


QUOTE OF THE DAY

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy did not answer my calls when I called him to speak about the roads and bridges in my constituency. We took up the construction of bridges at seven places in Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency limits. But the state government is not giving us funds and bills in time although the Centre has deposited its funds

- Arvind Dharmapuri, Lok Sabha MP



India seals big-ticket deal to procure 31 Predator drones From US

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VERSATILE VIXEN READY TO RULE THE SCREEN

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Tick tock! Rewind is ready to turn BACK TIME

12

DON'T MISS... Fervour marks 'Sirimanotsavam'

The annual 'Sirimanotsavam', the major folk festival of Sri Pydithalli Ammavari Jataru, was celebrated with religious fervour on Tuesday. Lakhs of devotees from across north coastal Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh thronged Vizianagaram town to seek the blessings of the presiding deity, Pydithalli Ammavaru. The day began with the hereditary trustee of the Pydithalli Ammavaru Temple, senior TDP leader Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi Raju, and his family offering prayers to the goddess in the morning session. Completing ...

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Murmu calls for deeper economic...

President Droupadi Murmu has called for deeper economic cooperation between India and Algeria, underlining that the African nation's rapid growth and expanding economy offer many opportunities in various sectors. The President in an address to the Algerian-Indian Economic Forum on Monday emphasised India's rapid rise and impressive progress in 'Ease of Doing Business', and invited Algerian companies to join India's 'Make in India' and 'Make for the World' initiatives. 'The stepping up of the ...

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'Don't see impact on trade ties'

The escalation in the diplomatic row between India and Canada will not have an impact on the bilateral trade and investment ties between the two countries, government sources said on Tuesday. They also said that the bilateral trade value is not significant and Canadian funds get route their investments through Singapore, the UAE and the US. "India is a preferred investment destination," they said. Canada is India's one of the primary sources of lentils and now that can come from Australia, they said, adding ...

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1st Test: Gill, Jaiswal continue ...

Yashviji Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, the torchbearers of India's transition phase, will have to be the team's driving force in its quest to lord over an unsettled New Zealand when the two sides square off in a three-Test series, beginning here on Wednesday. The batsman has not been completely passed, but Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are certainly running their last lap and these two young superstars will have to show that they can carry forward the legacy of the titans. Since a productive series against England ...

-SPORTS

AP's new liquor policy from today

CM Naidu warns of stern action against intimidation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government's new liquor policy is set to come into effect on October 16, replacing all government liquor shops with privately licensed outlets. As part of this transition, the winners of the liquor shop licences were selected through a lottery system, and their certificates have been distributed. However, even before the new policy is fully implemented, some licence holders are reportedly facing threats and pressure from local political leaders and liquor syndicates.

In various constituencies, including Palnadu, Visakhapatnam, Kurnool, Anantapur, Vijayawada, Guntur, Sri Satya Sai, and YSR districts, lottery winners have reported being coerced into surrendering a portion of their profits. Several winners allege that they are being asked to hand over up to 20% of their earnings without any investment from the parties making these demands. In some cases, political leaders are reportedly offering substantial sums as "goodwill" to take over the licenses or are demanding a share in the business.

Licence holders have claimed that they are being threatened with the inability to operate their businesses unless they comply with these demands. "We will see how you run the business here," some leaders have allegedly warned.

State government-managed shops to be replaced with privately licensed outlets.



CM instructs officials to protect licencees and ensure smooth implementation of new policy

- Licence winners chosen through a draw of lots
- Winners report being pressured to surrender up to 20% of their profits without any investment.
- Political leaders are allegedly offering money to take over licences or demanding a share of the business.
- New licence holders, especially those inexperienced in the liquor trade, are targeted by syndicates.

This pressure is particularly intense for individuals who are new to the liquor business and have no prior affiliations with established liquor syndicates. These syndicates are reportedly targeting independent license holders, attempting to force them to surrender their licenses or offer a portion of their profits in exchange for control over their operations.

In cities like Vijayawada and Guntur, the amounts being offered by these syndicates are significant, with reports of offers reaching Rs1 crore for each shop in Vijayawada and Rs 85 lakh in Guntur. In some areas, syndicates are even proposing a 10% share of profits without any upfront investment if the licences are surrendered.

share of profits without any upfront investment if the licences are surrendered.

Upon learning of these developments, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has taken the matter seriously. He has received reports from intelligence agencies and the excise department regarding the involvement of local leaders in threatening new license holders. The Chief Minister has issued a stern warning to those involved, stating that the government will not tolerate any form of harassment or coercion directed at license holders.

Continued on Page 2

Heavy rains lash parts of Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Heavy rains lashed several parts of Andhra Pradesh in the wake of a well-marked low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal, which moved from the southeast part of the sea towards the west and northward direction and lay there on Tuesday morning.

The weather system is likely to intensify into a depression and continue to move west-northwards towards north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and adjoining south Andhra Pradesh Coasts in the next two days, said the Meteorological Department in a release on Tuesday.

According to the Meteorological Department, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam are likely to witness vigorous monsoon activity on Tuesday, with fairly widespread rainfall distribution.

A similar weather pattern has been forecast for the Rayalaseema region of the southern state with widespread rainfall.

Dozens of places received heavy rainfall. Kavali in Nellore district recorded a rainfall of 15 cm, followed by Addanki (Bapatla) 14 cm, Kandukur (Nellore) 12 cm, Yanam 9 cm and Atmakur (Nellore) 8 cm, among others in coastal Andhra Pradesh region.

From the Rayalaseema region, Kodur in YSR Kadapa district registered a rainfall of 10 cm, followed by Sullurpeta and Gudur (Tirupati) 7 cm and 6 cm respectively, among others.

Low pressure likely to intensify as depression



Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) noted that parts of West Godavari, Eluru, Krishna and NTR districts are likely to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall on Tuesday.

It predicted a similar weather pattern for Guntur, Bapatla, Palnadu, Prakasam, Nellore, Nandyala, Annamaya, Chittoor, Tirupati and Kurnool districts.

Likewise, squally winds reaching up to 55 km per hour speed are expected along the coast.

APSDMA managing director R Kurmanadh advised people to stay alert and called on fishermen to refrain from venturing into the sea.

Farmer trampled to death by tuskers

PNS ■ RAYACHOTI

A herd of wild elephants trampled a farmer to death at B Vandlapalli village in Peleru mandal of Annamaya district on Tuesday.

According to official sources, the deceased, identified as Chinna Raja Reddy, had cultivated crops on his field when a herd of elephants began destroying them. In an attempt to save his crops, Raja Reddy approached the herd, which consisted of about 10 elephants.

As he tried to drive them away, the elephants suddenly went on a rampage, attacking and trampling him to death.

Local farmers immediately alerted forest officials, who rushed to the spot and began efforts to drive the elephants back into the forest.

3 new judges appointed to AP High Court

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the appointment of three advocates as judges of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh: Maheswara Rao Kuncham alias Kuncham, Thoota Chandra Dhana Sekar alias TCD Sekhar, and Challa Gunaranjan. In a release on Tuesday, the Supreme Court informed that on May 15, 2024, the Chief Justice of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, in consultation with his two senior colleagues, recommended these advocates for the appointment.

As the comments of the Chief Minister and the Governor of Andhra Pradesh have not yet been received, the

Department of Justice has forwarded the recommendation by invoking paragraph 14 of the Memorandum of Procedure. This provision states that if the comments from state constitutional authorities are not received within the prescribed timeframe, it will be presumed that the Governor and the Chief Minister have no additional input on the proposal, allowing the Minister of Law and Justice to proceed accordingly. The Supreme Court's release stated that to ascertain the suitability of the above advocates for elevation to the High Court, consultations were held with colleagues familiar with the affairs of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

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No relief to IAS at CAT

TG bureaucrats told to go to Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IAS officers Vakati Karuna, K. Amrapali, A. Vaniprasad, D. Ronald Ross and G. Srijana had approached the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) seeking cancellation of the transfer orders issued by the Centre asking them to go to Andhra Pradesh on October 9.

The officers sought relief from the orders mandating their transfer between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, claiming that the decisions were made without considering their preferences or the recommendations of the one-man committee.

During the hearing, the CAT made some observations regarding the transfer process and the officers' roles. The CAT said that officers should serve in areas that require their expertise and pointed out the floods in Andhra Pradesh.

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ED attaches Rs 23.54 cr assets

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached movable and immovable properties worth ₹23.54 crore under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, in connection with the misuse of funds in the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) Siemens Project.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, the ED explained that the

APSSDC CASE

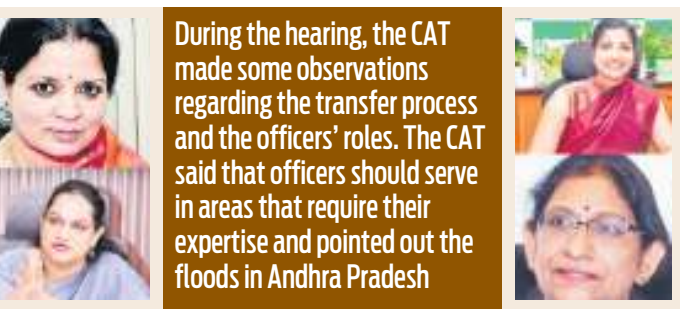
ED attaches Rs 23.54 cr assets

APSSDC Siemens Project was designed to promote skill development and entrepreneurship in Andhra Pradesh. The ED's investigation followed an FIR registered by the AP CID against M/s Designtech Systems Private Limited (DTSP) and others for cheating the Andhra Pradesh Government by diverting and misusing the funds invested in the Siemens project for unrelated purposes.

The ED's investigation revealed that Vikas Vinayak Khanvelkar,

Managing Director of M/s DTSP, Soumyadri Sekhar Bose alias Suman Bose, the former Managing Director of M/s Siemens Industry Software India Pvt. Ltd., and their associates Mukul Chandra Agarwal and Suresh Goyal, were involved in diverting government funds with the help of shell or defunct entities. These funds were siphoned off through complex, multi-layered transactions using bogus invoices under the guise of supplying materials and services.

Continued on Page 2



EC sounds poll bugle

Maha polls on Nov 20; Jharkhand polls on Nov 13, 20

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

November 13 and 20, the Election Commission of India announced on Tuesday.

The votes for the two states will be counted on November 23.

Continued on Page 2

YSRCP offices on closure spree amid exodus of leaders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), already reeling from a severe defeat in the last elections, is now facing another challenge as several of its offices are being closed across various districts.

Before the party could regroup and recover from its electoral loss, this fresh setback is emerging, with local leaders winding up YSRCP offices in multiple areas.

Senior YSRCP leaders, including former MPs and MLAs, have left the party to join either the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) or the Jana Sena Party (JSP). Now, many of these leaders are also closing down the YSRCP offices they had established.

One such instance involves



YSRCP senior leader P. Gowtham Reddy, who had set up the party office at his residence in 2014. Following the electoral defeat, Gowtham Reddy shut down the office and rented out the space. The removal of banners and cutouts of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy came as a shock to local party workers.

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India-Canada ties hit rock bottom

New Delhi strongly rejects Ottawa's fresh charges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India-Canada diplomatic row over the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar escalated further on Tuesday with Ottawa hinting at possible sanctions against India in view of certain findings in the case and New Delhi vehemently trashing the charges.

The Canadian authorities also attempted to link the Bishnoi gang with Indian government agents in carrying out covert operations including violent criminal activities in Canada and claimed to have clear evidence to back the charges.

As the ties between the two countries hit rock bottom, Canadian Foreign Minister



Melanie Joly did not rule out imposing sanctions against India saying "everything is on the table".

In a related development, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke to his British counterpart Keir

Starmer and discussed "developments" related to what the Ottawa described as "targeted campaign against Canadian citizens by agents linked to the government of India".

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7 flights get bomb threats via X



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seven flights, including one bound for the United States, received bomb-threat messages through a social media handle on Tuesday, prompting security agencies to undertake specific counter-terrorist drills at various airports, official sources said.

The threats via microblogging platform X came a day after three international flights originating from Mumbai received bomb threats, causing trouble to hundreds of passengers and airline crew. The messages posted on Monday were declared a hoax.

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SP inaugurates official website for women's safety

PNS ■ ELURU
Eluru District Superintendent of Police, Pratap Shiva Kishore, inaugurated the official website of the Eluru Police Department on Tuesday. The website has been launched to provide comprehensive information focused on women's safety. The website will feature detailed information on cyber fraud, particularly those occurring through social media platforms, and will highlight the awareness programs conducted by the Eluru Police Department to prevent such incidents. It aims to strengthen the relationship between the police and the public by offering easy access to resources. The site will include details of social media platforms associated with the

Eluru district and showcase the good work done by the Eluru District Police. Information regarding public awareness initiatives, such as those conducted through YouTube and other social media platforms, to educate people on cyber-crimes, will also be available. In addition, the website will provide essential details for the public, including information on local police stations, contact details of police officers, and their mobile numbers. It will also serve as a resource for district police personnel by providing necessary information. Present at the event were Additional SP (Admin) N Surya Chandra Rao, Nuzvid DSP Prasad, NIC DIO GVSR Sharma, Ravi Teja, and Eluru District IT in-charge RSI Narendra.



Apartment residents oppose liquor shop

PNS ■ GUNTUR
Residents of local apartments in Tadepalli took to the streets in strong opposition to the establishment of liquor shops in their neighbourhood. Residents of Amaravati Icon and CSR raised slogans and held placards expressing their discontent regarding the opening of liquor shops on CSR Road. They questioned the

authorities on how permission was granted to open a liquor shop in such a densely populated residential area. The residents expressed concerns that the presence of liquor shops could lead to law and order issues, as anti-social elements may congregate there. They demanded that the authorities revoke the permission and ensure that no liquor shop is opened in their locality.

I & PR Minister Kolusu lays foundation for roads

Says 'Palle Panduga' aims at rural development

The villagers brought to the minister's attention the acute drinking water shortage, the poor condition of roads, and clogged drainage systems. In response, Minister Parthasarathi directed Panchayat Raj officials to urgently address the water scarcity issue. He also assured the villagers that new roads would be constructed to replace the damaged ones.



Minister for Housing and I&PR, K Parthasarathi, laid the foundation stone for various development projects at Akkireddigudem village in Musunuru mandal, Nuzvid constituency, on Tuesday. The minister inaugurated the construction of five cement concrete (CC) roads in Akkireddigudem, each road to be built at a cost of Rs 15.50 lakh. During his visit, he interacted with villagers, going door to door to understand their concerns and grievances. The villagers brought to the minister's attention the acute drinking water shortage, the poor condition of roads, and clogged drainage systems. In response, Minister Parthasarathi directed Panchayat Raj officials to urgently address the water scarcity issue. He also assured the villagers that new roads would be constructed to replace the damaged ones. "The objective of organising 'Palle Panduga' is to ensure rural development and provide all necessary facilities to villages. Ministers and public representatives are visiting every village to understand the issues and take immediate steps to resolve them," he remarked. Later, the minister visited the Saibaba temple, where the temple chairman, P Narasimha Rao, handed over a cheque of ₹50,000 to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund as a donation for flood relief efforts.

PNS ■ ELURU
Minister for Housing and I&PR, K Parthasarathi, laid the



Woman killed as scooter rams stationary car

PNS ■ GUNTUR
In a tragic road accident, a young woman was killed when the scooter, which she was riding, rammed a stationary car at Boyapalem village in Nallapadu mandal on the national highway on the outskirts on Tuesday. Police said that the deceased Sheik Mahika (32) was riding a scooter. She rammed a stationary car and suffered a grievous head injury. She died instantaneously. The deceased was a resident of Chinna Bazar in Guntur. The Nallapadu police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem.

20 bus passengers have miraculous escape

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM
As many as 20 passengers travelling in a private travel bus had a miraculous escape when the bus plunged into an irrigation canal at Yerrapota varam village in K Ganga varam mandal in Konaseema district on Tuesday. Police said that the Meghana Travels bus was going to Yanam from Dwaraka Tirumala. The driver lost control over the bus resulting in it veering off the road and plunged into the irrigation canal. All passengers travelling in the bus escaped unhurt.

Ganja saplings seized, 2 arrested

PNS ■ CHITTOOR
The police seized ganja saplings, weighing 25 KGs, at Ramakuppam village and arrested two peddlers. DSP Parthasarathi told the media in Kuppam on Tuesday that on a tip-off the police conducted a raid and arrested two persons Adikeshavulu and Lokesh. The police seized ganja saplings weighing 25 kg from them. They were supplying ganja saplings to some farmers to raise in their fields. The police found that two farmers raised ganja crops in their fields at Pedduru village.

AP govt to ask for fast-track court to try 2 rape cases

PNS ■ AMARAVATI
The Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday said it will write to the High Court for setting up a fast-track court to hear two recent sensational rape cases in the state. State Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha noted that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu took this decision to ensure that the accused persons in the alleged incidents of rape occurred in Sathya Sai and Bapatla districts were punished as soon as possible. On October 12, a gang of five thieves including three minors, raped a woman and her daughter-in-law in Chilamathur mandal of Sri Sathya Sai district, it is alleged. In a previous incident, 21-year-old woman was allegedly raped and murdered at Epurupalem village in Bapatla district, in June. Anitha said these two cases will be handed over to the fast-track court and it will send a message that culprits cannot escape punishment through long-drawn court cases and easily procured bails. Addressing a press conference at the secretariat, Anitha said, "To ensure that the accused persons are punished, the CM has taken a decision. Government will write to the High Court for a fast-track court. This fast-track court is for this (Sri Sathya Sai district) case and another case from Bapatla where a woman was raped and murdered." Police nabbed five people accused in the Sri Sathya Sai district case using technology and by chasing them for about 200 kms in 48 hours, Home Minister said. They were all remanded and one of them had 32 cases - including those of rape and theft - booked against him.

Rs 30 cr for roads and drains in Machilipatnam

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM
Minister for Excise and Mines, Kollu Ravindra, announced that roads and drainage facilities in Machilipatnam town will be developed at a cost of Rs 30 crore. The Minister laid the foundation stone for the construction of an approach road at Tallapalem village in Machilipatnam mandal. This approach road will be constructed at a cost of Rs 38 lakh, utilizing funds from the NREGA grant. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister highlighted that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan have initiated works across the state under the NREGS, with a budget of Rs 4,500 crore. He mentioned that Gram Sabhas were launched across the state on August 23, during which necessary works were identified in the respective Gram Panchayats. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan had previously launched these works at Kankipadu. The government aims to complete all projects by the next Sankranti festival, with plans to reconstruct all roads and drainage systems in the Machilipatnam constituency using the Rs 30 crore budget. The Minister reiterated the target of providing a tap to every household and ensuring road connectivity and drainage facilities in every village. Minister Kollu Ravindra expressed regret over the incomplete roads previously started at Tallapalem Beach. The current project involves constructing a CC road that will be 500 meters long and three and a half meters wide, with a central divider. He recalled that ground levelling work at the beach had previously been carried out at a cost of Rs 3.50 crore. The Minister lamented that the beach has remained closed for the past five years without any development. He added that a programme has been initiated to develop infrastructure at the beach, aiming to transform it into an attractive tourist destination that will provide employment and income to residents.

R&B Minister Venkat not answering my calls: Arvind

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The BJP's Nizamabad MP, Dharmapuri Arvind, alleged that Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy is not answering his phone calls when he called Venkat to speak about roads and bridges in his constituency. Arvind said that Venkat is misleading officials and people regarding development works. He said that he took up the construction of bridges at seven places in Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency and that he made the 2-lane Madhana Nagar ROB 4-lane by spending Rs 93 crore. However, the state government is not giving funds and bills in time although the Centre deposited funds. Arvind asked the state government to explain why it has not allocated Young India Integrated Residential School to Nizamabad district. He said that there is no protection for temples under Congress rule. Telangana will develop only if the BJP comes to power, he said.

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Liquor cartels under TDP control: YSRCP

PNS ■ NELLORE/ VISAKHAPATNAM
The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has strongly criticised the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) coalition for allegedly monopolising the State's liquor industry. YSRCP leaders claim that 90% of the wine shops allocated through the lottery system have gone to individuals associated with the TDP coalition, with the process being overseen by TDP MLAs as part of a deliberate strategy to benefit the party's leaders and their associates. Addressing the media at the party office in Nellore, former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy alleged that the wine shop allocation is controlled by a syndicate dominated by the TDP coalition. He pointed out that this influence extends beyond liquor, affecting sectors like sand, gravel, education, and healthcare. He accused Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of exploiting these resources for personal and political gain, framing the liquor policy to primarily benefit TDP leaders and their supporters. Reddy also claimed that all distilleries in the State are under the control of TDP leaders, leading to the sale of low-quality liquor at cheaper rates, while other varieties are sold at inflated prices. He warned that the rise of illegal liquor outlets, known as belt shops, is becoming a major concern, and suggested that the government might soon introduce home delivery of alcohol, which would further harm the public. He emphasised that the new liquor policy is designed to favour TDP leaders, a fact made clear by the recent wine shop allocations. Reddy contrasted this with the situation under the previous government, where all revenue from liquor sales went directly into the state treasury. Under the current TDP-led administration, however, liquor syndicates are allegedly diverting this revenue for their own benefit, depriving the state of vital funds. In a separate press conference in Visakhapatnam, former minister Gudivada Amarnath echoed these concerns. He highlighted that the majority of wine shops have been allocated to TDP-affiliated individuals, leading to an unchecked rise in alcohol availability, including the opening of more belt shops. Amarnath pointed out that when the YSRCP government came to power in 2019, it closed 43,000 belt shops and reduced the number of wine shops from 4,500 to 2,900 to protect poor families from alcohol-related harm. Amarnath also criticised the TDP's potential plan to introduce a door-to-door liquor delivery scheme, warning that this would worsen the State's growing alcohol problem. He called for the immediate repeal of the current liquor policy, cautioning that if the government failed to act, the public, especially the poor, would protest against its negative impact.

Encourage students to innovate: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh is taking proactive measures to transform the state into a knowledge and innovation hub while simultaneously reducing student dropout rates in government schools. A project-based and peer-to-peer learning system is being established across the country in collaboration with the Agastya International Foundation, which aims to inspire students in the state towards innovation. Under the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu, the Agastya Campus Creativity Lab was established in 1998 on a sprawling 172-acre site in Kuppam. Building on that foundation, efforts will be made to enhance the development of regional science centres in the state. To this end, representation with the Agastya International Foundation, including STEM Labs, Mobile STEM Labs, Motor Bikes Labs, and Young Instructor Leaders. These resources aim to empower students to excel academically and develop a diverse range of skills. The representatives shared insights into their creative learning and innovation processes through a PowerPoint presentation. The foundation's goal is to enhance scientific knowledge, leadership abilities, problem-solving skills, self-confidence, and awareness among students. Agastya International Foundation Chairman Ram G. Raghavan, along with members A. Anjaneyulu, Mukund Jagannath, and C.S. Suresh, as well as CA Pushpa, Chairman of the AP State Council of Higher Education in charge, were present at the meeting. creativity, and confidence among economically disadvantaged students and government school teachers across the country. Minister Nara Lokesh discussed various educational tools that can be set up in collaboration with the Agastya International Foundation, including STEM Labs, Mobile STEM Labs, Motor Bikes Labs, and Young Instructor Leaders. The police achieved a breakthrough in the sensational gang rape of a woman and her daughter-in-law by arresting five persons, including three minor boys. Informing to the media in Hindupur on Tuesday, SP Ratna said that the police arrested five persons, including Nagendra and Pravine and three minor. One more accused in the case is absconding and the police teams are searching for him, the SP added. It may be mentioned here that the five-member gang barged into the house of the victims at Bommanapalli village in Chilamathur mandal in Hindupur constituency in SSS district in the wee hours of Sunday, threatened the two women, they robbed Rs 5,200 from them and fled. Two of the arrested persons were involved in several major criminal incidents including rapes and robberies. Before committing sex-



Minister Nara Lokesh discussed various educational tools that can be set up in collaboration with the Agastya International Foundation, including STEM Labs, Mobile STEM Labs, Motor Bikes Labs, and Young Instructor Leaders

GANG-RAPE CASE

3 minors among 5 accused arrested

PNS ■ ANATAPUR
The police achieved a breakthrough in the sensational gang rape of a woman and her daughter-in-law by arresting five persons, including three minor boys. Informing to the media in Hindupur on Tuesday, SP Ratna said that the police arrested five persons, including Nagendra and Pravine and three minor. One more accused in the case is absconding and the police teams are searching for him, the SP added. It may be mentioned here that the five-member gang barged into the house of the victims at Bommanapalli village in Chilamathur mandal in Hindupur constituency in SSS district in the wee hours of Sunday, threatened the two women, they robbed Rs 5,200 from them and fled. Two of the arrested persons were involved in several major criminal incidents including rapes and robberies. Before committing sexual assault on the two women, the gang destroyed the CCTV cameras on the premises. However, one of the cameras captured the faces of the accused which gave the police vital clues to identify them and arrest them in 48 hours, the SP said. The police are conducting a comprehensive investigation on the heinous crime incident and taking all steps to ensure that the offenders are punished in the court rigorously, the SP said. SP Ratna said that the two rape victims were undergoing treatment in the GGH and they were being extended all needed support. The police produced the two arrested notorious criminals before the media in the media conference.



ACROSS THE STATES



Maha: Man duped of Rs 14 L by cyber fraudsters

Police in Maharashtra's Panvel town has arrested a Delhi-based man who allegedly duped a local resident of Rs 14.2 lakh by impersonating a bank official and offering a personal loan.



One more held in Baba Siddique murder case

The Mumbai police have arrested one more person in connection with the killing of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, officials said on Tuesday.



Passengers praise hygiene, services at Delhi station

In a first of its kind interaction with train passengers, Delhi's Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Sukhvinder Singh held a 'Rail Chaupal' at the New Delhi Railway Station on Tuesday during which he received positive feedback on cleanliness and facilities from dozens of travellers.

INFRA PLANNING IN 27 ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

Goyal launches district master plan under PM GatiShakti

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday launched a district master plan under the PM GatiShakti initiative for infrastructure planning in 27 aspirational districts of the country.



India seals big-ticket deal to procure 31 Predator drones from US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday sealed a mega deal with the US to procure 31 Predator high-altitude long-endurance drones from American defence major General Atomics under the foreign military sales route at a cost of nearly US\$ 4 billion to crank up Indian military's combat prowess along the contested borders with China.



The deal, signed in presence of top defence and strategic brass of India in the national capital, marks a significant upswing in military ties between the two countries, officials said.

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based logistics for the drones through depot-level maintenance, repair and overhaul of the platforms in India.

Last week, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement of the MQ-9B hunter killer' drones.

Besides the main contract, a separate agreement was inked between the defence ministry and General Atomics Global India Pvt Ltd for performance-

sent at the signing ceremony. The drones are being procured at an estimated cost of around US\$ 4 billion, the officials said.

India is acquiring the drones primarily to crank up the surveillance apparatus of the armed forces, especially along the contested frontier with China.

In June last year, the Defence Ministry approved the procurement of the MQ-9B Predator armed drones from

the US under a government-to-government framework.

The MQ-9B drone is a variant of the MQ-9 'Reaper' which was used to launch a modified version of the Hellfire missile that eliminated al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in the heart of Kabul in July 2022.

While the Navy will get 15 Sea Guardian drones, the Indian Air Force and the Army will get eight Sky Guardian drones each.

Murmu calls for deeper economic ties between India, Algeria

PNS ■ ALGIERS

President Droupadi Murmu has called for deeper economic cooperation between India and Algeria, underlining that the African nation's rapid growth and expanding economy offer many opportunities in various sectors.



Industry (FICCI).

The President said Algeria's rapid growth and expanding economy offered many opportunities in various sectors and urged Indian companies to remain invested in the scope the Algerian economy presented, a statement from the President's Office said.

Noting that overall trade between India and Algeria stood at USD 1.7 billion, the President said the economic ties between the two countries have, however, not been able to tap its full potential, adding that India would be happy to share its experiences with its Algerian partners.

BSP to contest on its own in Maha, Jharkhand polls: Mayawati

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Tuesday said that her party will contest on its own in the upcoming state elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand as well as bye-elections in nine assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh.



In a series of posts on X in Hindi, Mayawati welcomed the announcement of the poll schedule and said it is the responsibility of the Election Commission to ensure that the elections are held in the shortest possible time and are free from the curse of money and muscle power.

mission to protect dignity and self-respect inspired by B R Ambedkar.

"The BSP will field its candidates in the by-elections being held on nine assembly seats in UP and will fight this election on its own strength with full preparation and vigour," the former chief minister said in another post.

Assembly polls in Maharashtra will be held in a single phase on November 20.

In Jharkhand, elections will be held in two phases on November 13 and 20, the Election Commission announced on Tuesday. Voting in the bypolls will be held on November 13. The counting of votes will be held on November 23.

The Election Commission announced the bypolls for nine of the 10 vacant seats of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

Dhankhar expresses concern over 'growing threat of demographic disorder'

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Echoing the sentiments of RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday expressed concern over the "growing threat of demographic disorder" in the country, saying it is no less severe in consequences than a nuclear bomb.



The vice president said "demographic dislocation" is turning certain regions into political fortresses, where elections have no real meaning.

"It is alarming to see how some areas have been affected by this strategic shift, turning

them into impenetrable strongholds where democracy loses its essence," he said while

speaking at a programme at the Birla Auditorium in Jaipur.

Addressing the annual Vijayadasami rally of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Nagpur on October 12, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat raised the issue of infiltration from Bangladesh and population imbalance caused by it.

The RSS chief said a "tyrannical fundamentalist" nature exists in Bangladesh and a sword hangs over the heads of minorities, including Hindus.

Enough evidence to prosecute accused, CBI tells court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday informed a Delhi court that there was enough evidence to prosecute the accused persons in the death case connected to the flooding in an Old Rajinder Nagar coaching institute. The civil services aspirants had lost their lives following a torrential downpour in the national capital leading to the flooding at the coaching institute.

Principal District and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandra heard the submissions of the CBI, which urged the court to take cognisance of a chargesheet filed in the case.

Among others, the CBI has chargesheeted the CEO of Rau's IAS Study Circle Abhishek Gupta and its coordinator Deshpal Singh.

The defence counsel, however, opposed the CBI submissions, claiming the chargesheet was incomplete.

Odisha to seal borders when kharif paddy procurement begins

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Tuesday said it will seal borders with neighbouring states when it begins paddy procurement for the kharif season next month.

The decision was taken during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, attended by

ministers and departmental secretaries.

The state plans to procure paddy at Rs 3,100 per quintal, fulfilling a promise made by the BJP before the elections. With the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy set at Rs 2,300, the state will provide an additional Rs 800 per quintal as a bonus at government mandis, an official said.

India under Modi has made its people 'vishwaguru' in hunger: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge slammed the BJP-led Centre on Tuesday over the rising inflation and said India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made its people "vishwaguru" in hunger. Kharge's remarks came following a rise in retail inflation and as India occupied the 105th place in the global hunger index.



"The situation of inflation is such that despite the provision of ration to the poor for food security, Modiji has made the people of the country

'Vishwaguru' in hunger! India has come to the 105th place in the Global Hunger Index," the Congress chief said in a post in Hindi on X.

He said retail inflation rose to 5.49 per cent in September, the highest in nine months. It was at 3.65 per cent in August, Kharge noted. He also shared a picture showing high prices of vegetables.

"In the last 10-and-a-half years, Modiji has not allowed

any let up in the BJP's 'loot' even for 10-and-a-half seconds! The politics of diversion will not work any longer. The public will vote on basic issues," Kharge said.

In the 2024 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 105th out of the 127 countries with sufficient data to calculate the 2024 GHI scores. With a score of 27.3 in the 2024 Global Hunger Index, India has a level of hunger that is serious.

TMC slams EC for not announcing Basirhat bypolls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Tuesday slammed the Election Commission for not announcing the dates of the bypoll in West Bengal's Basirhat, alleging the poll panel was deploying a "delaying tactic" at the behest of the BJP.

The seat fell vacant after the death of the party MP SK Nurul Islam due to cancer on September 25 at the age of 61.

On Monday, the Election Commission announced dates for assembly polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, and by-elections to 47 assembly seats and the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat.

'India symbolizes pluralism, democracy while Pakistan reminds world of terrorism'

PNS ■ UNITED NATIONS

India symbolises pluralism, diversity and democracy while Pakistan reminds the world of terrorism, parochialism and persecution, New Delhi said in a strong response to Islamabad in the UN.

Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of India to the UN Eidos Mathew Punnoose exercised India's right of reply against Pakistan at the Joint General Debate on decolonisation here Monday.

Punnoose said Pakistan continues to abuse the UN forum by peddling "falsehoods and baseless accusations", which he added is not surprising given Pakistan's past conduct. "India symbolises plural-

ism, diversity and democracy. In contrast, Pakistan reminds the world of terrorism, parochialism and persecution. Religious and ethnic minorities

Punnoose said Pakistan continues to abuse the UN forum by peddling "falsehoods and baseless accusations", which he added is not surprising given Pakistan's past conduct



and their places of worship are targeted and vandalised on a regular basis. India's strong retort came after Pakistan raked the issue of Jammu and

Kashmir during the debate. "It is important for Pakistan to first look inwards and set own house in order instead of meddling in the internal affairs

of neighboring countries," he said. "The world is witness to the divisive activities that Pakistan tries to undertake day in and day out. India would like to stress that our foundations are built on the enduring pillar of democratic values, unlike Pakistan's."

He said that given their tainted democratic record, Pakistan considers real democratic exercises as sham, as reflected in their statement.

"All countries speak from their experience - sham elections, incarceration of opposition leaders and suppression of political voices are what Pakistan is familiar with. It is natural that Pakistan must be disappointed to see real democracy at work," Punnoose said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

souring relations

New Delhi dismisses the Canadian claims of Indian involvement in the Nijjar case as politically driven

The already tense relations between India and Canada have hit a new low, with both countries expelling each other's diplomats. New Delhi expelled six Canadian diplomats, including Acting High Commissioner Stewart Ross Wheeler after Ottawa's expulsion of 'targeted' Indian diplomats. These diplomats were allegedly involved in 'violent criminal activity in Canada.'



India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has responded with forceful rebuttal, describing the allegations as 'preposterous imputations.' The MEA criticised Canada's decision to expel the Indian diplomats, dismissing the accusations as politically motivated and linked to the Trudeau government's domestic challenges.

India's national security. It is rather unfortunate that two friendly countries should snap diplomatic relations with each other. Justin Trudeau's electoral compulsions, with elections just a year away, could be behind his recent actions. Justin Trudeau's perceived support for Sikh separatists, particularly those advocating for a Khalistan, stems from a complex blend of domestic political considerations and Canada's multicultural policies.

The untold story of Captain Rameshwar Thapa's heroics



ASHOK K MEHTA

Capt Rameshwar Thapa, Nepal's first civilian pilot to command a Russian Mi17 helicopter, played a pivotal role during the country's Maoist insurgency

When you think of rotary wing aircraft in Nepal, some names will crop up: Tula Bahadur Thapa, Narain Singh Pun, Madan KC, all Army Colonels, but among civilians a pioneer is Capt Rameshwar Thapa, the first Russian Mi17 helicopter pilot who trained the then Royal Nepal Army on Mi17 and was later requisitioned by Security Forces during the Maoist People's War. Let's call the Captain, RT who has written the English version of his book in Nepali, Barud Mathi Uddaa titled Into The FIRE, a book 'based on hard facts'. It encapsulates the Maoist insurgency that aimed to capture the state: they came perilously close to doing it. But for RT's heroic efforts, on April 8, 2005 in saving Khara, the epic battle waged by Maoists, by flying in 20 Special Force Rangers after an SOS- 'if no reinforcements in 20-30 minutes, Khara will go. Despite his helicopter being hit by Maoists on surrounding hills he made a second attempt in a vertical descent to land reinforcements at base camp.



the humanitarian angle of saving lives and security posts at great personal risk. RT turns out to be a cat with nine lives having taken numerous hits and a life-threatening crash landing near Everest Base Camp. Initially, he joined Everest Air which was regularly supplying helicopters to the police as they had none; later, he flew for the Armed Police Force and RNA. King Gyanendra who had usurped power first in 2002 and done a coup in 2005, did not allow the RNA to aid or assist the police which suffered on account of it. He did not even allow PM GP Koirala to use it to break the siege of the Holleri post when 76 policemen were taken hostage. Koirala had to resign but Maoists but Rangers saved the day. At the time, I had written reams on the first and second Khara battles, describing Khara II's criticality. RT rightly calls Khara the turning point, for soon after, their defeat at Khara Maoists sued for peace: choosing ballot over bullet. They signed the 12-point agreement in New Delhi in November 2005 which led to the political transformation of Nepal - restoration of democracy and mainstreaming of Maoists.

the atrocities committed by both sides. RT has narrated several human interest stories like once evacuating a female Maoist who later became a minister and married a fellow Maoist minister. There is a conversation with elders in a village who tell him that they prefer to give their daughters to RNA rather than letting Maoists take them away to join the movement. His underground life at Oasis Hotel in Nepalgunj is cloak-and-dagger stuff. RT has not shied away from writing about RNA's November 2004 Pandaun, Kailali 'propaganda' attack under the lyricist Divisional Commander, Gen Rajendra Thapa. The Army claimed it had killed 200 to 300 Maoists whereas only 4 to 5 bodies were found (Maoists had an honour code not to leave behind any bodies). One of the Army's self-afflicted disasters was enacted at Pili in August 2004 when an Engineer Regiment was ordered to crash-build a road for King Gyanendra's visit. Their prize was a huge cache of explosives stored at Pili for road construction. Nearly 160 soldiers were killed as RT conducted casualty evacuation flights. Elsewhere he mentions current President Ramchandra Poudel writing an article in Kantipur



RT HAS NARRATED SEVERAL HUMAN INTEREST STORIES LIKE ONCE EVACUATING A FEMALE MAOIST WHO LATER BECAME A MINISTER AND MARRIED A FELLOW MAOIST MINISTER

PICTALK



An oriental pied hornbill at Ponitora Wild Life Sanctuary, in Morigaon

PTI

The invisible battle for mental health in India

Mental health remains an afterthought in our healthcare narrative. The true healing encompasses both body and mind



KAVITA KABIRA

As a psychologist, I've seen how health in India isn't just a battle of the body—it's a struggle of the mind. Behind every disease is a person dealing with fear, frustration and, at times, loneliness. Whether in rural areas, where diseases like tuberculosis persist or in urban centres where lifestyle illnesses are on the rise, the emotional toll is often invisible but deeply felt. In rural India, patients face challenges that go beyond medical diagnoses. I remember a man from a small village battling tuberculosis, but what weighed on him most wasn't just his illness—it was the isolation. He felt forgotten and cut off from the world because healthcare facilities were far away, and his family didn't know how to support him. This emotional isolation is something many rural patients experience, and it can be as damaging as their physical symptoms, compounding their sense of hopelessness. In cities like Gurgaon, the struggles are different but equally pro-



found. I think of Anjali, a young woman overwhelmed by anxiety. To the outside world, she seemed to have it all—a great job, a busy social life, and a bright future. But inside, she was spiralling. She hesitated for months before seeking help, afraid that admitting to her struggles would make her appear weak. This fear of judgment keeps many people from asking for help, and it's heartbreaking to see how common this is in urban environments. Mental health remains an afterthought in our healthcare system. We focus on physical symptoms—treating heart disease, diabetes, and other

conditions—but the emotional weight people carry is often ignored. I've seen people suffer for years in silence, feeling their emotional pain isn't valid because it can't be measured like a physical illness. There's an urgent need for change. India's healthcare system mirrors this divide. In cities, private care offers options, but mental health services are still limited and expensive. In rural areas, mental health is rarely even discussed. Socioeconomic barriers, especially for women, make it even harder to access mental health care. Women often put their health—both emotional and physical—on the back burner,

prioritising their families' needs over their own. One of my patients, a mother of two, delayed seeking help for her anxiety for years. She was exhausted, overwhelmed, and losing her sense of self. But like so many women, she felt guilty for even considering that her health deserved attention. This is a common story—too many women in India silently endure mental health struggles, dismissing their needs as unimportant, further isolating themselves in the process. We need to change this narrative. Mental health is not a luxury or a sign of weakness. It is an integral part of overall well-being. We must make mental health care as important as physical health in our conversations and our healthcare system. Only then can we address the full scope of health challenges in India—because real healing isn't just about the body; it's about the mind too. (The writer is Psychologist and founder - Kavita Kabira wellness clinic; views are personal)

RTI POWER FADES

Madam — It is really unfortunate that the RTI Act, which came into effect in 2005, promising a new era in transparency in government functioning, has almost died its own death, with the executive not showing any keenness to infuse a fresh life into it. The Act has slowly weakened due to unwarranted amendments, overreach of the executive and restrictive judicial interpretations. Lack of adequate infrastructure and shortage of staff in government offices to deal with RTI applications is another cause for worry. Ever since its ratification, several attempts have been made to deliberately dilute this law and hamper access to information by the public.

The proposed amendments were dropped due to widespread public defiance. In the administration and functioning of a democratic government, the right to access and seek information is a sine qua non for transparency, openness and accountability. Unless citizens are empowered with the right to ask questions, democracies cannot and will not survive. The need of the hour is to promote the free flow of information to limit tyrannical tendencies and reinforce democratic ideals.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

RAILWAY SAFETY NEGLECTED

Madam — Gone are the days when a Railway minister used to apologise for a train accident and even tender his resignation for it. Now, it is too much to expect even an explanation for the snail's pace at which the Train Collision Avoidance System is being installed and the lack of manpower that makes even loco pilots do the extra shifts. In such a scenario, there is no wonder why train accidents have become a regular event in our country. Train Collision Avoidance System, which was later renamed as Kavach, is an automatic train protection system that helps prevent collisions if two trains are on the same tracks. Senior railway officials said that a field trial was

Peacekeepers under attack



Just a week ago, Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz announced that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been banned from entering Israel, accusing him of 'supporting' Hamas, Hezbollah,

Houthis and Iran. Now a new order has been issued from Tel Aviv, which says that all UN peacekeepers should be removed from Lebanon. Israel is accusing without any proof that Hezbollah is using peacekeepers as human shields.

On the contrary, Israel has been continuously attacking the peacekeepers since last week. Dozens of peacekeepers have been injured so far. UNIFIL, a mission of about 9,500 soldiers of various nationalities, was created after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978. It is currently tasked with monitoring the ceasefire that ended the 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006. Israel's actions have been criticised by the whole world, except the US.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshepur

started for Kavach in 2016. But it has been installed only in less than 1,500 km of tracks out of the total 70,000 km covered by the Indian Railways across the country. That means this lifesaving device has so far been placed in only a little over 2 per cent of railway tracks in eight years after its field trials! An RTI reply says that of 1,27,644 sanctioned posts of loco pilots and assistant loco pilots, 18,766-nearly 15 per cent - were vacant as of March 1 this year. Indian Railways have been playing with our lives by not filling up vacant posts and by forcing their personnel, even loco pilots, to overwork. How can a loco pilot remain alert if he has to do extra shifts?

Sujit De | Kolkata

LAW AND ORDER CRISIS

Madam — The shooting of Baba Siddiqui could not have come at a worse time for the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra, as elections to the assembly are just around the corner. The opposition has been handed over an issue of

law and order in the state which is certainly going to be used as ammunition against the government in the electoral campaigning. There is no doubt this issue will resonate with the people of the state. If important political leaders and ex-ministers are not safe, what hope is there for the common citizen? Another disturbing fact is that the alleged kingpin is over-seeding operations from jail. With the right connections, jails seem to have become a holiday resort with all facilities available, like cell phones and wi-fi. The assailants are said to be in the ages of 19-21, and another one is supposedly said to be a minor. The lack of education and scarcity of jobs play their part in getting the young people sucked into the criminal world. Usually, the criminals come from the Northern Hindi belt. Those in charge of the states must find ways and means to stop the young people from entering the world of crime.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN CLEANLINESS AND SPIRITUALITY

The connection between a clean space and a peaceful mind is undeniable



RAVI VALLURI

When I recall our college days, particularly the hostel rooms, it takes me on a nostalgic trip. The days were full of fun and frolic, books scattered around, beer and rum bottles lying randomly, with cigarette butts strewn rather carelessly. The rooms were full of stench.

Most of the guys would ogle, there was no Google back then, at the girls. Posters of Pink Floyd, the Beatles, and Led Zeppelin populated the grubby and unwashed walls of the rooms. The politically inclined would paste large printed pictures of Che Guevara, Marx and Lenin among others, professing their ideological baggage unequivocally.

Some rooms were relatively cleaner and tidily kept. In our hail-fellow-well-met attitude we ended up ostracising such students. But they were our Gurus during examination times, much to their chagrin. A close friend had put up a poster which read: "Cleanliness is the sign of a sick mind."

His room was particularly unclean and stained. Cleanliness is both the abstract state of being clean and free from dirt, and the process of achieving and maintaining that state. However, to my mind cleanliness and spirituality are intertwined like Siamese twins. The human mind normally slips into a state of meditation and involuntarily has a spiritual experience at places which are relatively clean. Cleanliness is positively next to godliness.

India has of late embarked upon a major cleanliness drive where villages, bijou towns, cities, rivers, among others, places of historical importance and important religious places are being refurbished. This is indeed a positive statement made by the government. A gurdwara is the place of worship for Sikhs. People from all faiths and those who do not pro-



fess any faith too, are welcomed in Sikh gurdwaras. To me gurdwaras are among the cleanest spots in the country and it is a lesson in humility to observe how the devout keep it absolutely spick and span. The mind gravitates to the pristine spirit and listens to the soulful and mellifluous Gurubani being sung. The human mind, which is normally canonaded by innumerable thoughts, gradually settles down and is at rest and peace.

It would be interesting to mention that Sri Harmandir Sahib and Sri Darbar Sahib are informally referred to as the Golden Temple. Guru Ram Das constructed the Golden Temple in 1577. He was the fourth Guru in the pantheon of Sikh Gurus. A Sikh friend mentioned that a gurdwara is a community asset and serviced by unpaid and committed volunteers, those who perform seva from the kitchen to the shoe rack.

Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of peace and non-violence, championed the cause of truth only as he could. His autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, like his life, documents every aspect where he does not disseminate anything. During my days of quotidian drinking, I drank heavily and remained inebriated. In that state of arrogance and hubris, I walked into the holy precincts of the Golden Temple carrying a packet of Wills Navy Cut. The act was certainly sacrilegious. For perpetrating this sinful act, I could have been trolled on social media. Today, I regret the mistake committed and apologise sincerely from the depths of my heart. I am sober today because of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and have given up drinking, smoking and eating non-vegetarian fare. The twisted personality in me is making amends and I hope those afflicted with these vices seek the grace of a Guru to extricate themselves from this cesspool of negativity and embark upon the voyage to discover the quintessential quality of cleanliness and spirituality.

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

Migration issue polarises Canada ahead of 2025 election

Canada is struggling to reconcile the benefits of foreign influx with stagnant wages, strained services and a housing crisis; analysis by AMAL CHANDRA and AJAY P KARUVALLY

Canada has recently cut down on international student permits and tightened eligibility for work permits in a bid to cut down on the number of temporary residents. As the federal election approaches in October 2025, immigration remains the most contentious issue in Canadian politics. "Immigration is an advantage for our economy — but when bad actors abuse the system and take advantage of students, we crack down." Said Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in a post on X. However, things are a little more complicated. Canada presents a unique case of population dynamics, with rapid growth despite record-low birth rates. Between 2023 and 2024, Canada's population surged by 3.2 per cent, outpacing even some African nations known for their high population growth. While the population is increasing rapidly, the total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.33 children per woman in 2022 was the lowest in Canadian history. Canada's population growth, despite a very low TFR, is a testament to the power of immigration. In 2023, 97.6 per cent of the growth in the Canadian population came through immigration.



This reliance on immigrants is a long-standing strategy to offset the country's ageing population. While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed population growth to just 0.4 per cent in 2021, immigration quickly rebounded, fuelling a rapid recovery in population growth. A significant portion of Canada's immigrants come from India, making up 10.8 per cent of all immigrants in 2023. The proportion of Indians among all the immigrant groups entering the country has increased from 9.6 per cent between 1991 and 2000, to 18.6 per cent between 2016 and 2021. Projections for the period between 2022 and 2026 suggest this trend will continue to accelerate.

Canada's Immigration Dilemma: Canada's immigration system comprises four main programs: economic, family, refugee, and temporary work. The first three lead to permanent residency, while temporary workers must follow specific pathways with quotas and criteria to attain permanent residency. The preferred route for international students is the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which is issued to foreign students who have completed a diploma or degree at a Canadian institution. This permit allows them to qualify for permanent residency programs. While all immigration programs have grown, the 127 per cent surge in international student permits issued in 2023 compared to 2006 is particularly remarkable. A 2015 study showed that between 20 per cent and 27 per cent of international students transitioned to permanent residency within ten years of receiving their first study permit. This conversion rate is likely even higher in more recent years, reflecting the growing appeal of Canada as a destination for long-term settlement through the student migration route.

Economic Growth or Illusion? The influx of immigrants and their economic activity has fuelled Canada's GDP growth (1.8 per cent average from 2000 to 2023), but population growth is masking underlying economic challenges. The GDP per capita rate for the same period from 2000 to 2023 is only



CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM COMPRISES FOUR MAIN PROGRAMS: ECONOMIC, FAMILY, REFUGEE, AND TEMPORARY WORK. THE FIRST THREE LEAD TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY, WHILE TEMPORARY WORKERS MUST FOLLOW SPECIFIC PATHWAYS WITH QUOTAS AND CRITERIA TO ATTAIN PERMANENT RESIDENCY

0.7 per cent, among the lowest in the G7. The Canadian economy and the living standards of its population have largely stagnated over the last decade.

While immigrants are contributing to economic growth, the GDP per capita rates are declining. Many new immigrants earn less than the national average, and there are doubts about their ability to achieve upward mobility as rapidly as past generations of immigrants, especially given that the majority are temporary residents.

The Government's Immigration Gamble: To course-correct a stagnating economy and compensate for poor growth rates, Canadian policymakers have made a bet on immigration. By letting in massive numbers of permanent and temporary residents, Canada has prioritised short-term growth, in hopes this can translate to a sustainable long-term growth strategy through the upward mobility of the recently introduced immigrant cohorts. While it may be too early to say this is not working, Canadian public opinion against immigration is at an all-time low. Many Canadians feel the rapid influx of immigrants is exacerbating critical issues like the housing shortage and the strain on social services, including healthcare and emergency response. Despite placing their hopes on immigration, the government has failed to make parallel investments in infrastructure to support both immigrants and the existing population.

Wages in Canada have struggled to keep pace with inflation and there is rising concern among Canadians that immigrants are

suppressing wages. Although evidence suggests that immigrants have little to no impact on the average wages of native workers, the perception of such effects tends to fuel stronger anti-immigration sentiments. Corporations, however, have capitalised on this dynamic, employing temporary workers, including international students, in low-wage, precarious jobs. The promise of permanent residency keeps them in the system, even when working conditions are poor.

For corporations, this represents a windfall of cheap labour. Coincidentally, working these low-paying jobs means the immigrants are unlikely to undergo the upward social mobility the government is hoping they would. Rising Hostility and Public Sentiment As frustrations over the government's immigration policies mount, this frustration is being increasingly manifested as resentment toward immigrants themselves. Public sentiment has noticeably shifted in recent years, with more Canadians expressing negative views toward international students and other immigrants. While this is hard to quantify and prove, public sentiment analysis using machine learning models on social media platforms like Reddit provides a useful indication.

We analysed all the comments under posts containing the word "international students" in the r/Canada subreddit (community) from 2010 to 2022. While the r/Canada subreddit is not in any way a reflection of Canadian society, it could be a fair representation of a microcosm of Canadian centrist views on immi-

gration. Till 2015, There was minimal discussion or negative sentiments related to international students (see figure below). Starting from around 2015, the number of negative comments saw a sharp rise. This trend peaks significantly after 2020, indicating a growing negative discourse, especially in recent years. The number of positive comments seems to plateaued after 2017. Although positive sentiment persists, sentiment analysis reveals a shift in public discourse toward increasingly negative views on the broader issue of international students in recent years.

Conclusion: A Broken System For many international students and temporary immigrants, these growing negative sentiments could lead to increased hostility and more barriers to integration. Instances of food bank usage, cultural misunderstandings, and economic struggles may further inflame these tensions. Canada's immigration system, which lacks a strategic vision, seems to benefit neither Canadian citizens nor immigrants.

Without meaningful reforms, only corporations exploiting cheap labour will see long-term gains, while social unrest and economic stagnation will continue to grow. The future of Canada's immigration policy hinges on the ability of the government and its citizens to address the current challenges and find a path forward that benefits all residents.

(Chandra is an author, policy analyst and columnist and Ajay P Karuvally is a Research Fellow at The International Institute of Migration and Development; views are personal)

The divisive legacy of British colonialism: A persistent threat to India's unity

Politicians continue to exploit social divisions for electoral gains, while foreign forces seek to undermine India's unity

The legacy of British colonialism in India remains a contentious issue, with far-reaching consequences that continue to impact the country's social fabric. In the contemporary context, this can be seen in the practice of politics by the opposition parties, particularly the Indian National Congress (INC).



SHIV PRAKASH

The colonial era strategically exploited India's inherent social and cultural diversities, creating fault lines that persist today. These divisions, crafted to serve the interests of the British Empire, have become entrenched in India's societal landscape, posing a significant challenge to national unity. Post-1857, British authorities, scholars, and missionaries collaborated to divide Dalits, tribals and Muslims

independence. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently highlighted Congress's departure from its founding principles, embracing leftist ideologies instead. Modi cited Congress's original stance on issues like Swadeshi, Swavalamban, and Panchayat Raj, and Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to religious conversion and cow slaughter. Gandhi's post-1920 emphasis on eradicating untouchability, casteism, alcoholism, and women's oppression, and promoting national unity, has given way to divisive rhetoric. Congress's current leadership, exemplified by Rahul Gandhi, has strayed from these ideals. Gandhi's recent US visit sparked controversy, as he claimed Sikhs face identity crises in India, despite no evi-

dence. His comments fueled separatist sentiments among Khalistani supporters, echoing the tactics employed by British colonialists. Meanwhile, in Sikh communities, Max Arthur Macauliffe sowed seeds of separation, as detailed in Khushwant Singh's "The Sikh Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors." These foreign interventions fabricated logic, distorted literature, and spread misinformation to execute their divide-and-rule policy. Gandhi's stance resonates with the British-era concept that India is not a nation but a union of states. This contradicts the ancient Indian ethos, affirming India's nationhood. The Vedas proclaim, "Yayam Rashtra Jagryam Purahitah" (We are the guardians of the

nation). Even former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's wish to have his ashes immersed in the Ganges reflects his devotion to Mother India. The British exploited these divisions, nurturing enduring fault lines evident in the Direct Action orchestrated by the Muslim League, resulting in the brutal massacre of 16,000 Hindus in Calcutta alone. Notable figures like Jaipal Singh Munda and Jogendra Nath Mandal eventually broke away from the Muslim League, recognising the sinister intentions. Mandal resigned from the Pakistan government and returned to India, highlighting the atrocities faced by Dalits and tribals. Today, India must recognise and learn from this history,

acknowledging the artificial divisions created by British colonialism and guarding against similar tactics employed by contemporary forces seeking to exploit these fault lines for political gain. Citizens and political parties must remain vigilant, prioritising national unity over sectarian interests. The 1946 Jharkhand, Chota Nagpur Pakistan Conference and Jogendra Nath Mandal's alliance with the Muslim League exemplified this strategy. British authorities fueled fears among Dalits and tribals, claiming the "Hindu Raj" would oppress them. This manipulation ignored the historical social cohesion and shared struggles of India's diverse communities. Mahatma Gandhi's vision for

a unified India contrasts sharply with the divisive agenda of some contemporary politicians, who seek to resurrect the British-era fault lines. Gandhi's emphasis on eradicating social evils and promoting national unity has given way to identity politics and vote bank manipulation. India's democratic fabric demands that citizens and leaders recognise and resist these divisive forces, promoting national unity and social cohesion. The country must acknowledge its complex history and address the lingering consequences of colonialism. By doing so, India can overcome the artificial divisions imposed upon it and forge a path toward true unity and progress. Despite progress, India faces

significant challenges in overcoming the legacy of colonialism. Politicians continue to exploit social divisions for electoral gains, while foreign forces seek to undermine India's unity. The rise of social media has amplified divisive rhetoric, making it easier to spread misinformation and fuel tensions. The divisive legacy of British colonialism remains a pressing concern for India. By acknowledging this history and resisting divisive forces, India can build a more unified future. Citizens must prioritise national interests over sectarian agendas, and leaders must work toward inclusive governance.

(The writer is National Joint General Secretary, Organisation BJP; views are personal)

MORE GLAMOUR, MORE DRAMA, MORE BHAVNA

The glitz and glamour return as Bhavna Panday, Maheep Kapoor, Neelam Kothari, and Seema Sajdeh light up the screen again in *Fabulous Lives vs Bollywood Wives Season 3*, premiering on October 18. This time, the iconic foursome will welcome new faces from Delhi: Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, Shalini Passi and Kalyani Saha Chawla. As the highly anticipated season approaches, Bhavna Panday, wife of actor Chunky Panday and mother to Bollywood actress Ananya Panday, reflects on her journey through the world of reality television.

"When I first got the show, I was really nervous," Bhavna recalls. "It was the first time Karan (Johar), the girls and I were doing something like this. I wasn't playing a character; I was presenting my real self and my family, which made me cautious and worried about how people would perceive me." Bhavna joked about her collaboration with filmmaker Karan Johar, saying, "You could say I debuted with Karan Johar," laughing at the unexpected path her career has taken.

Talking about her dynamic with the other women, Bhavna shares, "Season 3 feels different. We've all grown more comfortable with each other and the cameras. Our friendships are so natural and real that it trans-

lates effortlessly on screen. With each season, our bond only strengthens."

With the growing popularity of the show, Bhavna admits she has become more at ease in front of the camera. "In the beginning, I was conscious—not so much about what I was saying, but how it would come across. Now, with this season, I feel much more confident. I've become comfortable in my own skin and have allowed myself to open up more."

Known for her grace and authenticity, Bhavna embraces a more relaxed approach. "I'm not as concerned about what others think anymore. I just want to continue being myself with more confidence." In previous seasons, Bhavna wowed fans with her natural beauty regimen, incorporating organic products and face yoga into her routine. As *Season 3* kicks off, audiences are excited to see her shine even brighter, embracing her true self while balancing her roles as a public figure, wife and mother.

Fabulous Lives vs Bollywood Wives Season 3 promises to deliver more glamour, drama, and, above all, Bhavna Panday at her most confident yet.



what's brewing?

Vikrant Massey on portraying a serial killer in *Sector 36*

Vikrant Massey, known for his ability to transform into complex characters, once again showcased his versatility in *Sector 36*, where he took on the chilling role of a serial killer. With each performance, Massey brings a new dimension to his craft, and his portrayal in *Sector 36* has left a lasting impression on audiences. Despite his usual dedication to fully embodying his characters, Vikrant approached this role with a heightened sense of caution, ensuring that the darkness of the character didn't seep into his personal life. In a recent interview, Vikrant opened up about the emotional toll his role in *Sector 36* had on him. "There were moments during the shoot where I felt an intense physical reaction. My hands and feet would go cold, not because I was unprepared, but due to the heavy emotional weight of the scenes I was performing. Some scenes offered a chance to explore a deeper, darker side of myself, and that really stayed with me," he revealed.



Reflecting on how previous roles shaped his approach to this challenging character, Vikrant shared, "My past experiences in films like *A Death In The Gunj* and *Love*

Hostel really took a toll on my mental and emotional well-being. So, when I signed on for *Sector 36*, I made a conscious decision to handle it differently. I told myself, 'Work hard, but don't let this character consume you. Focus on your well-being.' That mindset helped me stay grounded throughout the shoot." Shooting away from home added another layer of difficulty for the actor. He noted, "Being away from my family made the experience more isolating. After a long day of shooting, instead of returning home, I was going back to an empty hotel room, which can be quite overwhelming. There were times on set where I felt a real sense of fear, my hands would go cold, not out of nervousness but because of the intensity of what I was portraying. That's why I was firm about not carrying the character's energy with me when I left the set each day." *Sector 36* recently premiered at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, where Vikrant received praise for his haunting performance. Coming off the success of *12th Fail*, Massey is continuing his winning streak. Fans and critics alike have lauded his work in *Sector 36* and he's already preparing for his next project, *The Sabarmati Report*, with anticipation running high.

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3's title track gets International twist



rhythms, resulting in a unique sonic experience. Kartik Aaryan, who once again leads the charge as Rooh Baba, delivers flawless dance moves with his signature swagger, setting the stage for what is sure to become an instant fan favourite. His new gliding dance steps, paired with his electrifying presence, add even more excitement to the song. The music is a blend of modern and traditional, with Tanishk Bagchi handling the remix magic, while the original composition is courtesy of Pritam, whose work has already made the *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* soundtrack legendary. The track also features the unmistakable voice of Neeraj Shridhar, a staple of the franchise, alongside Pitbull and Diljit Dosanjh, creating a seamless fusion of cultures and beats.

Following the overwhelming success of the *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3* trailer, the makers have just unveiled a teaser for the film's highly anticipated title track, leaving fans in awe. In a game-changing collaboration, T-Series, led by Bhushan Kumar, has brought together global music sensation Pitbull—also known as Mr. Worldwide—and Punjabi superstar Diljit Dosanjh to create an electrifying song for the much-awaited Diwali release.

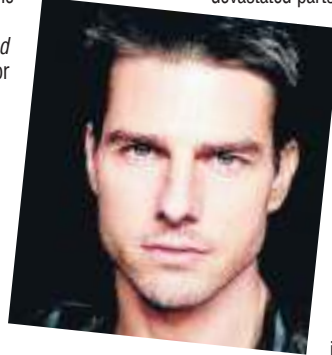


This title track promises to merge Bollywood's high-octane energy with international

Directed by Anees Bazmee and spearheaded by Bhushan Kumar, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3* continues the legacy of the horror-comedy hit series. With a star-studded cast including Kartik Aaryan, Vidya Balan, Madhuri Dixit, and Triptii Dimri, the film is poised to deliver both chills and laughs. As the buzz builds around the title track, fans can hardly wait for its full release tomorrow! Mark your calendars—*Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3* is all set for a grand Diwali release on November 1, 2024, bringing you a perfect mix of spooky fun and entertainment!

Tom Cruise set to return to USA after 5 years in UK

After spending the past five years in the UK working on the *Mission: Impossible* films, Tom Cruise is preparing to make his long-awaited return to the United States. The Hollywood megastar, who had made London his home during the filming of *Mission: Impossible—Dead Reckoning Parts I and II*, is excited to reunite with his son Connor and friends in the U.S. Cruise had been living in Britain throughout his extensive filming schedule, even investing in a luxurious penthouse in central London. Now that production on the *Dead Reckoning* sequel has wrapped, he's ready to head back to the States. Recently spotted boarding a helicopter in Battersea, London, Cruise bid farewell to his British film crew, marking the end of his time in the UK for now. A source close to the actor shared, "The UK has been Tom's base for the *Dead Reckoning* films and the longer he stayed, the more he fell in love with the country. But now that the sequel is finished, he's excited to return to the U.S. to be closer to his son



and friends." Cruise's return coincides with the aftermath of Hurricane Milton, which has caused significant damage across Florida. He owns an apartment in Clearwater. The storm has devastated parts of the state, leaving many homes destroyed and millions of residents displaced. Cruise, who has owned his Clearwater apartment since 2016 due to its proximity to Scientology's international headquarters, was reportedly concerned about the hurricane's impact on his property. While reflecting on his time in the UK, Cruise expressed his affection for the country, telling, "I spend a lot of time in Britain and it's not just for work; I genuinely love being here." Though the actor is looking forward to returning to the U.S., there's no doubt he'll be back in the UK when the next *Mission: Impossible* project comes calling.

Raj Kundra takes legal action over defamatory media coverage!

Raj Kundra has filed a formal police complaint following defamatory claims made against him in a news article and a YouTube channel, which linked him to an illegal immigration case involving Riya Barade. The Juhu Police Station has registered a case against the authors of these reports under Section 356(3) of the Bharuaya Nyay Sanhita, 2023. The complaint, filed based on court orders, aims to address what Kundra describes as deliberate attempts to tarnish his reputation. Kundra expressed his frustration, stating, "I have been compelled by the media to take this step. On multiple occasions, they have tarnished my image by publishing false and defamatory statements. Despite sending takedown notices and giving them the opportunity to retract, no action was taken. My matter is subjudice, I have been fighting in court for my

discharge. It's been three years in which three judges have changed. Whilst it's frustrating I have full faith in the law. I don't deserve to be pronounced guilty in a trial by the media." He emphasised that his decision to escalate the matter legally was driven by the failure of the media outlets to respond to his takedown notices. The court has granted permission to the Juhu Police to investigate the case and file an FIR against those responsible. This signals the start of a thorough investigation into the matter, which Kundra hopes will restore his reputation and hold the responsible parties accountable.



MOUNI ROY DOMINATES LONDON FASHION WEEK 2025

As the only Indian celebrity to attend the prestigious event, Mouni topped the list of influencers, alongside notable names such as Hu Bing, Diamante Harper, Declan Rice and Leigh-Anne Pinnock. Mouni's presence at London Fashion Week not only highlighted her as a fashion trailblazer but also showcased her ability to represent India on the international stage with elegance and style.

FUN

ARCHIE

WHAT MOOSE LACKS IN BRAINS, HE MAKES UP FOR IN MUSCLE! AND THAT'S A LOT TO MAKE UP FOR!

REGGIE BET HIM HE COULDN'T DO PUSHUPS WITH ONE HAND BEHIND HIS BACK! LOOKS LIKE MOOSE MISUNDERSTOOD!

STILL PRETTY IMPRESSIVE, THOUGH!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

HEY, LOOK! I HIT SOMETHING! DON'T BREAK IT! DIG CAREFULLY!

GOSH, WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE IT IS? DUST IT OFF SO WE CAN SEE.

IT'S SOME BIZARRE SKULL! LOOK AT ITS MOUTH. MAYBE IT'S A PREHISTORIC ANTEATER.

GARFIELD

I HAVEN'T SEEN A MOUSE ALL WEEK. GOOD JOB, GARFIELD!

HOW WAS THE VACATION? GREAT! BUT IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO GET BACK HOME.

REALITY CHECK

OCCAM'S RAZOR: THE SIMPLEST ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE BLADE IS TOO SHARP.

SPEED BUMP

CUT IT OUT! I WAS SAYING THAT FOOD FOR LATER!

F DOGS HAD BRACES.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8	9	10	11	
		12		
13				
14	15	16	17	18
19				

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

RULES

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

NANCY

SPRING IS SO BEAUTIFUL.

FOR THE TEN SECONDS I CAN SEE IT BEFORE MY EYES START TEARING UP FROM ALLERGIES.

WE HAD A GOOD RUN THIS YEAR.

GINGER MEGGS

HEY, FITZY. WHAT DOES YOUR HEAD LOOK LIKE WITHOUT THAT BIG, BOOBY AFRO?

I DON'T KNOW. YOU'D HAVE TO SHAVE MY HEAD TO FIND OUT!

DID YOU REALISE WHO YOU WERE TALKING TO?

1ST TEST: GILL, JAISWAL CONTINUE GOOD FORM; KOHLI, ROHIT EYE CONSISTENT RUN

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, the torchbearers of India's transition phase, will have to be the team's driving force in its quest to lord over an unsettled New Zealand when the two sides square off in a three-Test series, beginning here on Wednesday. The baton has not been completely passed, but Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are certainly running their last lap and these two young superstars will have to show that they can carry forward the legacy of the titans. Since a productive series against England earlier this year, Gill is now more familiar and comfortable with the rigours of Test cricket. His last 10 innings contain three hundreds and two fifties, while Jaiswal's last eight outings in Test cricket feature a 214 and five fifties. Those numbers are not to be scoffed at. But at the same time, it is important for them to build on the foundation through this series, a precursor to the much tougher journey to Australia next month. Gill seems to have sorted his issues with the in-coming

deliveries from pacers, but a trace of the old failing still remains. In Chennai, Bangladesh pacer Hasan Mahamud troubled him with nip-backers before eventually grabbing his wicket. Similarly, Jaiswal has a penchant to go for expansive shots against pace bowlers to get dismissed, evidenced by his three dismissals recently against Bangladesh quicks. In all, the left-hander has fallen to pacers 12 times in 20 innings, and he would want a better record before facing a clutch of top-class Australian pacers. While these concerns are not deeply rooted, they serve as cautionary points against a New Zealand attack that has capable hands in pacers Matt Henry, William O'Rourke and the experienced Tim Southee, if he gets to play here after a sharp decline in his form. There is another angle to the emergence of Jaiswal and Gill as the pillars of the Indian line-up, as Kohli and Rohit have not precisely set the field ablaze. Rohit, who has played 15 innings this year, has made two hundreds but managed only one fifty in the remaining 13, totaling 497



runs in eight Tests at just over 35. Kohli, 53 runs shy of 9000 Test runs, has not made even a fifty in six innings this year,

and while Rohit often perishes in his attempt to grab the momentum, his colleague offers a much more curious case. The 35-year-old Kohli

has not been able to convert the two starts he got this year, ending up with 46 (vs SA) and 47 (vs Bangladesh), stirring the uncomfortable memories

of that great slump between 2019 and 2023. The master batter will also have to keep an eye on New Zealand left-arm spinners -

Ajaz Patel and Rachin Ravindra - the tribe which has been a thorn in his flesh in the past. It has been a while since these two stalwarts embossed their mark across a full series, and a nervy New Zealand could be their golden chance to do so. India has only minor concerns, but New Zealand's troubles across batting and bowling departments are more pronounced. Their batsmen struggled copiously against Sri Lankan spinners recently while losing an away series 0-2, and here they will have to negate two modern-day greats in Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja. They took 20 wickets together against Bangladesh and with the Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch expected to give some assistance to spinners, the veterans might be itching to have a bowl here. Besides the duo, the Kiwis will have to contend with the genius of Jasprit Bumrah, who rattled Bangladesh by picking up 11 wickets across two Tests. If they persist with the combination from the last series, Akash Deep will be the third pacer behind Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj. The weather here is expected

to be gloomy over the course of the Test match, and there could be some delayed starts and truncated sessions. The management will take into account the fact that New Zealand, who have already lost Kane Williamson to an injury, were put through the wringer by Lankan spinners recently. In another blow, right-arm pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the series due to a knee injury. An uncapped Jacob Duffy, who has played six ODIs and 14 T20s, has been brought into the squad. Teams (from): India: Rohit Sharma (c), Jasprit Bumrah (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep. New Zealand: Tom Latham (captain), Devon Conway, Kane Williamson, Mark Chapman, Will Young, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell, Mitchell Santner, Rachin Ravindra, Tom Blundell (wk), Ajaz Patel, Matt Henry, Tim Southee, William O'Rourke, Jacob Duffy.

Don't want to take undercooked Shami to Australia: Rohit

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India skipper Rohit Sharma has virtually ruled out Mohammed Shami from the upcoming Test tour of Australia, saying that the pacer's recovery from an ankle surgery has been hampered by swelling in knees and it would not be right to take an "undercooked" version of him for the marquee showdown. Shami last played for India during the ODI World Cup final last year and has been recuperating from an ankle surgery after that. "To be honest, right now, it's pretty difficult for us to make a call on him, whether he'll be fit for this series or Australia series. He recently had swelling on his knee, which was quite unusual," Rohit told



reporters here on the eve of the first Test against New Zealand. "He was in the process of getting fit, getting close to 100 per cent, he had swelling in his knee, that put him back a little bit in his recovery. So, he had to start again. Right now, he's at NCA, he's working with the physios and the doctors at NCA," he added. Rohit said the team management wants Shami to regain full fitness before returning to top-flight cricket. "We are keeping our fingers crossed, we want him to be 100 per cent fit. We don't want to bring an undercooked Shami to Australia, that is not going to be the right decision for us. "It is quite tough for a fast bowler, having missed so

much of cricket, and then suddenly to come out and be at his best, it is not ideal," he noted. Rohit said the National Cricket Academy staff will continue to assess Shami's fitness and he might play a couple of internal matches in that process. "We want to give him enough time to recover and be 100 per cent fit. The physios, the trainers, the doctors have set a roadmap for him. "He is supposed to play a couple of (practice) games before he plays international cricket," he added. Shami has played 64 Tests for India, taking 229 wickets at an impressive average of 27.71. India will play five Tests in Australia starting November 22.



New Zealand pacer Ben Sears ruled out of India tour due to knee injury

PTI ■ BENGALURU

New Zealand right-arm pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the upcoming three-Test series against India due to a knee injury. The opening Test begins here on Tuesday. Sears' departure to India was delayed after he experienced pain in his left knee during New Zealand's recent tour of Sri Lanka. Scans back home revealed a tear to his meniscus, prompting medical consultations in hopes he could be cleared to play. "However, following the medical advice, the decision was made to rule him out of the series. A plan on the best course of treatment and rehabilitation for the injury will be advised in due course," New Zealand Cricket said. Jacob Duffy has been called in as his replacement and the uncapped 30-year-old right-arm fast bowler will leave for India on Wednesday. Duffy has so far played six ODIs and 14 T20s for the

Kiwis and in 102 First-Class outings he has claimed 299 wickets. "We're obviously disappointed for Ben who made a strong start to his Test career during the home summer and offers a genuine pace option," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said in a statement. "It remains to be seen how long we'll be without him for, but we're hopeful his road to a full recovery will be a short one. It's an exciting opportunity for Jacob who has been around Test the squad before. With three Tests ahead of us he has every chance of making his Test debut." Stead hoped Duffy's experience in County Championship would be beneficial for the player. "Jacob's recent experience playing for Nottinghamshire in the County Championship certainly pushed his place. His performances in white-ball cricket for the Blackcaps have always been impressive and we're confident he'll be able to contribute if called upon," he said.

Keeping Jasprit Bumrah quiet will go a long way in winning against India: Pat Cummins

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Australia will have to find a way to keep Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah quiet if they are to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, reckoned captain Pat Cummins on Tuesday as they draw comfort from success in last two ICC finals against their fierce rivals. The world's top two Test teams will clash in a five-match affair starting on November 22 in Perth and India will enter the contest having held the trophy for nearly a decade, which includes winning two consecutive series Down Under. "I'm a big fan of Bumrah. I think he's a fantastic bowler. Hopefully, if we can keep him quiet, that is going to go a long way to winning the series," Cummins said on the

Star Sports Press Room. "Alongside him, he has got some other guys who haven't played a lot over here in Australia (that) we haven't seen a lot of. We'll see how it goes," he added. Cummins said Australia will lean on happy memories of winning the last two ICC finals -- World Test Championship and ODI World Cup -- against Rohit Sharma's India. "The last two series were a long time ago. We have got over it," he said. "I've never played alongside him (Rohit Sharma), so I don't know him super well. But it has looked like they (Indian team) are pretty organised, pretty well-planned. "Fortunately, over the last few years, we've had some success in the World Test Championship final and (in



a different format for the ODI World Cup. We'll be trying to lean on those memories. As I'm sure they're trying to remember some of the previous series over here as well," he said. Pujara's absence will give a 'different feel' Cummins said playing against Cheteshwar Pujara, whose stoic resistance with the bat laid the foundation of India's away wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21, was 'real Test

cricket'. "It was always great playing (against) Pujara. He was one of those guys who never really felt like he was getting away from you. But then he would (just) bat, bat, bat and bat," he said. "I really enjoyed the contest against him. Some days he won, other days I won. It's going to have a bit of a different feel without him. Pujara is a great player." "(I) had lots of battles against

him over the years. I quite enjoyed them, to be honest. It was real Test cricket. He might score runs, but you always feel like you're in for a chance." Cummins said playing against India's former No 3 batter was a battle of outlasting each other. "It comes down to almost who wants to outlast each other, which I quite like that aspect of Test cricket. It's going to be a shame that he is not there, but I'm sure they'll pick someone else who's in a similar kind of style," he said. Cummins said the India-Australia rivalry will now be "mirroring" the Ashes given that there will be five Tests hereon. "I do think it is," said Cummins when asked if India-Australia rivalry matched that of the Ashes. "Particularly, after the Indian

team won the last couple of series at (our) home. We've had more success against England over the past decade. I think it's right up there," he said. "You know when you play against India, you've got a few Indian fans that are watching. It's a slightly different rivalry to England-Australia rivalry. But again, now having a five-Test match series, it does mirror the Ashes series very closely," he said. Cummins said India's reputation has been consolidated by winning away from home. "Winning (in) Test cricket away from home is as tough as it gets in our sport and India have done that around the world. They are really, really good at home but also, one of the better teams to travel as well that's their reputation," he said.

Latham looking forward to challenge of beating "well-rounded" India

PTI ■ BENGALURU

New Zealand captain Tom Latham on Tuesday conceded that beating a "well-rounded" India would be an enormous task but said his team is ready to face the challenge over the course of a three-match Test series, beginning here from Wednesday. The presence of a host of experienced batters and bowlers, Latham said, makes India a formidable opponent. "You obviously look at the spinners when you come over these conditions. But they've got an equally good seam attack in Bumrah, Siraj, Akash Deep, who's played the last couple of Tests against Bangladesh. So just a well-rounded side," Latham said in the pre-match press meet here on Tuesday. "From a batting point of

view. You have a lot of match winners who can take a game away from you pretty quickly. "We're looking forward to the challenge. Hopefully, we can lean back on the experiences that we've had here the last couple of times that we've toured," he added. In that context, Latham said the Kiwis will miss the presence of former captain Kane Williamson, who has been ruled out of the early part of this tour owing to a groin injury. "It's disappointing not to have Kane here. Fingers crossed he'll be ready as soon as possible. I think Youngie (Will Young) will play. He'll bat at three. He's batted all over the order. I guess it's his opportunity to put his hand up. "Yeah, obviously, disappointing when you



miss a senior guy like Kane, but it gives opportunities for other guys to put their hand up," he said. However, Ben Sears getting ruled out because of a knee injury has opened up a chance for out of form veteran Tim Southee to get a place in the eleven. "Absolutely. I think last time they played a Test here, Tim took 7 for 60. Obviously, Ben Sears has been ruled out, so I guess if we do end up going with the three seamers, then obviously Tim will come right into the equation." Latham admitted that the build-up to this series was not ideal after a 0-2 series defeat against Sri Lanka, but hoped to carry over the learning from that contest. "Obviously, results weren't ideal in Sri Lanka. I think that first Test was a reasonably small margin in terms of the defeat. But we

actually did a lot of good stuff in that tour. "And, yeah, I guess you come here to India, it's slightly different conditions. That wicket at Galle didn't offer a lot from a bowling point of view," he noted. Latham is no stranger to captaincy but being in the hot seat on a permanent basis from the three-match series against India excites the Canterbury man. The 32-year-old was handed the skipper's arm band after Southee stepped down from the role after a poor away series against Sri Lanka. "It's obviously a huge, exciting privilege for me to be in this position. But regardless whether I'm captain or not captain, I'm trying to perform my role as best as I can. "That's not going to be any different being captain," said Latham.

₹120 CRORE BUDGET FOR SAI DURGHA TEJ'S PERIOD DRAMA?

On the occasion of Sai Durgha Tej's birthday, the makers of his upcoming film, tentatively titled *SDT18*, released a glimpse of the project. Rohith KP is making his directorial debut with this film, while K Niranjan Reddy and Chaitanya Reddy are producing it. In the video, Sai Durgha Tej looks completely fit, showcasing a six-pack transformation. This is a stark contrast to when *Bro* was released, where many commented on his weight gain. Now, after watching the teaser, it's clear the actor has undergone a complete makeover, looking lean and losing significant weight.

The teaser also introduces a village set, suggesting the film will be made on a massive budget. A bit of the storyline is teased, showing that the land has long suffered under evil forces, eagerly awaiting its saviour. Now, that wait is finally over.

According to a source, the film's budget is nearly Rs 120 crore. Although Sai Durgha Tej's market has yet to surpass Rs 100 crore, the producers are taking a risk, confident in the film's content. The source also revealed that the story is a period drama, requiring extensive graphic work.

The film is being shot entirely on sets, with villages from the 1950s recreated at Tukuguda, RFC and Saradhi Studios, according to the source. Aishwarya Lakshmi plays the female lead, and the cast includes top actors like Jagapathi Babu and Srikanth. The makers are also planning to cast a Bollywood actor as the villain.

Typically, when a star's birthday arrives, multiple upcoming projects are announced, but Sai Durgha Tej is fully focused on *SDT18*, with no other films announced. This marks his first time playing such a powerful role. The makers also plan to release the film in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kannada and Malayalam.



RAJINIKANTH BACK IN ACTION, HALE AND HEALTHY

Tamil Superstar Rajinikanth fell ill a few days ago and was hospitalized. Before the release of his film *Vettaiyan*, the actor underwent surgery, was later discharged and took time to rest at home. Now, it seems the superstar is back to work, as some of the unit members from *Vettaiyan* recently met with him.

The film was released during the Dasara festival in all languages. The Telugu version is performing well at the box office, along with the Tamil

release. Director T.J. Gnanavel, music director Anirudh Ravichander and the producers met Rajinikanth on Monday and they all appeared happy with the success of their film.

According to the makers, the film has collected a whopping Rs 240 crore, reaffirming Rajinikanth's box-office power. The telugu version was released under the original Tamil title, which some industry insiders saw as a disadvantage. Many thought it was just the Tamil version, but after a

few days, the collections surged thanks to Rajinikanth's star power. The film also features legendary actors Amitabh Bachchan, Fahadh Faasil, Rana Daggubati, and Manju Warrier. The makers added that the film is now being shown in over 7,250 theaters. Subaskaran, the producer from Lyca Productions, expressed his gratitude for the overwhelming response, saying, "This is a labor of love, and we are humbled by the support from fans across the globe."

Tick tock! *Rewind* is ready to turn back time

Young actors Sai Ronak and Amrutha Chowdhary are playing the lead roles in the film *Rewind*, directed and produced by Kalyan Chakravarthy. The makers have now announced that the film is set to release on October 18 in South India. Music for the film is composed by Ashirwad. The director expressed confidence, stating that small films have been performing remarkably well at the box office, and he hopes *Rewind* will do the same. "I believe in my content and hope the film will be liked by everyone," said Kalyan Chakravarthy. Promotional videos released a few days ago have received a positive response, according to the director.

The film's story revolves around time travel, with Sai Ronak playing the protagonist. The trailer hints at the actor traveling between the present and future, encountering challenges along the way. While several time travel films have been released in recent years, the director is confident he has introduced a fresh concept. Kalyan Chakravarthy also mentioned that the songs from the film have been well received. He added that he showed the film to distributors, who were highly supportive and liked it very much. "I am very thankful to them for their support," he said.



Prashanth Neel pens story for *Bagheera*

After the success of the *KGF* film, director Prashanth Neel has become one of the most sought-after directors in India. Following that, he directed *Salaar* with Prabhas and is now working on a film with Jr NTR. Despite his busy schedule with high-budget projects, he has penned the story

for a film titled *Bagheera*, directed by Dr. Suri. Sriimurali stars as the leading actor. The makers have now begun promotions for this film and announced that the first single will be released on October 17.

Sriimurali previously starred in *Ugramm*, which was Prashanth Neel's

debut film. According to the makers, *Bagheera* promises to deliver an engaging and thrilling cinematic experience. Rukmini Vasanth plays the female lead, while the character actor Prakash Raj has an important role in the film. *Bagheera* is made in Kannada and the makers are confident it will

set trends in Kannada cinema. Asian Suresh is set to release this film in Telugu. They also announced that the film will be released on October 31 to coincide with the Diwali festival. According to the makers, Sriimurali plays an intense and power-packed role in the film.

Priyanka Upendra launches *Ugravataram* trailer, seeks blockbuster success

At the trailer launch event for *Ugravataram*, actress Priyanka Upendra made an earnest plea for audiences to help make her first pan-Indian film a blockbuster. Produced by S.G. Satish under the SGS Creations banner and directed by Gurumurthy, the film stars Priyanka in the lead role alongside a talented ensemble cast that includes Suman, Nataraj, Ajay, Pavitra Lokesh, Sai Dheena, Sudhi Cockroach and Lakshya Shetty.

The event also featured notable personalities like Karate Raju, father of actor Vishwak Sen, actor Satya Prakash, and producer Raj Kandukuri, who participated in the celebrations. The song was unveiled by Karate Raju and Satya Prakash, followed by the trailer launch led by Raj Kandukuri.

Raj Kandukuri expressed his enthusiasm for the film, stating, "*Ugravataram* is ideally timed for Dussehra. This female-driven narrative

highlights pressing societal issues, ensuring it resonates with audiences. Gurumurthy has a proven track record with his past projects, and I hope this film, which releases on November 1st, achieves great success. I also

wish Priyanka Upendra all the best, as such films deserve strong media promotion."

Priyanka Upendra reflected on her connection to Hyderabad, sharing, "Hyderabad is a lucky city for me; it's where I first met Upendra

Garu. This film marks my first venture into action and I accepted this role because of Gurumurthy's faith in me. Cinematographer Nandakumar has beautifully captured the essence of our performances, and Nataraj has delivered an outstanding portrayal. Raju Garu has provided memorable songs and dialogues in Telugu, while Krishna Basrur's music is exceptional. I hope everyone watches my first pan-Indian film and helps it become a blockbuster."

Actor Satya Prakash highlighted Priyanka's impressive background, stating, "Priyanka hails from Kolkata, and her performance in this film will remind viewers of Vijayashanthi in *Karthavyam*. Following this project, I believe Priyanka will become a household name. I'm thrilled to see my son acting in this film and I commend Gurumurthy for his dedication as a director. Let's all rally behind the film, set to release on November 1st and ensure its success."



Get ready to groove! *Srimathi Garu* song from *Lucky Baskhar* released

Tollywood fans, get ready! The vibrant video song *Srimathi Garu* from the much-anticipated film *Lucky Baskhar* has officially launched, featuring a catchy melody that promises to be a chartbuster.

Set to hit theaters worldwide on October 31st, *Lucky Baskhar* boasts

a star-studded cast and is expected to deliver an entertaining cinematic experience. Don't miss the chance to enjoy the lively visuals and enchanting music by watching the video. As excitement builds for its release, stay tuned for more updates from the Tollywood scene!

