has long admired the legendary singer Kishore Kumar. Receiving the award on the anniversary of Kishore Da's passing made the moment even more meaningful for the director.

The award ceremony took place in Khandwa, the birthplace of Kishore Kumar, where Hirani was recognised by the Madhya Pradesh government. Tribal Affairs Minister Vijay Shah presented him with the honour, celebrating his outstanding contributions to the art of scriptwriting.

During the ceremony, Hirani shared a touching memory from the day Kishore Da passed away. As a young fan who had just moved to Mumbai from Nagpur, he stood outside Kishore Da's bungalow in

Juhu, hoping to pay his respects but was unable to enter as he was still unknown in the industry. Hirani recalled the lyrics of Kishore Da's songs, where the singer expressed his longing to return to Khandwa to enjoy simple pleasures like milk and jalebi. In a heartfelt tribute, Hirani visited Kishore Da's memorial, offering milk and jalebi as a gesture of respect.

Reflecting on the honour, Hirani said, "It's surreal to think that the same person who couldn't enter Kishore Da's home in Mumbai is now being recognized in his birthplace, Khandwa. Artists and directors come and go, but songs live on forever. I believe Kishore Da's songs will continue to be cherished for the next hundred years."

With this accolade, Rajkumar Hirani joins a distinguished list of previous recipients, becoming the 27th honoree of the National Kishore Kumar Award. This moment is a significant milestone not only for Hirani but also for his fans, as anticipation grows for his next cinematic venture.

## Sean 'Diddy' Combs' bodyguard reflects on biggie's tragic death

In 1997, Sean 'Diddy' Combs and The Notorious B.I.G. attended an after-party that would tragically be Biggie's last. The rapper was fatally shot in a drive-by shooting, a moment that continues to haunt those who were there that night.

Diddy's bodyguard, Gene Deal, was present during the devastating event and later shared his lingering pain and regret. Deal revealed that he had an unsettling feeling before the night even began, believing it was his responsibility to protect the *I'll Be Missing You* artist. "I saw this kid lose his life—he died as I was pulling him out of the car," Deal recalled.

"I wouldn't wish what I went through on anyone, because I don't think they could handle it. If it weren't for God in my life and people praying for me, I don't know how I would've made it through." Deal explained that before they left Andre Harrell's house, Diddy had told him he didn't need to come along. But Deal's gut told him otherwise. "I knew someone was going to die that night. I did everything I could to keep it from being Puff, and it wasn't him."

Deal's sorrow is intensified by the fact that, though Biggie wasn't his primary responsibility that night, he still feels the weight of the loss. "The guys who were protecting Big didn't do everything they could to prevent it—and that hurts, even though he wasn't my principal. Every time I hear his music, see murals, or those statues, it hurts. It'll hurt until the day I leave this earth."

Sean 'Diddy' Combs, who was nearby when the shooting happened, rushed to the hospital with Biggie. "Then the doctors came out and gave us the news," Diddy recalled in a 1997 interview. "I was on my knees, praying the whole time. I couldn't process it. Everything was happening so fast, I just couldn't believe it was real."

To make things worse, Diddy had to break the heartbreaking news to Biggie's mother. "I had Damien call her, but he broke down in the middle of it, so I had to finish. I had to calm her down and find someone to go to her house."

In the chaotic aftermath, many close to Diddy feared he could be the killer's next target, urging him to flee Los Angeles. "I woke up the next morning to people panicking, telling me to get out of L.A. But I couldn't move—I was just stuck."



## Shaheer Sheikh romances two Kriti Sanons in his b'wood debut, *Do Patti*

The eagerly awaited trailer for *Do Patti*, starring Kriti Sanon, Kajol and Shaheer Sheikh, has finally dropped and it's left audiences buzzing with excitement. Directed by Shashanka Chaturvedi and penned by Kanika Dhillon, the film promises to be a gripping drama packed with suspense and unexpected twists.

The trailer's standout moment is the fiery love triangle between Shaheer Sheikh's character, Dhruv Sood and the twin sisters, both played by Kriti Sanon. As the rivalry between the sisters escalates, Dhruv accuses one of them of being mentally unstable, setting the stage for a series of thrilling twists that will keep viewers on the edge of their seats.

This film marks a first for Kriti Sanon, who takes on the challenge of

portraying two distinct characters in a double role. Meanwhile, Shaheer Sheikh, a beloved television star, steps out of his usual 'lover boy' image to embrace a character with more complexity and darker undertones.

The classic love triangle, with two sisters vying for the affection of the same man, has heightened anticipation, and the sizzling chemistry between Kriti and



Shaheer has only added to the excitement. *Do Patti* highlights Shaheer's versatility as an actor, showcasing a performance that is markedly different from his past roles. Audiences are eager to see him in this new avatar, and his portrayal is already being hailed as a departure from his previous work.

Also starring Kajol in a key role, *Do Patti* is set to premiere on an OTT platform on October 25, 2024 and promises to be a thrilling roller-coaster of emotions.

## Ankur and Adah share kiss on their first day of filming!



Udkehki actor Ankur Rathee is preparing for the release of his upcoming project, *Reeta Sanyal*. In a career first, Rathee steps into the shoes of a whimsical yet dedicated police officer, opposite Adah Sharma, who portrays a lawyer. Reflecting on the whirlwind that was his first day on set, Rathee revealed the unexpected challenges he faced.

"I had only a few hours after landing in Mumbai before being rushed to the set," Rathee shared. "Everything was happening so fast—my

hair was being cut, the stylists were adjusting my wardrobe, a tailor was taking measurements a bit too close for comfort, and an AD was snapping photos of my new look. Meanwhile, the producer was explaining his vision for the character,

and the director was running through the scenes for the day. It felt like a circus in my vanity van during that first hour and I was honestly overwhelmed."

As he flipped through the script, Rathee discovered more reasons for concern. "The first scene scheduled was my character's final scene in the series, which meant I had to think about the entire emotional arc of my character before I'd even fully grasped him. The second scene was my character's very first one, which is a critical moment as it sets the tone for the audience's impression. And to top it all off, the only kiss in the show was also scheduled for my first day! I hadn't even met Adah yet, and suddenly we were supposed to film this

intimate moment."

Despite the jet lag and the pressure, Rathee managed to navigate the chaos like a pro. Speaking about his co-star, he said, "When I finally met Adah, she was wonderful—very professional and full of charm. I've done a number of intimate scenes in my career and I've learned that trust and creative comfort with your co-star are crucial. Fortunately, Adah and I found that naturally. Any initial awkwardness vanished as we discussed the significance of the kiss—why our characters are kissing, what it meant for their relationship and how best to portray the moment. It became a sweet, effortless scene." Reflecting on the experience, Rathee added, "I later

found out that Adah was just as nervous as I was. She admitted she was so preoccupied with the idea that we'd be kissing soon that she didn't really have time to form an impression of me initially. We actors lead unconventional lives, and I feel fortunate to have worked with such great co-actresses along the way."

*Reeta Sanyal*, a gripping thriller series, is set to premiere on Disney+ Hotstar on October 14. Directed by Abhirup Ghosh and produced by Rajeshwar Nair, the series stars Adah Sharma, Ankur Rathee, Rahul Dev and Manik Papneja. Adapted from a character created by novelist Amit Khan, it combines fantasy and emotional depth.

### FUN

#### ARCHIE

#### CALVIN AND HOBBS

#### GARFIELD

#### NANCY

#### GINGER MEGGS

#### REALITY CHECK

#### SPEED BUMP

#### CROSSWORD

|    |   |   |    |   |
|----|---|---|----|---|
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| 6  |   |   |    |   |
| 7  |   | 8 |    |   |
| 9  |   |   |    |   |
| 10 |   |   |    |   |
| 11 |   |   | 12 |   |
| 13 |   |   |    |   |
| 14 |   |   |    |   |
| 15 |   |   |    |   |
| 16 |   |   |    |   |
| 17 |   |   |    |   |
| 18 |   |   |    |   |
| 19 |   |   |    |   |

#### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

#### ACROSS

- Nearly
- Wide smile
- Tame animals
- This colour plus red makes orange
- One hundred years
- Parts of a minute
- Tired and drowsy
- Meat and vegetables boiled slowly
- Drink made from grapes
- Happening every twelve months

#### DOWN

- Mountains
- A parent
- A law
- The one bought most recently
- Sleep in this room
- Try
- A puzzle with many pieces
- A newspaper boss
- A plant with fronds that grows in shady places
- Absent

SOLUTION

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | V | E | R | Y | B | O | D | Y |   |
| E | O | E | R |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| M | E | N | D | S | G | O | I | N | G |
| E | D | O | E |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | L | S | O | C | E | L | L | A | R |
| S | I | D |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| L | E | S | S | O | N |   |   |   |   |
| P | L | P | O | N |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | M | A | L | L | O | P | E | N |   |
| I | D | O |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | N | S | W | E | R |   |   |   |   |







# IT MAY HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF WE TOOK CHANCES: MUZUMDAR

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Disheartened India head coach Amol Muzumdar rued the missed opportunities that could have altered the game's outcome after his team's hopes of reaching the women's T20 World Cup semifinals were dashed by a loss to Australia. In a bid to control their own destiny, the Indian team delivered a lackluster performance on the field, ultimately resulting in a nine-run loss to defending champions Australia in their must-win game on Sunday. "I think we were right in the game, right till the last over. Just that experience of Australia, saw them through," Muzumdar said at the post match press conference. "Just a little disappointing with the loss. And I feel we've fielded pretty well. But yeah, a couple of chances could have been, we could have taken those chances and then the things could have been different. "Maybe 10-15 runs less, even the last over. But at the same time, I would like to say that we put in our best effort



forward in this game," he added. India dropped as many as three catches, while also missing a stumping opportunity. To add to their woes, a close lbw call also went against them. In the 17th over of the Australian innings, Phoebe Litchfield, batting on 5, had attempted a reverse sweep with the on-field umpire giving her leg-before-wicket after she missed the shot. However, a decision to review handed her a reprieve because the ball pitched outside leg stump. India players, including vice-captain Smriti Mandhana, protested, claiming the ball pitching outside the leg-stump line should be deemed inconsequential given the batter had switched stances. Litchfield went on to add 10 more crucial runs, helping Australia post the highest team total at Sharjah in the ongoing tournament. "What I gathered from that non-dismissal is that she didn't move before the ball was released. So, the leg mark, what was there, it stood as it is. That was my only understanding about it.

Whether it was out or not, it was up to the umpires to decide or the third umpire. So yeah, it was a crucial one." Australia posted a total of 151/8. In response, India fell short, finishing at 142/9 despite skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's unbeaten 54. With senior players Harmanpreet and Deepti Sharma in the middle, India needed 85 off 10 overs. Asked what message was being sent to the duo in the middle at the time, Muzumdar said: "First and foremost, it was about the run chase. Second was keeping the net run rate also in account. But the only message was if we take it a little deeper, then we do have a good chance to chase these runs down. "I think Harman's presence was very important till the end. That is what I felt in her run chase. We almost got it through." India's chances of making the semifinal now hinge on Pakistan beating New Zealand on Monday. "Well, I just want to wish Pakistan all the best. That's all I can say. But we will be watching the game very closely, that's for sure."

# Ben Stokes returns for second Test against Pakistan

PTI ■ MULTAN

Captain Ben Stokes made a return to the England Test team as he was on Monday named in the playing eleven for the second match against Pakistan beginning here Tuesday, after he was declared to have been recovered from an injury he sustained in August. Stokes, who has been out of action due to a hamstring problem, is one of the two changes in the England side that beat Pakistan in the first Test by an innings and 47 runs. Fast bowler Matthew Potts was included in place of Gus Atkinson. Stokes has replaced pacer Chris Woakes while England have retained both spinners Shoaib Bashir and Jack Leach in their eleven. According to the visiting team management, Stokes has bowled and batted

without any discomfort in the nets in the last few days and was cleared by medical experts to make his comeback. The 33-year-old all-rounder last played in the Hundred where he sustained his injury in August forcing him to miss the entire three-match series against Sri Lanka at home. He also missed the first Test against Pakistan here. Pakistan is yet to announce its playing eleven although the selectors on Sunday dropped Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah for the remaining two Tests and also released Sarfaraz Ahmed from the squad. **England Playing XI:** Ben Stokes (capt), Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith (wk), Brydon Carse, Matthew Potts, Jack Leach, Shoaib Bashir.



# Cummins to lead Australia in Pakistan ODIs, McGuirk retained

AP ■ SYDNEY

Pat Cummins will captain Australia's one-day squad for the first time since lifting the Cricket World Cup in November in its three-match series against Pakistan at home next month. Cummins was named Monday in the 14-man Australia squad for the matches at Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth along with Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, the other regular members of Australia's test pace lineup. Jake Fraser-McGuirk has been given another chance after struggling in Australia's Twenty20 series against Scotland in September, in which he made 16 runs in three innings with two ducks. While he made a 30-ball 50 against England, he wasn't selected for the subsequent five-match ODI series. Fraser-McGuirk will likely open the batting with Matt Short in the absence of Travis Head and Mitch Marsh who are on paternity leave. The squad also includes batters Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne and white ball regulars Glenn Maxwell, Josh Inglis and Adam Zampa. In Cooper Connolly also has

been retained after making his one-day and T20 debuts on Australia's September tour to Britain. Allrounder Aaron Hardie who scored 67 runs in two innings while batting No. 8 and took four wickets in the England series has kept his place while Marcus Stoinis returns after being left out of the England one-dayers. Seamer Sean Abbott also has held his spot with several bowlers recovering from injuries suffered in England. Nathan Ellis, Xavier Bartlett, Meredith all left that series with injuries while Spencer Johnson was ruled out with a side strain before it began. Meanwhile, test allrounder Cameron Green confirmed Monday he will undergo surgery on a stress fracture in his back and will be out of action for six months. A squad for the Twenty20 series against Pakistan will be named later this month. The Pakistan series which comprises matches at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Nov. 4, the Adelaide Oval on Nov. 8 and Perth Stadium on Nov. 10 is Australia's last one-day series before the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February.

# Kohli hungry for runs, no need to judge after every match: Gambhir



PTI ■ BENGALURU

India head coach Gautam Gambhir is not too concerned about the recent lukewarm form of Virat Kohli, insisting that the star batter remains as hungry as when he made his debut. To now, his hunger is always there," Gambhir told reporters here on Monday. "That hunger is what makes him a world-class cricketer. I am sure that he will be hungry to get runs in this series and probably moving forward to Australia as well," he added. Gambhir said the prolific batter, once he gets into "those runs scoring phases", is remarkably consistent. "So, I am sure that he will be looking for these three Test matches in the series and then to Australia." Gambhir reiterated his opinion that a player should not be judged on the basis of a one bad match or a series. "You don't keep judging people after every game. If you keep judging people after every game, that's not fair on

them. It's a sport and people are bound to fail. "But more importantly, I think if we can get the results, if people are doing what is needed of them to get the results in our favour, that is fine," he noted. The former opener said his job is to back the players and keep them hungry for success, particularly during a long season where India is scheduled to play eight more Test matches. "Everyone doesn't have the best days everyday. I think the kind of vibe we have is we keep backing our players. My job is to keep backing the players. My job is to keep selecting the best playing 11, not dropping anyone. "I'm sure everyone is hungry and they know there are eight Test matches in a row. So, this is probably the start of them looking at eight Test matches in a row and performing well," said Gambhir.



# Green ruled out of India Test series, to undergo back surgery

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia all-rounder Cameron Green was on Monday ruled out of the marquee Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series against India owing to a stress fracture in his spine that will need six months to heal after a surgery. The 25-year-old seam-bowling all-rounder was diagnosed with the problem in his lower back after experiencing pain during last month's tour of the UK. Green has previously suffered four stress fractures in his back but has not encountered any issues in that area since 2019. "Whilst spine stress fractures are not unusual in pace bowlers, Cam has a unique defect in an adjacent area to the fracture that is believed to be contributing to the injury," a CA statement said on Monday. A six-month recovery time will mean Green misses not just the Border Gavaskar Trophy, but also February's Test tour of Sri Lanka and the Champions Trophy. His

participation in the IPL is also in doubt. Green has decided to opt for a similar type of surgery undergone by several pacers including Jasprit Bumrah, James Pattinson, Jason Behrendorff, and Ben Dwarshuis. "After thorough consultation it was determined Cameron would benefit from the surgery to stabilise the defect and reduce the risk of future recurrence," CA said. The alternative to surgery would have involved rehabilitation and restricting his bowling during the five-match series against India, starting November 22 in Perth. "The surgery has been performed successfully with elite pace bowlers in the past. Recovery time is anticipated to be around six-months. "The decision to proceed to surgery is with Cameron's long-term future as an all-rounder in mind," the statement added. The operation will be performed by New Zealand surgeons Grahame Inglis and Rowan Schouten, which

involves screws and titanium wire to bind vertebrae together, according to 'cricket.Com.Au.' His absence would mean Australia will have to rejig their batting order. Green had returned to the Test side following veteran opener David Warner's retirement earlier this year with Steve Smith being pushed to open the innings. However, the veteran struggled at the top of the order and will drop back to his preferred number four position, which has been left vacant by Green. The selectors will now keep an eye on Australia's A series against India where the likes of Cameron Bancroft, and teen prodigy Sam Konstas will vie for the now vacant opening spot. Additionally, Australia will also have to find someone to bowl Green's overs. Mitchell Marsh did not bowl in Western Australia's Sheffield Shield match against Queensland and hardly rolled his arm while captaining the white-ball teams over the winter.

# Battling accomplished Ashwin, Jadeja crucial for New Zealand: Rachin Ravindra

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Top-order batter Rachin Ravindra said on Monday that nullifying the twin threat posed by senior spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja will be crucial to New Zealand's success in the three-match series against India. Ashwin and Jadeja together have grabbed over 800 Test wickets, and are among the most experienced bowling pairs in world cricket at present. "They've got consistent bowlers who bowl in an area for a long period of time. I mean, you see the two spinners who play consistently, Ashwin and Jadeja, they're two very accomplished bowlers. You know, they can bat too, which makes it a little bit hard," Ravindra told reporters here on Monday. "They're consistent, they're good to battle, especially in this part of the world. Obviously, we know how good India are in their own

conditions, the quality of their bowlers and batters. It shows how hard it is for a team to come and win here. So, it's difficult," he added. Ravindra banked on his previous experience of playing cricket in India to come good in the upcoming Test rubber. The Kiwi played in this part of the world during last year's ODI World Cup before appearing for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL 2024. "Although it is different formats, it gives you confidence that you can perform in this part of the world. I think it's (Test cricket) a different challenge entirely and it's something I'm really looking forward to. "As you've seen, those two tournaments (ODI WC and IPL) were amazing, the crowds and the passion and the hype and the buzz around them. So, I'm excited to have a full-fledged series here," he noted. From a team perspective, the 24-year-old said the tourists



will have to keep focus on their game plans rather than worrying about India's approach. "The brand of cricket they play is very positive, especially in their own conditions. The way they've evolved over the last few years has been amazing, especially away (from home). "As New Zealanders, we don't necessarily try and look at the opposition too much. We know what a quality side they are and what they bring to the table, but I think if we're able to play our game and be consistent and put our best foot forward, hopefully, that will result in a win," he added. New Zealand's preparation for the series against India has been far from ideal as they lost 0-2 against Sri Lanka recently, while their one-off Test match against Afghanistan was a washout at Noida. However, Ravindra was confident that the team can lean upon the learnings from

those experiences against India. "We did some really good stuff during the Sri Lankan series, obviously, came on the wrong side of the win and loss column. But I think as a group there were times where we really pushed and that first Test was close," he said. In the first Test against the Islanders at Galle, the left-hander made a fine 92 but the Kiwis lost the match by 63 runs while chasing 275. Ravindra wanted his side not to repeat the mistake of faltering at the crunch moments. "I think we've got to understand that we've got to do it (fighting) for long periods of time because that's what Test match cricket is about. Obviously, Sri Lanka and India are different places, but similar in terms of the amount of spin you might play. "So, we have learnt a lot. So, it's about, you know, seeing how we can play our game and how we can bring that here to India," he added.



RIYA SUMAN

# NAVIGATING CHAOS, CINEMA AND CONFIDENT NEW ROLES

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In a world where the silver screen often reflects the chaos and charm of life, Riya Suman is a breath of fresh air, dancing effortlessly between the vibrant realms of Telugu and Tamil cinema. Bursting onto the scene with her debut in *Majnu*, she quickly turned heads and won hearts, proving that she's more than just another pretty face. With an infectious energy that lights up every frame and a fearless approach to her craft, Riya is not just acting, igniting a sensation. Whether she's tackling serious social issues in *Men Too* or unleashing her inner action heroine in the upcoming thriller *Hitler*, this Bombay-born dynamo embraces every challenge with a wink and a smile.

Navigating the dual worlds of Tamil and Telugu cinema is no easy feat, but for actress Riya Suman, it's been a "hell of a roller coaster." Born and raised in Bombay, she found herself learning new languages, shuttling between cities and adjusting to the complexities of two distinct industries. But while the journey has been chaotic, it's also been rewarding. "It's super chaotic and challenging but at the same time quite a humbling and rewarding experience," she reflects. She candidly shares that her growth has been immense, not just as an actor but as an individual. "I've evolved so much as a person, learned so much about myself, people, and life in general. It's almost like an innocent girl to an assured confident woman transformation. I'm already in love with the woman I'm becoming."

Riya made her debut with the Telugu film *Majnu*, which was a commercial success, and continued her journey through Tamil cinema, embracing roles both large and small. When it comes to screen time, she holds a pragmatic view. "Screen time is definitely not something I stress about because in the end, the pace and essence of the film is what matters," she says. Her role in *Men Too*, a film dealing with sensitive themes, allowed her to explore complex dynamics, but she approaches each project without personal judgment. "As an actor, you are never supposed to judge your characters," she states, reinforcing her belief in cinema as a director's medium.

Her latest venture, the political thriller *Hitler*, offered Riya the chance to explore a challenging character in Sara, a confident yet emotionally complex woman who suffers from fits due to past trauma. "The part to act getting fits suddenly was the most challenging physical aspect of this character," she reveals. Working alongside seasoned actors like Gautham Menon, she found herself in awe of his professionalism, noting that "no matter who, an actor must always go with a clean slate and submit to the narrative of the director."

The *Hitler* star is not content to be pigeonholed into any one type of role. Whether light-hearted romantic characters or intense dramatic ones, she finds herself at home in front of the camera, eager to embrace all genres. "To be honest, you put me in front of the camera, and I already feel I'm home," she shares, with a particular eagerness to explore horror comedies or period dramas like *Pomniyin Selvan*.

With the rise of OTT platforms and the

global reach of cinema, she believes that experimental roles are finally gaining the recognition they deserve. "Interesting roles were always being offered, like Mani Ratnam has been doing it forever," she says, acknowledging the evolving landscape for female actors in regional cinema. However, she remains grounded, understanding that her role in a film is to serve the director's vision: "Once I'm on board for the film, I completely submit to the vision of the director."

As someone who has portrayed everything from innocent to morally complex characters, she emphasises that it's a team effort to ensure her roles remain fresh and distinct. "When a director signs me up, they themselves make sure that my look and nuances shouldn't be similar to my previous work," she explains.

Despite her rising profile, she hasn't burdened herself with the expectations of being a role model just yet. However, she is committed to helping others navigate the industry. "The responsibility I do take is to guide well with my own experiences, help with any contacts if needed, and share my thoughts and knowledge transparently," she says.

Looking ahead, she remains open to exploring new creative realms, whether it's experimental cinema or venturing into international projects. But beyond acting, she keeps herself busy by managing her family's real estate business, travelling and enjoying her leisure time. "Experimental roles, international cinema, or cinema in any language basically anything to do with acting," she says of her future aspirations, offering a glimpse of her passion and zeal for the craft.



## Chiranjeevi launches Abhishek Nama's new film *Nagabandham*

Producer Abhishek Nama, who turned director with the film *Devil*, starring Nandamuri Kalyan Ram and Samyuktha, is now directing his second film titled *Nagabandham*. The previous film, a period drama, was released last December. The new film was launched on Monday at a private studio in Hyderabad, with Megastar Chiranjeevi attending as the special guest. The tagline for *Nagabandham* is "The Secret Treasure."

Interestingly, Abhishek Nama is also providing the story and screenplay for this upcoming

film, which is produced by Kishore Annapureddy. Virat Karma, who made his acting debut in *Peddha Kapu*, will play the lead role in *Nagabandham*, alongside Nabha Natesh and Iswarya Menon as the female leads. Notable actors Jagapathi Babu, Jayaprakash and Murali Sharma will also feature in key roles.

The story revolves around the ancient concept of *Nagabandham*, linked to the protection of 108 Vishnu temples across India. With a backdrop of hidden treasures, such as those at the Padmanabhaswamy Temple in

Thiruvananthapuram and the Ratna Bhandar at the Puri Jagannath Temple, *Nagabandham* delves into a powerful narrative filled with spiritual and adventurous elements, according to the makers. The film is set to release in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam in 2025, with regular shooting scheduled to begin on October 23.

Several industry figures, including BRS MLA Talasani Srinivas Yadav, director Ajay Bhupathi and producer and distributor Asian Suniel, attended the launch to wish Abhishek Nama and the team success.

## Kiran Abbavaram's *KA* joins Diwali race

Actor Kiran Abbavaram is entering the Diwali race with his film *KA*, set to release on October 31. The release date was officially announced by the makers on Monday during a media conference. This film holds special significance for Kiran Abbavaram, as it marks his first release in multiple languages. Directed by the duo Sujith and Sandeep, the film is produced by Chinta Gopalakrishna Reddy.

The story is a period drama with hints of supernatural elements, as teased in the promotional videos. Kiran Abbavaram plays the role of Vasu, a postman. The plot revolves around mysterious incidents in a village and Vasu's connection to them. Kiran Abbavaram has high hopes for the film and has spoken positively about its potential. Tanvi Ram stars as the female lead.

"The film's theatrical rights were bought by Vamsi Nandipati for a high price. Another factor is that the festival holidays will definitely benefit our film. The story's 1970s backdrop is sure to captivate family audiences, so we decided to release the film for Diwali, despite the competition," said Kiran Abbavaram.



## Is *Viswam* really a hit or just hype?

The Gopichand and film maker Srinu Vaitla collaboration, *Viswam*, was released on October 11, coinciding with the Dasara festival. However, critics were unimpressed, with many noting that Srinu Vaitla stuck to his usual formulaic approach. This film is particularly crucial for Srinu Vaitla, actor Gopichand, and lead actress Kavya Thapar, all of whom have faced a string of flops in recent years.

Recently, the makers released a poster claiming that the film had recovered its budget within two days and entered the profit zone by day three. Yet, many viewers and industry insiders find this hard to believe. According to reports, *Viswam* was made on a budget of approximately Rs 44 crore, including the remuneration for Gopichand and Srinu Vaitla. Initially, production began under Chitralaya, but due to financial constraints, Peoples Media Factory took over the project.

Sources suggest that the theatrical rights for the Telugu States were sold for just Rs 10 crore, a notably low amount for a Srinu Vaitla film in recent years. After its release, many dismissed the film, with social media criticism focusing on the outdated storytelling. Despite this, the filmmakers seem determined to position *Viswam* as a success, likely due to the challenging phase faced by key members of the team.

So, is *Viswam* truly a hit, or just marketing spin?

## Ghatikachalam: A true incident-based horror tale set to thrill

The small film *Ghatikachalam* has sparked interest following the release of its teaser on Monday. Directed by Amar Kamepalli and produced by Amar Kamepalli and producer SKN, the film is now being released worldwide by producer SKN and director Maruthi. After watching the film, both decided to back the project, aiming to support smaller films.

The teaser reveals a horror storyline with a split personality backdrop. Intriguingly, the film is based on a true incident. Director Amar Kamepalli shared that his friend Raju, who resides in the US, sent him a video depicting eerie incidents that occurred in a house belonging to someone Raju knew. This intrigued Amar, who then wrote a story inspired by the event. Raju decided to produce the film. The plot centers around a 19-year-old medical student, with Nikhil Devadula, a former child actor with credits in nearly 70 films, making his debut as a lead actor.

Director Amar revealed that he showed the trailer to Maruthi, who offered valu-



able suggestions for improvements. "I incorporated the changes Maruthi recommended and after seeing the final cut, he decided to release the film," said Amar. He expressed gratitude to Maruthi and SKN for their support in giving the film a wide release. Producer SKN emphasised the importance of supporting small films in the industry. "Many successful actors began with small films, which are essential for keeping theaters running. However, these films often lack the promotion they deserve. After watching *Ghatikachalam*, I was impressed and decided to release it," said SKN. He praised Nikhil's performance and advised him not to limit himself to lead roles but to explore various character roles.

Nikhil Devadula, who has been acting as a child artist for 15 years, expressed his excitement for the project. "With the experience I gained and the support from the technicians, I gave my best in *Ghatikachalam*. I hope it will be a great success," he said.

