

the pioneer

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Terrorism hurdle in regional cooperation:
Jaishankar



'NEED TO PROMOTE NATURAL FARMING TO IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH'
TJ GNANA VEL



I want to make prequel of Vettaian: Director
TJ GNANA VEL

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Rs 20,000 cr burden on the public due to alignment changes made to the Regional Ring Road (RRR) to benefit contractors. Recent changes in the alignment of the southern section of the RRR were made to benefit a few influential landowners. The alignment changes increased the length of the road from 182 kilometers to 198 kilometers, a modification the central government would not accept. These changes clearly favour certain individuals at the expense of the state, and it is the people who will bear the cost

- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

DON'T MISS...

35 relief centres being set up for...

District Collector A Thameem Ansariya here on Wednesday said that 35 relief centres are being set up for the rain affected victims in Prakasam district at various places. She said that five relief centres had already been set up in Ongole, Tangutur, Kottapatnam and Singarayakonda mandals in which over 200 victims were accommodated. "Prakasam district was declared as 'red zone' in view of the incessant rains under the influence of depression. Entire government machinery has been put on high alert and all precautionary measures...

'Stay away from free sand supply'

CM tells Ministers that primary goal is to serve common people

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has made it clear that party leaders' intervention in free sand will be dealt with seriously as such actions are damaging the government's reputation. During the Cabinet meeting held at the Secretariat in Velagapudi, Amaravati, on Wednesday, Chandrababu stated that negligence in implementing the free sand policy will not be tolerated. After addressing the Cabinet agenda, the Chief Minister discussed political issues specifically focusing on the challenges surrounding the free sand policy. He expressed concern over the complaints from the public about difficulties in getting sand, which has become costly despite the government's policy to make it available for free. The Chief Minister reminded the ministers that the free sand policy was introduced to ensure that sand is easily accessible to the common man and middle-class families, reducing the financial burden of house construction. He emphasised that the policy's primary goal is to serve the real beneficiaries -- the common people -- and that delays or inefficiencies will not be acceptable.



● The complaints from the public about difficulties in getting sand, which has become costly despite the government's policy to make it available for free. ● The government recently approved a proposal to involve private agencies in managing sand reaches. This initiative, along with the existing free sand reaches, aims to streamline operations and ensure continuous monitoring of sand supply.

CM stresses on creating 20L jobs

To attract ₹30 lakh cr investments, achieve \$40 billion in exports

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Speaking to the media after the Cabinet meeting, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced the launch of a new initiative aimed at creating 20 lakh jobs over a period of five years, following the slogan "Think Globally, Act Globally." He highlighted the introduction of six new policies including those for electronics, industrial development, clean energy, and green energy. He also mentioned forthcoming policies in tourism, IT, and virtual working, with the mantra "One Family, One Entrepreneur", encouraging the youth not just to seek jobs, but to create jobs.



Continued on Page 2



Stay alert, ensure safety of pilgrims

TTD EO SYAMALA RAO ASKS OFFICIALS

Srivari Mettu footpath route to remain closed today

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In view of the heavy downpour that is expected to continue for the next 36 hours till Thursday evening, TTD EO J Syamala Rao has directed all the officials concerned to be more cautious in taking preventive measures for the safety of the pilgrims. A virtual meeting was conducted by the TTD EO along with the Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary and other officials on Wednesday evening to assess the situation and the preparedness of each department. Following the incessant rains, keeping in view the safety of the devotees, TTD has already closed the devotee entry on Papavanasanam road starting from Gogarham circle at Tirumala. A decision has been taken to completely close the Srivari Mettu footpath route on Thursday. The functioning of this walkway will be decided after the cyclonic rain subsides. The EO discussed in length about the measures taken up by the Engineering wing in clearing the landslides, boulders if any on ghat roads, avoiding traffic issues on Ghats by TTD vigilance and security with the police, keeping enough fuel (diesel) for operating generators in the case of power failures, keeping medical kits, ambulances, medicines by the Medical wing, sanitation measures by Health wing and so on.

Bollywood celebs in crosshairs of...

The brazen killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique, famous for his iftar parties and his connections in Bollywood, outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's Mumbai office has again put the spotlight on the symbiotic relationship between showbiz and the underworld. Siddique, who was gunned down on Saturday night, may have been targeted by the Lawrence Bishnoi because of his proximity to Salman Khan. Here are some instances of celebrities coming in the crosshairs of the underworld with cases of...

'Awareness about retirement...

Awareness about retirement planning has been rising in urban India with growing number of people feeling the need to start planning for their post-work life early, a report said. As much as 44 Indians consider the right age to start planning for retirement is before 35 years, as per the India Retirement Index Study (IRIS) released by Max Life Insurance. Encouragingly, 63 per cent respondents have already begun investing for retirement, leading to reduced concerns about meeting both basic and luxury...

Day 1 of first Test between India...

Unrelenting rain wiped out play on day one of the opening Test between India and New Zealand here on Wednesday. The play was called off at 2.34 PM as heavy rain lashed the M Chinnaswamy Stadium after relenting for about half an hour earlier. The match officials came out to inspect the pitch around 2 PM after outfield and first layer of covers were removed around 1.50 PM. But there were large damp areas on either side of the pitch as hessians were brought out in a last-ditch attempt to get some...



Diarrhoea outbreak claims 4 lives in Gurla

Eight persons in critical condition

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Four people have died, and eight others are in critical condition due to a severe diarrhoea outbreak in Gurla mandal of Vizianagaram, affecting over 200 individuals as of Wednesday. The deceased have been identified as Sariki Pentayya (65), Thodranki Ramulamma (60), Gummadi Pydamma (60), and Kaliseti Seethamma (50), all of whom reportedly passed away within a 24-hour period. District Collector B.R. Ambedkar addressed the situation, stating, "While the outbreak is primarily due to water contamination, it is important to note that the deceased individuals had underlying health conditions that were exacerbated by the disease." The District Medical and Health Officer (DM&HO), Bhaskar, further elaborated, revealing that four of the deaths were attributed to non-diarrhoea-related causes such as septic shock, chronic kidney disease, cardiac arrest, and acute exacerbation of asthma. "These underlying issues made them particularly vulnerable." Ambedkar emphasised the contagious nature of diarrhoea, urging residents to maintain proper hygiene and avoid using common washrooms.

Continued on Page 2

Durga Temple nets Rs 3.50 cr in 15 days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Devasathanam in Vijayawada has earned a Hundi income of Rs 3,50,28,700 in 15 days. The average income per day was Rs 23.35 lakh. In addition to the Hundi collection, 272 grams of gold ornaments and 9.325 kg of silver jewellery were offered by the devotees. The temple authorities started the Hundi counting at Sri Mallikarjuna Maha mandapam on Wednesday. Temple Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao and other officials supervised the counting.

Delhi airport incident 'political harassment'

Sajjala denounces false media claims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has criticised a section of the media for 'spreading false propaganda about him', exaggerating the incident at the Delhi airport where he was stopped, portraying it as if he was attempting to flee after committing a crime. He also condemned the State government for political harassment, questioning why authorities stopped him at the airport despite having High Court protection from legal action until October 25. Speaking to the media at the party central office, Sajjala explained that he had travelled to Bali with his family

on October 7 and returned to Delhi on October 14. Upon landing at the Delhi airport, he was stopped by Immigration officials due to a Look-Out Circular (LOC) issued by the Guntur SP, which he argued was unnecessary since he was returning to India, not fleeing. He highlighted that he had a High Court order protecting him from any action until October 25, but the incident caused him to miss his flight to Vijayawada, forcing him to travel the next morning. Continued on Page 2

Sajjala served notice to appear for questioning today

VIJAYAWADA: The Mangalagiri Rural police have issued notice to YSRCP leader Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy to appear for questioning at 10.30 am on Thursday, in connection with the attack on the TDP central office. The attack took place in October, 2021, when YSRCP was in power. The police identified Sajjala's involvement in the case, and issued lookout notices in September to ensure that he does not leave the country. Continued on Page 2

TG skeptical of Pawan's stand on axing Conocarpus

NAVEENA GHANATE
naveena.ghanate@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

In Telangana, Conocarpus trees have been a frequent topic of discussion in the meetings of the forest department after Andhra Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan ordered the removal of these trees, citing environmental concerns. Hyderabad is filled with Conocarpus trees, raising questions about their long-term impact on urban ecosystems. Conocarpus is banned in Telangana, but the State



government is indecisive about axing the existing ones. Top sources in the forest department said that the entire capital city, medians and

footpaths have Conocarpus, "but what we don't have is concrete evidence to go about with mass axing". Sources indicate that while there is growing concern over the environmental effects of these trees, officials are hesitant to proceed with large-scale removal without written, factual evidence to present to environmentalists and possibly the courts. Top sources in Forest Ministry said, "We need to have concrete scientific data to support any legal or environmental action against Conocarpus, or else it will be difficult to make a strong case". Continued on Page 2

NSG commandos withdrawn from security duties, CRPF steps in



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government has ordered the complete withdrawal of the counter-terrorist commando force NSG from VIP security duties and handing over its nine "high-risk" VIPs to the CRPF by the next month, official sources said Wednesday. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has also sanctioned a fresh battalion of specially trained personnel, recently withdrawn from Parliament security

Law is not blind anymore

Lady Justice in SC library now holds Constitution with open eyes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an initiative shedding the colonial imprint and traditional attributes, the statue of Lady Justice, in the judges' library of the Supreme Court, now holds a copy of the Indian Constitution, instead of a sword, and the blindfold has come off to leave her with open eyes. The change effected under the tenure of incumbent Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud, now signals that the law in the country is not blind and does not merely symbolise punishment. Traditionally, the blindfold suggested equality before the law, meaning that the dispensation of justice should not be influenced by the status, wealth, or power of the parties. The sword historically symbolised authority and the capacity to punish injustice. In a departure from colonial influences,

like the replacement of the colonial-era penal code with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the new Lady Justice signifies that the law in the country sees everyone equally as mandated under the Constitution. The might of the Constitution, not of the sword, prevails in the justice delivery process. However, the scales of justice in the right hand of Lady Justice have been retained, symbolizing a societal balance and the significance of careful consideration of facts and arguments from both sides before arriving at a verdict. Last month, President Droupadi Murmu unveiled the new flag and insignia of the Supreme Court to commemorate the 75th year of its establishment. Under CJI Chandrachud's tenure, the SC began live-streaming proceedings of the Constitution Bench on YouTube and used artificial intelligence and natural language processing

technology for live transcription of such hearings of national importance. The judicial hearings in the NEET-UG matter and R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital suo moto case garnered huge public views.



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Cabinet hikes wheat MSP by Rs 150

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet on Wednesday raised the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat by 6.59 per cent to Rs 2,425 per quintal for the 2025-26 rabi marketing season. The Rs 150 per quintal hike in wheat support price is significant ahead of elections in states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi. Rabi marketing season begins from April 2025. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the increase in the MSP of six mandated rabi crops for 2025-26 marketing season in the range of Rs 130-300 per quintal. "The major decision taken by the cabinet is related to the welfare of the farmers. Like in Kharif, there is a significant increase in the MSP for rabi crops," I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told media after the cabinet meeting.



He said the support price for wheat has been increased to Rs 2,425 per quintal for 2025-26, from Rs 2,275 per quintal in the previous year. To increase domestic production of oilseeds, the cabinet increased the support price for rapeseed/mustard seed by Rs 300 to Rs 5,950 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season. The support price for safflower was increased by Rs 140 to Rs 5,940 per quintal from Rs 5,800 per quintal in the previous year. In case of pulses, support price for lentil (masur) increased by Rs 275 to Rs 6,700 per quintal, while that for gram MSP raised by Rs 210 to Rs 5,650 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season.

Will Jagan break free from the coterie around him?

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, you see, adopted an ostrich-like policy when he was in power. That is why he voted against him. If he had kept his ear to the ground, he would have remained in power for 15 more years," an auto-rickshaw driver remarked during a no-holds-barred conversation recently.

This prompted another question to him: "Which of the policies adopted by the Jagan Mohan Reddy government hurt you, considering that auto drivers used to get Rs 10,000 every year through the government?"

The driver replied that the police used to collect at least half of the amount the government used to give them by imposing penalties on them ahead of the distribution of benefits every year.

"Who advised Jagan Mohan Reddy to appoint PSR

Anajanyulu as chief of the Intelligence Bureau? Doesn't he know that the National Human Rights Commission declared back in 2012 that 16 out of the 19 deaths of various people were extra-judicial killings in 'fake' police encounters that had taken place when PSR Anjaneyulu was the superintendent of police in Guntur and Kurnool district in the united Andhra Pradesh?" This is also the question that many of YSRCP's well-wishers had posed.

It may be recalled that the National Human Rights Commission conducted an inquiry for over a decade on a complaint by noted advocate B Chandrasekhar on behalf of the Human Rights Forum in Guntur.

A security guard at an auditorium, where an 11-day ceremony relating to a politician who had died recently took place, was heard telling a gov-

The rich and powerful are making a long list of commissions and omissions of the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. They accused him of adopting an ostrich-like approach and plundering the State's wealth to distribute it to various sections of people, ignoring the long-term developmental aspects of the State.



SRIRAMULU K

ernment employee: "You (government employees) contributed greatly to the humiliating defeat of Jagan Mohan Reddy." His grouse runs deep. The security guard had been denied a house because a government employee had created fake data suggesting that he already owned a house.

The rich and powerful are making a long list of commissions and omissions of the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. They accused him of

adopting an ostrich-like approach and plundering the State's wealth to distribute it to various sections of people, ignoring the long-term developmental aspects of the State.

The high and the mighty in Andhra Pradesh remain unchanged though the regimes they embraced collapsed like a house of cards. The irony is that the common ostrich, being the world's largest bird, has large eyes that can see as far as 3.5 kilometres away. So,

the description hardly fits Jagan Mohan Reddy, who, as is clear now, could not see beyond the next election.

What else can be said about the defeat of Jagan Mohan Reddy who founded a party without any support from any popular politician and came to power? For five years he enjoyed unbridled power; then, people from almost all sections rejected him.

It is common for people, particularly the powerful, to always

humiliate those who had suffered defeat in the political arena. It is a different matter that they may have kowtowed before them when they were in power. Hence, a politician should not ignore signs of common people developing a dislike towards him. This is not to say that all people in Andhra Pradesh dislike him.

Perhaps the reshuffle of the Cabinet midway through the term could have tarnished the image of Jagan Mohan Reddy. Not only that, he appeared to have failed to focus on the nitty-gritty of the administration, despite having the best of officers at the helm. Instead, he acquiesced to the machinations of some of his advisors who had no idea that their tactics would have disastrous consequences. Besides, his government's strategy of suppressing even peaceful protests cost him heavily. For instance, when teachers and Anganwadi

workers planned to march to the capital to stage a protest, the police, perhaps in a bid to get into the good books of the powers that be, not only arrested them at the railway station, but also allegedly ill-treated them. This also led to disenchantment of various sections with the government.

According to veteran politicians, whenever people are allowed to peacefully protest, the reputation of the government will go up. So, the brash style of the government too seemed to have eroded the confidence of people in the administration. The civil administration had vanished into thin air. It is the complaint by people of all sections, not only in villages but also in towns and cities.

The government employees, particularly teachers, reportedly spread disinformation against the Jagan Mohan Reddy government to vilify it.

The Ministers, instead of paying attention to what the common people were saying, relied on the police to suppress even peaceful protesters on the pretext of maintaining law and order. Instead of analysing the criticism against the government in the media, Jagan Mohan Reddy reportedly used to frown at the newspapers which carried reports critical of his government. Even a small bit of comment in an article in a popular newspaper reportedly angered Jagan Mohan Reddy, though the particular daily had always supported him.

All such follies seemed to have led to Jagan Mohan Reddy's humiliating defeat, according to analysts. Will he at least now extricate himself from the clutches of the coterie around him is the question that cannot be left unanswered.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

MP pushes for resilient Bhogapuram Airport

Directs officials to develop maintenance plans suitable for local conditions

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam MP M Sribharat, on Wednesday, held a crucial meeting with the officials from GMR Corporation to discuss the progress of the Bhogapuram International Airport at Bhogapuram.

The meeting focused on the airport's construction, design, and future plans, with a particular emphasis on ensuring its long-term sustainability and accessibility.

MP Sribharat stressed the importance of adapting construction materials and maintenance strategies to the unique coastal climate of the region. "To ensure that the Bhogapuram airport operates smoothly for the next 50 years, it is essential that we select materials and develop maintenance plans that are suited to our local conditions," he stated.



Officials from the GMR Corporation shared positive updates, revealing that 45 per cent of the airport construction is now complete, with 27 per cent of the target already surpassed. "Work is progressing at a fast pace, and we anticipate that the Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower will be fully operational by next December," they reported.

Sribharat expressed confidence in the project's potential impact, stating, "The Bhogapuram International Airport is set to become the main hub for the development of North Andhra, bringing significant benefits to the Visakhapatnam area."

Andhra Pradesh Markfed Chairman Karrothu Bangaraju and Visakhapatnam parliament TDP president Gandhi Babji, along with other officials from the region, attended the meeting.

remarked. To further improve accessibility, the MP announced that several road expansion projects would be prioritised. "The expansions of Marikavalasa-Thimmapuram, Bhemili-Tagarapurvalasa, Boyapalem-Mangamariyeta, Kothavalasa-NH16, and Rajapulova-Divis will be expedited to better connect surrounding areas to Bhogapuram airport," he

Sajjala served...

Continued from Page 1

YSRCP leaders Lella Appireddy, Devineni Avinash, Jogi Ramesh, and Talasila Raghuram were also served notices and have already been to the police station multiple times for questioning.

The Andhra Pradesh government has transferred the investigation into the attacks on the TDP central office and the residence of Chandrababu Naidu to the Crime Investigation Department (CID). The cases, which were previously being investigated by the Mangalagiri and Tadepalli police stations, will be handed over to the CID by the Mangalagiri Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP). The decision was made to expedite the investigation, as the progress made by the civil police was deemed to be slow.

Former Bapatla MP Nandigam Suresh was arrested and sent to jail in connection with the attack, but was later released on bail.

CM concerned over diarrhoea deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has expressed serious concern over the death of five persons due to diarrhoea at Gurla in Vizianagaram district in the past two days.

Following the death of four persons on a single day (Monday), the Chief Minister enquired about the prevailing situation in the area and sought the details from the officials of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). Chandrababu also sought the treatment details of those who are suffering from the disease and the sanitary works being taken up in the village.

The Chief Minister also told the officials to be alert as heavy rains are lashing the State and enquired about the situation prevailing in vari-



ous places, including Nellore district which is receiving heavy downpour. He directed the officials to continuously update him on the situation, particularly the rain-hit districts.

Strongly condemning the damage caused to the temple of Lord Abayanjaneya in the forest region of Kadarinathunikota in Annamaya district due to an attack, the Chief Minister directed the officials to initiate stringent action against those resorted to the attack.

TG skeptical of Pawan's...

Continued from Page 1

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Gujarat banned Conocarpus as the exotic tree's roots on telecommunication cables, drains and freshwater pipelines are posing a risk to infrastructure. Furthermore, it draws attention to the adverse effects of the species' pollen, which can lead to colds, coughs, asthma and allergies among individuals, particularly during winter.

In Andhra, the felling of trees taken up by Dy CM was challenged in the State High Court on August 24 by social activist Vallamreddy Laxman Reddy, who heads an NGO, Jana Chaitanya Vedika, and two botanical scientists - K Bayyapu Reddy, a retired botany and environmental professor of Acharya Nagarjuna University and Attipalli Ramachandra Reddy, a professor of plant sciences of the University of Hyderabad. They argued that the adverse impact of Conocarpus trees to the environment and humans has not been scientifically proven yet and the government should stop felling of such trees. Kakinada City alone witnessed felling of 35,000 trees.

Despite the hesitation to remove them across Hyderabad, officials and public representatives, including some MLAs, have already started removing Conocarpus trees from their private properties, signalling that the concerns over the plant may be more serious than initially thought.

These actions come amid worries that the trees, originally introduced for their rapid growth and aesthetic appeal, could have detrimental effects on local biodiversity and groundwater levels due to their high water consumption and invasive root systems.

Diarrhoea outbreak...

Continued from Page 1

During a visit to Gurla on Wednesday, he met with affected families who expressed concerns over their recent consumption of fish and meat curry during local festivities as a possible source of the outbreak. "We need to be cautious about the food we consume and ensure that it is properly cooked," he said.

In response to the crisis, the Medical and Health Department has set up a medical camp staffed by 40 personnel, including 10 doctors. However, the severity of the situation was underscored by reports that some Asha workers, who were treating patients, have also fallen ill. "It's a challenging situation for our healthcare workers, and we need to support them," Ambedkar said.

Rs 534 crore allocated for completion of pending apartments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant move to address pending housing projects in the Amaravati capital region, Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) Minister Ponguru Narayana announced that the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) has granted administrative approval to release Rs 534 crore. This funding is for the completion of 432 apartments across 18 towers designated for MLAs, MLCs, and All India Service (AIS) officers.

During the CRDA Authority's 38th meeting, chaired by Chief Minister N

432 apartments across 18 towers are designated for MLAs, MLCs, AIS officers



Chandrababu Naidu, Minister Narayana highlighted that tenders would soon be invited to finalise pending sewage works, a clubhouse, and other essential amenities within the

residential complex.

In addition to the apartment project, Narayana disclosed that the CRDA authority has sanctioned Rs 160 crore for the completion of the CRDA headquarters in Amaravati. He revealed plans to invite tenders for the construction of permanent Assembly and High Court buildings by January.

Minister Narayana also noted that the World Bank is expected to release funds shortly to facilitate construction activities in the Amaravati capital city.

Water quality tests conducted in 44 villages

Final report to be submitted to higher officials today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Following the directives of the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj & Rural Development, K Pawan Kalyan, the Rural Water Supply (RWS) officials have initiated water quality testing across 44 villages in Gudivada Rural, Nandivada, and Gudlavalluru mandals. The RWS Laboratory officials have collected water samples from these villages to check quality. They have to submit the final report on the water quality analysis by October 17.

During the inauguration of the 'Palle Panduga - Panchayat Varotsavulu' in Kankipadu mandal, Gudivada MLA Venigandla Ramu requested Pawan Kalyan to conduct the water quality tests in all villages in three mandals in his constituency. Soon, Pawan instructed the RWS officials to conduct the water quality tests and submit a detailed report in due course.

At the instructions from the



Deputy Chief Minister, RWS Krishna District Executive Engineer Nataraj formed three teams to take water samples in all 44 villages of Gudivada Rural, Nandivada and Gudlavalluru. These teams have completed the collection of water samples from the waterworks and sent them to the laboratory in Machilipatnam and tests were conducted on Wednesday.

Due to the lack of proper repairs, filter beds have been damaged. As a result, people drank contaminated water and it caused several diseases. At this stage, the people brought this issue to the notice of Gudivada MLA Venigandla Ramu to resolve. After the directive from the Deputy Chief Minister, the RWS officials have decided to conduct repairs to the filter beds to resolve the drinking water issue in the Gudivada Assembly constituency.

'Stay away from...

Continued from Page 1

The CM issued a stern warning that any negligence in the execution of the free sand policy will result in serious consequences. He demanded visible improvements within the next 10 days and stressed that the availability of sand must be ensured State-wide, with all obstacles removed to facilitate smooth distribution. The government recently approved a proposal to involve private agencies in managing sand reaches. This initiative, along with the existing free sand reaches, aims to streamline operations and ensure continuous monitoring of sand supply. Officials assured the Chief Minister that handing over management to private agencies will enhance oversight and improve the availability of sand at stock points.

The CM ordered continuous surveillance and monitoring to guarantee the proper implementation of the policy and ensure that the benefits reach those in need.

Cabinet nod for AP Integrated Clean...

Continued from Page 1

Considering the allottees' request, the Cabinet approved the proposal to allocate industrial park plots at a rate of ₹16.5 lakh per acre, as per GO Ms No 78 I&C Dept., Dt.19.05.2017. The Cabinet also approved APIC's proposal for government hand-holding in securing a ₹1,000-crore loan for infrastructure development in Mallavalli under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment Scheme.

The Cabinet gave nod to the proposal to form a Cabinet Sub-Committee to create 20 lakh jobs. Approval was also given for the formation of a ministerial group to monitor and regulate prices and intervene in the market when necessary.

The State Cabinet further approved the proposal to set up a ministerial group to study and provide recommendations on

CM stresses on...

Continued from Page 1

The CM announced establishment of the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub in Amaravati and other hubs in Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Tirupati, Vijayawada/Guntur, and Anantapur. These hubs aim to bring modern technology closer to the people and make Andhra Pradesh a knowledge-based economy. He also discussed the need to rebuild the AP brand and attract large-scale foreign investments, and stressed that the linking of rivers is key to the State's development.

Chandrababu revealed plans to attract investments worth ₹30 lakh crore and promote Andhra Pradesh as a hub for green energy and aquaculture. He outlined a vision for Swarnandhra 2047, a document to be released in November, which will focus on transforming AP into a manufacturing hub with global marketing for its products. The goal includes achieving \$40 billion in exports and reducing production costs, with initiatives like the construction of a road from Visakhapatnam to Bhavanapadu and the establishment of an industrial park across 10,000 acres in Bhavanapadu. Finally, the CM stressed strengthening MSMEs and encouraging entrepreneurship to promote industrial growth in the State.

Stay alert...

Continued from Page 1

He questioned the legality of the actions against him and said he trusts the judicial system. He suggested that the Look-Out Circular (LOC), issued on October 10 after he had already left for Bali, might have been motivated by spite. He also criticised the media for spreading false information and making unfounded accusations.

He dismissed the accusations of trying to flee, questioning why he would need to run if he had done nothing wrong. He pointed out that the LOC was used as a pretext to cause trouble and described the State's governance as a 'lawless regime', where even the police were misused for political gains, with the Red Book functioning as an unofficial constitution.

Delhi airport...

Continued from Page 1

TODAY
ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Purnima: Oct 16 08:40 PM to Oct 17 04:56 PM
Krishna Paksha Pratipada: Oct 17 04:56 PM to Oct 18 01:15 PM

Nakshatram:
Revati: Oct 16 07:17 PM to Oct 17 04:20 PM
Ashwini: Oct 17 04:20 PM to Oct 18 01:26 PM

Rahukalam: 1:28 PM to 2:55 PM
Yamagandam: 6:13 AM to 7:40 AM
Varjyam: 09:55 AM to 11:19 AM
Gulika: 9:07 AM to 10:34 AM
Amritakalam: 02:14 PM to 03:38 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:38 AM to 12:24 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 80%
Sunrise: 6:00 AM
Sunset: 5:45 PM
Updated: October 16, 2024 5:00 PM

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PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Lokesh's gesture saves infant's life

In a heartwarming act of support, the public grievance programme 'Praja Darbar' initiated by Minister Nara Lokesh has given new life to a 14-day-old infant. The parents who were in distress over their baby's critical health condition sought medical help through Praja Darbar. Lokesh provided assurance to the parents, arranged for financial assistance through the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), which saved the child's life.

Ch Venkata Maheshwar Rao, a resident of Jaggayyapeta in NTR district, was blessed with a second child, a baby boy. However, 14 days after birth, the baby began showing signs of illness, crying incessantly at night and refusing to drink milk. The parents took the baby to a nearby hospital where he was treated. But when his platelet count dropped significantly and his condition worsened, doctors recommended that he be moved to Vijayawada for better medical care.

A private hospital in Vijayawada told the parents that the treatment would be expensive. Maheshwar Rao from a tribal background found himself in a helpless situation as his child's condition became life-threatening. On a friend's advice, Maheshwar Rao approached Lokesh at his residence in Undavalli on September 27 night seeking help.

At the public grievance programme held the next morning, Maheshwar Rao met Minister Lokesh and pleaded



After 14 days of intensive care, the infant made a full recovery and returned home healthy.

for assistance.

Lokesh acted swiftly, providing the necessary financial

aid through the CMRF, which enabled the baby to receive treatment.

After 14 days of intensive care, the infant made a full recovery and returned home healthy.

During Wednesday's 'Praja Darbar', the parents met Lokesh, expressing their deep gratitude for his timely intervention, stating that they are indebted to him for life.

Focus on challenges in cocoa cultivation

Scientists, officials, and farmers from various States brought together

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A stakeholder conference on cocoa cultivation, organised by the Directorate of Cashew Nut and Cocoa Development (DCCD) under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kochi, in collaboration with the Andhra Pradesh Horticulture Department, took place at Hotel Park N in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The event brought together scientists, officials, and farmers from various States, as well as marketing agencies and other stakeholders, to address the challenges in cocoa cultivation and explore ways to improve yields and farmer incomes.

The discussions focused on issues throughout the cocoa cultivation process, from seed to sale, including the production of quality plants (hybrids and clones), supply challenges, quality bean production, value addition, post-harvest management, and integrated strategies for cocoa development. The brainstorming sessions aimed to develop a comprehensive approach to address these challenges. Andhra Pradesh Horticulture Department Director Dr K Srinivasulu highlighted the efforts being made in the State, such as the establishment of a cocoa clonal orchard in Vijayarai under Dr YSR Horticulture University to produce high-quality plants. He emphasised the depart-



ment's collaboration with the university for cocoa cultivation and outlined the financial assistance being provided to farmers for expanding it, setting up cocoa powder-based industries, and establishing fermentation pack houses for chocolate production. He also noted that Andhra Pradesh is a leading State in cocoa production, yielding 12,135 metric tonnes of dry beans annually across 30,552 hectares. He said key districts for cocoa cultivation include Eluru, East Godavari, West Godavari, Srikakulam, Konaseema, Kakinada, Krishna, and Parvathipuram Manyam, of which the Eluru district ranks first in both area and productivity.

Dr Srinivasulu highlighted the potential for expanding cocoa cultivation through intercropping with coconut and oil palm plantations, aiming to increase Cocoa cultivation by 5,000 hectares each year. He pointed out that the quality of cocoa beans produced in Andhra Pradesh matches the best Ghanaian beans. He said that intercropping provides farmers with an additional income of Rs. 75,000 while enhancing the productivity of the main crop. The conference underscored the need to improve farmers' skills, support the production of high-quality beans, and conduct extension programmes tailored to cocoa cultivation.

A valuable discussion on these topics took place, guided by DCCD Director Dr. Femina.

The event was attended by Horticulture Department Additional Directors M Venkateswarlu, Balaji Nayak, Harinath Reddy, Assistant Coordinators Sudha, ICAR Scientist Dr S Elaine Afsara, Dr YSRHU Research Director Dr M Madhavi, Mandlega India Foods Private Limited Cocoa Operations Manager Rajesh Ramachandran, Campco Limited (Mangalore) MD Dr BV Satyanarayana, Cocoa Treat (Chennai) Nitin Chordia, and NTR District Horticulture Officer Dr P Balaji Kumar, among others.

Release water to Handri-Neeva from Srisailem Project: CPI

Demand to improve Handri-Neeva canal capacity, allocate funds for HLC lining works

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation of the Communist Party of India (CPI), led by party State secretary K Ramakrishna, on Wednesday urged the State government to release water from the Srisailem Project to the Handri-Neeva Project. They also demanded completion of the lining works of the Tungabhadra High-Level Canal (HLC) and allocation of funds in the State budget for the purpose.

The CPI delegation submitted a formal representation to Minister for Water Resources, Dr Nimmala Ramanaidu, at the camp office in Vijayawada. K Ramakrishna, party secretary member Gujjula Eswaraiah and others held a discussion with Minister Ramanaidu on the two key issues. The Minister assured the CPI leaders that the issues will be resolved after bringing them to the notice of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Later, Ramakrishna said that though the Srisailem Project is at its Full Reservoir Capacity (FRC), the Water



CPI leaders led by State secretary K Ramakrishna submitting a representation to Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu at the camp office in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Resources Department (WRD) failed to supply irrigation water to Kurnool, Anantapur, Kadapa and Chittoor districts through the Handri-Neeva canal. Both the ruling TDP and the Opposition YSRCP had assured the local residents during the election campaign that adequate water will be supplied from Srisailem and that the capacity of the Handri-Neeva canal will be improved. But nothing happened, he said.

Ramakrishna requested the Minister to allocate sufficient funds in the budget to

improve the water flowing capacity in the Handri-Neeva canal and release water.

He said that currently, there is adequate water in the Tungabhadra Dam. Water can be released to the drought-prone Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

Usually, around 32 TMCs of water is released from Tungabhadra. However, only 13 TMCs have been released so far. The Tungabhadra Dam officials are ready to release water to the HLC. However, as the canal lining works are not complete, there is no chance to release water, he added.



Red Cross launches Climate Action Campaign with ICRC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Red Cross, in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, officially launched the Climate Action Campaign here on Wednesday. The campaign aims to raise awareness about climate change among students and prepare them as community-based climate change agents.

Dr A Sridhar Reddy, Chairman of the AP Red Cross, inaugurated the campaign during a workshop held at a local hotel. He emphasised that the AP Red Cross has been at the forefront of various social initiatives, which is why the ICRC chose Vijayawada as the pilot location for this project in India.

The workshop saw participation from the principals of 40

government and private colleges in and around Vijayawada. AK Parida, retired IAS officer and General Secretary of the AP Red Cross, elaborated on the campaign's objectives. He explained that the initiative aims to educate college students about the impacts of climate change and train them as Climate Change Agents who will lead mitigation activities at the local level.

Under this campaign, 100 students from each participating college will be identified and enrolled as Youth Red Cross volunteers. These students will form a Climate Action Group (CAG), with one faculty member from each institution serving as the Campaign Coordinator. Students will be encouraged to register as volunteers through the AP Red Cross app available on the Google Play Store.

Call to equip youth with industry-relevant skills

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Madireddy Pratap, Director General of the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Response & Fire Services, stressed the importance of equipping youth with industry-relevant skills to enhance employment opportunities. During his visit to Andhra University (AU) on Wednesday, he met with Vice-Chancellor Prof G Sasibhushan Rao and Registrar Prof EN Dhanunjaya Rao.

"We need to focus on developing skills that align with industry requirements," Pratap stated, emphasising the need for strong partnerships between academia and industry. "My goal is to introduce new courses that foster employment, and I am keen on setting up a drone training centre at AU to further this vision." Pratap assured his continued support in the development of AU, signalling his interest in being actively involved in the university's growth.

Prof G Sasibhushan Rao echoed these sentiments, announcing, "We are in the process of establishing an Industry 4.0 laboratory and are introducing a VLSI course in collaboration with the Central government's Mighty Department." He added, "Our



"We need to focus on developing skills that align with industry requirements," Pratap stated, emphasising the need for strong partnerships between academia and industry. "My goal is to introduce new courses that foster employment, and I am keen on setting up a drone training centre at AU to further this vision." Pratap assured his continued support in the development of AU, signalling his interest in being actively involved in the university's growth.

mission is to ensure that every student finds employment, and to that end, we are developing a food and farm testing laboratory as well." As AU prepares to celebrate its centenary, Prof Rao called for active alumni engagement. "We welcome the participation, cooperation, and suggestions of our alumni as we move towards this historic milestone." Prof Dhanunjaya Rao

shared insights on the university's global presence. "Currently, students from 64 countries are enrolled at AU, with eight percent of our student body being international students."

The event was attended by Rector Prof N Kishore Babu and Suresh Betha. Director General Madireddy Pratap was honoured by AU and presented with a memento.

GITAM achieves milestone with successful oral cancer surgery

Oral cancer remains a major public health issue in India

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Dental College & Hospital has made a significant breakthrough in its medical capabilities with the successful completion of its first oral cancer surgery. The complex procedure was performed on Wednesday on 47-year-old B. Rama Rao from Waltair, Visakhapatnam, who had been experiencing persistent tongue pain.

A biopsy confirmed squamous cell carcinoma, and a coordinated surgical intervention was planned after a thorough PET CT evaluation. The surgery was led by Dr Roopa Ganta, Dr Satish, and Dr Sowjanya from the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, in collaboration with Dr Yuginthar's team from the ENT department.

"This case is a landmark in our medical journey," said Dr Roopa Ganta, lead surgeon.

"We're proud to have performed such a complex surgery successfully, and this is just the beginning of the advanced care we aim to provide for oral cancer patients." Prof B Geetanjali, Pro Vice-Chancellor of GITAM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, commended the team's efforts.

Oral cancer remains a major public health issue in India, driven largely by tobacco use and alcohol consumption. GITAM Dental College's Department of Public Health Dentistry actively promotes awareness and operates a Tobacco Cessation Centre. "We're committed to raising awareness about oral cancer and its preventable causes," stated Dr. Satish. "Through our campaigns and cessation programmes, we hope to reduce oral cancer prevalence and improve community quality of life."

Menstrual health awareness programme held at KGBV Rambilli

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

The Rural Development Welfare Society (RDWS), in collaboration with Toyotsu Rare Earth India Private Ltd. (TREI), conducted a comprehensive menstrual health and hygiene awareness programme at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and High School in Rambilli here on Wednesday. The initiative, a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, aimed to empower young girls with essential knowledge about menstrual health.

Dr. Ooha Mahanthi, Director of RDWS, led the informative session, addressing critical aspects of menstrual health and hygiene. Using engaging slides and Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, Dr. Mahanthi emphasised the importance of understanding menstrual health to prevent potential vaginal infections and reproductive health issues. "Knowledge about menstrual health is vital for every girl," Dr. Mahanthi



stated during the session. "It helps safeguard their overall well-being and empowers them to manage their health confidently."

The programme fostered an open dialogue, encouraging students to ask questions and express their concerns. Dr. Mahanthi patiently addressed each query, using relatable real-life examples to ensure the students felt comfortable

and well-informed. "To talk about menstrual health openly is essential, and I'm glad the girls participated actively," she added. The session concluded positively with the distribution of free sanitary napkins to all participants. The RDWS staff provided nutritious cookies and energy drinks, reinforcing the importance of overall health and well-being. Special Officer Pameela of

KGBV Rambilli, teachers, and the Headmaster of High School Rambilli, Venu Gopal, actively participated in the programme. "This initiative is a testament to our commitment to empowering young girls with essential knowledge and resources," said Pameela. "We believe that informed girls can lead healthier lives and make better choices for their futures."

Skill scam: Satish Reddy slams CM for misleading public

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State general secretary SV Satish Kumar Reddy has criticised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for falsely claiming that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had cleared him of wrongdoing in the Skill Scam case.

Speaking to the media at the party central office in Vijayawada on Wednesday, Satish Reddy pointed out that the ED recently seized assets worth Rs 23.54 crore related to the ongoing investigation, showing that the probe was far from over. He questioned how the CM could declare himself exonerated when there was no such statement from the ED.

He said Chandrababu has been misleading the public and that the recent asset seizure had left him unsettled.

He noted that government funds amounting to Rs 371 crore could not have been released without Chandrababu's approval, as he had personally signed off on the disbursements 13 times. He suggested that this directly implicated Chandrababu in the misuse

Funds amounting to Rs 371 crore could not have been released without Chandrababu's approval

of the funds. He highlighted that the ED's findings showed that money intended for the Siemens project in Andhra Pradesh was diverted through fake invoices and shell companies. He named individuals involved in the scheme, including key executives from DesignTech Systems and Siemens Industry Software India, as mentioned in the ED's report.

He emphasised that only the courts could clear Chandrababu, and any claim of a "clean chit" before the investigation was complete was misleading.

He asserted that the ED's investigation would prove the misuse of public funds through dummy companies and confirm Chandrababu's involvement in the alleged scam.

35 relief centres being set up for rain-affected victims Prakasam

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector A Thameem Ansariya here on Wednesday said that 35 relief centres are being set up for the rain affected victims in Prakasam district at various places.

She said that five relief centres had already been set up in Ongole, Tangutur, Kottapatnam and Singaraykonda mandals in which over 200 victims were accommodated.

"Prakasam district was declared as 'red zone' in view of the incessant rains under the influence of depression. Entire government machinery has been put on high alert and all precautionary measures have been taken to avoid loss of life or property," the Collector informed.

Collector Ansariya, accompanied by Mayor Gangada Sujata and other officials, visited some of the rain affected areas including the Mother Theresa colony on Wednesday.



The Collector also saw the swollen Nallavagu stream and spoke to the dwellers of the area.

The denizens of the colonies explained to the Collector

about the water stagnation and scarcity for drinking water. Later the Collector visited the BSR colony and interacted with the dwellers.

The Collector instructed

the officials concerned to take steps to desilting of drains and canals and ensure that rain water is not stagnated at any areas.

She also directed the munic-

ipal officials to take steps to ensure that drinking water is provided to the denizens of all colonies. She told the electricity engineers to take steps to ensure that uninterrupted power is provided to the colonies.

Talking to the media on the occasion, District Collector Ansariya said that in the backdrop of heavy rains, measures are being taken to prevent clogging of rainwater in the residential colonies. Special focus was laid on the low-lying areas including Keshavarajugunta, Balaram colony, Netaji colony, Nehru Nagar and Mother Theresa colony in Ongole city in view of heavy rains.

Arrangements were made to shift the people living in low-lying areas to the relief centres, she stated. Municipal Commissioner Venkateswara Rao, RDO Lakshmi Prasanna and other officials were among those who accompanied the Collector.



Collector, MLA lay stone for construction of drain, CC road

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, flanked by MLA Arimilla Radhakrishna, laid the foundation stone for the construction of drain and Cement roads at Uradalapaalem village in Attili Mandal on Wednesday.

The drain and the cement roads would be constructed at a cost of Rs 1.10 crore. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Collector Nagarani said the government has taken up large-scale works to develop the village and efforts would be made to get more funds for development works by adding more working days.

"The material component of employment guarantee works has increased to 40 percent from earlier 30 percent. If about 10 lakh work is done, Rs 4 lakh will be sanctioned under the material component, thus

supporting the development of infrastructure in the villages," the Collector explained.

The Collector said that the government would provide unskilled work where needed so that the unskilled workers of the village do not face financial difficulties. The eligible unskilled people should take advantage of them, she said.

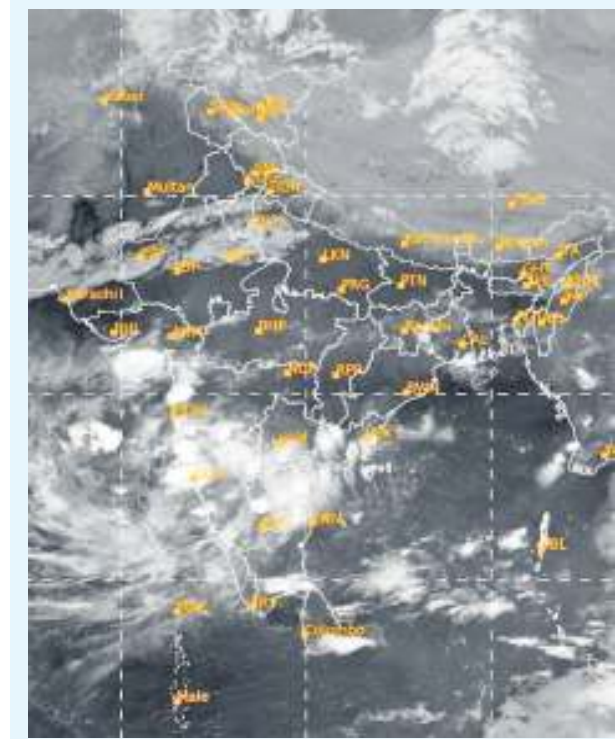
Nagarani said that women are leading in all fields and the role of women in the family is very important, depending on the economic conditions. When the men go abroad seeking livelihood, the women play an important role by taking the responsibility of the family, the Collector lauded the women.

In the NREGA works, the works useful to villagers and works related to canals, drains and farmers should be identified and allocated. It is suggested that the work done should be of quality and not temporary, she stated, adding that

garbage has become a major problem for human survival. Collector Nagarani regretted that the plastic waste including bottles are dumped in the drains and canals causing inhibition of flood water leading to cloggings.

MLA Arimilla Radhakrishna highlighted that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan are keen to develop the state swiftly and consequently many development works are being launched, especially in the rural areas. 'Palla Panduga' is being organized aiming to provide needed amenities in the rural areas, the MLA pointed out.

The MLA made it clear that all the development works would be completed by the next Sankranti festival. DWAMA PD KCH Appa Rao and Panchayat Raj DE B Vijay Kumar were among those who were present.



Heavy rainfall forecast in R'seema, South Coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy to very Heavy rainfall at a few places with isolated extreme rainfall over Rayalaseema, Heavy to very Heavy rainfall at isolated places over south Coastal Andhra Pradesh were forecasted.

The depression over south-west and adjoining west central Bay of Bengal moved west-northwestwards with a speed of 17 kmph and lay centered. It is likely to move west-northwestwards and cross north Tamil Nadu - South Andhra Pradesh coasts between Puducherry and Nellore, close to north of Chennai during the early morning of October 17th. Thereafter, it is very likely to

continue to move west-northwestwards and weaken into a well marked low pressure area over south coastal Andhra Pradesh and adjoining north Tamil Nadu by October 17th forenoon.

Light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places is likely to occur on October 16th and heavy rainfall at isolated places is likely on October 17th likely to occur in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Rayalaseema.

Squally wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph is likely to prevail in south Andhra Pradesh coasts

until midnight of 16th October and decrease gradually thereafter.

Meanwhile, the AP Distaste Management Authority MD Ronanki Kurmanath said that flash floods are likely to occur in Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor and Kadapa district following incessant rains under the influence of depression. He directed the officials of the districts to take all precautionary measures to shift the people living under the plains of the river Penna. He said that five SDRF teams and two NDRF teams have been deployed and relief centres are being set up wherever they are needed, he stated.

Rs 20,000 cr burden on people due to RRR realignment: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister and BRS MLA Harish Rao has criticised the government for its handling of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) project, claiming that the mismanagement is placing a massive Rs 20,000 crore burden on the people of Telangana. Speaking during an informal discussion at Telangana Bhavan, Harish Rao expressed concern over delays, alignment changes and the government's failure to deliver on its promises.

Harish Rao explained that the RRR was originally planned during the previous government, with separate proposals for the northern and southern sections. The 158-kilometer northern section, which had been approved by the Central government, was to have its land acquisition costs shared equally between the central and state governments under Section 3A.

However, despite a notification being issued 10 months ago, land acquisition has seen no progress.



"Farmers who are supposed to be compensated are still waiting. The delay in moving the project forward is unacceptable, and immediate action is needed," he urged.

He also raised concerns over the recent changes in the alignment of the southern section of the RRR, which he believes were made to benefit a few influential landowners.

The alignment change increased the length of the road from 182 kilometers to 198 kilometers, a modification Harish Rao warned the central government would

not accept. "These changes clearly favor certain individuals at the expense of the state, and it's the people who will bear the cost," he remarked.

Harish Rao was particularly critical of the state government's decision to take on the RRR project on its own, resulting in a Rs 20,000 crore financial burden. "Why is the State government taking this on when the central government is ready to handle it? This only benefits contractors and influential individuals, while the people of Telangana pay the price," he questioned.

The former minister also slammed the government for not releasing the Assembly Constituency Development Programme (ACDP) funds, which were promised at Rs 5 crore per constituency. "It's been six months, and not a single rupee has been released. The necessary orders haven't even been issued. These funds are critical for constituency development and must be released immediately," he demanded.

Landslide on Tirumala ghat road, vehicular traffic suspended



PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Huge boulders fell on the Tirumala ghat road at Papavinasanam forcing authorities to suspend vehicular traffic on the ghat road on Wednesday. A landslide took place on the Papavinasanam ghat road due to incessant

rains. Huge boulders fell on the road. However no one was hurt in the incident.

As a precautionary measure, the authorities suspended vehicular traffic on the ghat road temporarily. The boulders were removed using a JCP and cleared the traffic some time later.

Kakinada GGH to be revamped with advanced equipment: DC



PNS ■ KAKINADA

District Collector Shan Mohan has made it clear that the Government General Hospital (GGH), which is catering to the requirements of patients of Godavari districts, will be revamped by providing advanced equipment upgrading the departments.

In order to send a comprehensive report on the requirements of the hospital for development, the Collector visited the hospital on Wednesday and went round various departments along with the hospital superintendent, Dr. Lavanya Kumari.

The Collector asked the superintendent to write a detailed report on the list of vacancies, medical equipment requirements, and improvement of the infrastructure, including lift maintenance.

Collector Shan Mohan told media persons that discrete enquiries were made about the facilities available, especially

for performing the preliminary surgeries, x-ray machines, operation theatres, lights, ventilators, and the staff availability. The GGH was one of the prominent hospitals in the state. A medical team from the USA has recently conducted a special cancer camp in the hospital, benefiting a large number of people.

It would be upgraded and developed all around based on the comprehensive report being submitted to the government, he added. Conceding that the maintenance of toilets in the hospital was to be improved, the collector said the staff was instructed to improve the toilets maintenance and send daily reports along with photos on the toilets condition.

GGH deputy superintendent Dr P Srinivas, RMO Dr Anitha, emergency wing chief Dr K Satyavani, and orthopaedic chief Dr Vithal were among those accompanying the collector during the visit.



Hanuman temple destroyed by miscreants

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

Unidentified miscreants destroyed a Hanuman temple at Kadarinathunikota village in Annamaya district in the early hours on Wednesday.

The Hanuman temple is located one half a kilometer away from the village. Last night miscreants destroyed the temple. As the walls of the temple were demolished, the temple tilted to one side and it may collapse at any time. The RSS and VSP who visited the temple told the media that they lodged a police complaint.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has taken the destruction of Abhayanjaneya temple seriously and directed the officials to arrest the offenders. The Chief Minister strongly condemned the damage caused to the temple of Lord Abhayanjaneya in the forest region of Kadarinathunikota in Annamaya district due to the attack on the temple. The Chief Minister directed the officials to initiate stringent action against those resorted to the attack as heavy damage is caused to the temple.

Counseling conducted for rowdy sheeters, warned of invoking PD Act

PNS ■ ONGOLE

On the directions of SP AR Damodhar, Deputy Superintendent of Police R Srinivasa Rao conducted counseling to some rowdy sheeters here on Wednesday and warned them of invoking the PD Act if they are involved in criminal activities.

The rowdy sheeters in the limits of Ongole town, one town, two town and taluka police stations were counselled by the DSP.

The DSP warned of stringent action, if they are involved again in criminal activities. The DSP inquired



with the rowdy sheeters of their present profession and how they were eking out livelihood.

The DSP instructed them

to keep distance from criminal activity from now onwards.

Otherwise, stringent action would be taken and the PD

Act would also be invoked, she warned them. CIs Nagaraju, Srinivasa Rao and Ajay Kumar were among those who were present.

3 kg of cannabis seized, 3 peddlers arrested

PNS ■ PADERU

The police seized 3 KGs of ganja when being transported illegally on a two-wheeler at Donkarai village in Chintur mandal on Wednesday in ASR district. Police said that on a tip off, a police team conducted checking of vehicles. The police team found 3 KGs of ganja being transported on a two-wheeler.

The police seized the ganja and arrested three persons and two of them belong to Odisha state. The arrested three persons were produced before the court which sent them to judicial custody.

Driver suffers stroke while driving RTC bus, dies

PNS ■ GUNTUR

As many as 20 passengers travelling in an APSRTC bus had a miraculous escape as the bus driver suffered cardiac arrest while driving the bus at Karlapalem village.

The incident took place when the bus was going to Chirala from Repalle. The driver suffered cardiac arrest while driving the bus and he collapsed on the steering wheel. The bus veered off the road and plunged into a canal.

All the bus passengers escaped unhurt. Had the incident taken place on the national highway, it would



have been a major accident, the passengers feared. The

stranded bus passengers were sent in another bus.

ACROSS THE STATES



KNP records 446 butterfly species

More than 446 butterfly species have been recorded in Assam's Kaziranga National Park (KNP), famed for the one-horned rhinoceros, making it a habitat with the second highest concentration in the country after the Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh, a park official said. The long-term observation and records are a culmination of years of work put in by a scientist from Kaziranga, Dr Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi. The survey was conducted in different parts of the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, especially in the Panbari Reserve Forest, which is home to a diverse range of butterfly species. A new pictorial guidebook on butterflies, authored by Gogoi, documents 446 species of butterflies recorded in Kaziranga, 18 of which are new in the country.



'Pink alarms' in Datia hospital for safety of staff

In a first, 'pink alarms' have been installed at the government-run district hospital and medical college in Datia town of Madhya Pradesh, officials said on Wednesday. The issue of safety of women staff at public hospitals came to the fore recently after the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital. The alarm system was district collector Sandeep Makin's initiative, a state public relations department official said. "This is the first government hospital in the state where this facility has been provided," he said. The pressing of an alarm will set off a siren and within five minutes the security will reach the person in trouble, the official added. Alarms were installed in the staff duty room on all the three floors of the Maternity Ward, Trauma Center and the New OPD Block, civil surgeon and hospital superintendent Dr K C Rathore said.



Kerala to host conclave on higher education

The Kerala government will organise an international conclave on next generation higher education on December 19 and 20 at the Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) in Kochi. Titled "Shaping Kerala's Future: International Conclave on Next-Gen Higher Education," the event would bring together experts and thought leaders in higher education from India and around the globe, an official statement said here on Wednesday. The two-day event would be inaugurated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. A Nobel laureate is also expected to take part in the inaugural session on December 19, it said. As Kerala embarks on a transformative journey in higher education, this conclave is expected to serve as a critical platform for addressing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Terrorism hurdle in regional cooperation: Jaishankar

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

Delivering a thinly veiled message to Pakistan from its national capital, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said if activities across borders are "characterised" by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows and connectivity in parallel.

In his address at a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) chaired by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended among others by Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Jaishankar also asserted that trade and connectivity initiatives must recognise territorial integrity and sovereignty and it is essential to have an "honest conversation" on lack of trust.

The remarks came amid the lingering military standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh and concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the Indian Ocean and other strategic waters.

Ahead of the SCO deliberations at the Jinnah Convention Centre, PM Sharif shook hands with Jaishankar and warmly received him for the second time in the last two



In his remarks at the conclave, Jaishankar said cooperation must be based on mutual respect and sovereign equality and that the SCO member nations can benefit immensely if the grouping moves ahead collectively with mutual trust. He especially stressed on adhering to the SCO charter, highlighting its underlying essence of strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness.

days. Sharif and Jaishankar shook hands and briefly spoke at a dinner reception last night. In his address at the conclave, Jaishankar flagged concerns over a number of challenges including that of countering the 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism. "If activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges in parallel," the external affairs minister said, without naming Pakistan.

Before leaving Islamabad, Jaishankar thanked PM Sharif and Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in a post on 'X' that is being seen as a positive gesture by senior functionaries in the Pakistan establishment.

He also described the SCO's Council of Heads of Government meeting as "productive".

"Departing from Islamabad, Thank PM @CMShehbaz, DPM & FM @MishaqDar50 and the Government of Pakistan for the hospitality and courtesies," Jaishankar said.

In another post, the external affairs minister identified eight takeaways from the Indian perspective at the conclave that included the inclusion of digital public infrastructure (DPI) and digital in the SCO framework and a decision to develop a dialogue on the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

Other key takeaways listed by the minister included upholding fair and balanced connectivity projects in accordance with international law and reemphasising rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, fair, inclusive and transparent multilateral trading systems with WTO at its core.



Omar Abdullah sworn in as J-K CM

Cong stays away from govt for now

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah took oath as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, heading the first elected government in the union territory since 2019 when its special status was revoked.

As Jammu and Kashmir turned another page in its troubled history, the 54-year-old was sworn in along with five other ministers, three from Jammu region and two from the Kashmir Valley. The effort towards regional balance within the administration was also reflected in his choice of deputy chief minister -- Surender Choudhary from Jammu region's Nowshera constituency.

The Congress, a member of the pre-poll alliance with the

NC, has decided not to take up any ministerial positions in the new government as of now. The new Jammu and Kashmir government, which ends six years of direct central rule, can have up to nine ministers.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Abdullah and his ministers at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre along the banks of the Dal Lake.

Abdullah, who takes over as chief minister for a second term, is the third generation of the influential Abdullah family to occupy the office -- after his grandfather Sheikh Abdullah and father Farooq Abdullah.

His first term as chief minister was from 2009 to 2014 when Jammu and Kashmir was a full-fledged state.

Saini to take oath as Haryana CM today

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Nayab Singh Saini will be sworn-in as the chief minister of Haryana on Thursday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP's top leadership, among others attending the oath-taking ceremony.

Saini, 54, on Wednesday met Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and staked claim to form the next government after he was unanimously elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party in a meet-

Modi, Shah to attend event

ing held at the party office in Panchkula.

Massive security arrangements have been made in the wake of the swearing-in ceremony which will take place in Panchkula.

Besides Modi and Shah, several Union ministers including Rajnath Singh and J P Nadda, who is also the BJP president, chief ministers of many states, and senior party leaders will attend the oath-

taking event.

Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya will administer the oath of office and secrecy.

Haryana BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli on Tuesday said while PM Modi, Union ministers, chief ministers of the BJP-ruled states and NDA partners will attend the oath-taking function, opposition leaders of various parties, 'progressive farmers', 'Lakshpati Didis' and people from various



social organisations have also been invited.

Badoli had also said Valmiki Jayanti falls on October 17, the day when the new government would be sworn-in.

In the October 5 Haryana polls, the BJP secured an unprecedented third term in the state, winning 48 seats in the 90-member assembly. The Congress won 37 seats.

With the BJP forming the government for a third time in a row in Haryana, Saini will be taking oath as the chief minister for the second time.

'Northeast on radar of nation's development': Dhankhar

PNS ■ SHILLONG

Asserting that skilling youth is the need of the time, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday said Northeast is on the radar of the nation's development.

Addressing a function in Shillong, he said the Northeast is a significant contributor to the economic progress and cultural essence of the country.

Dhankhar was speaking after laying the foundation stone for the Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub in New Shillong. He also launched the 'CM Business Catalyst: Student B-Plan Challenge', which is supported by IIM-Shillong, and presided over the signing of an MoU between UNDP and the Meghalaya government for promoting entrepreneurship.

The Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub will be built on a 6.54-acre plot at Rs 77.5



Cr. It will be developed as a facility for incubation, training, collaboration and industry partnerships.

Dhankhar said the empowerment of youth will boost the economy of the country.

"Skilling youth is the need of the time," he said.

"Skill is neither discovered nor innovated, it is in fact the optimal exploitation of talent of a person in that specified field which gives the human resource a qualitative cutting-edge," he added, underscoring that skilling is no longer a quality, it is a need.

Siddaramaiah deeply involved in MUDA 'scam': BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the MUDA chairman stepped down from his post on Wednesday, the BJP demanded that Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also resign immediately as he is "deeply embroiled" in the land "scam".

Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) chairman K Marigowda resigned from his post amid the row over alleged irregularities in the allotment of sites to Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi B M.

"MUDA chairman has tendered his resignation... I call upon Siddaramaiah that if you have the slightest morality left, you should step down immediately. You should not wait for today's sunset," BJP

national spokesperson and MP Sambit Patra said at a press conference here.

He said Marigowda's resignation and Siddaramaiah's wife "offering" to return the MUDA sites allocated to her make it clear that the chief minister is "deeply involved in the scam from head to toe".

"There is no doubt about it," Patra said.

Earlier in the day, Marigowda submitted his resignation to the Karnataka Urban Development Department Secretary. "I have resigned following directions from the CM. Also, as I had health issues, I have resigned... there was no pressure on me, as I had health issues I have resigned," Marigowda told reporters in Bengaluru.

Netaji's niece Roma Ray dies at 95

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's niece Roma Ray died on Wednesday at her south Kolkata residence due to old age ailments, her family said.

She was 95. She is survived by a son, two daughters and five grandchildren, her son Ashis Ray said in a statement.

Ray was the daughter of eminent barrister and freedom fighter Sarat Chandra Bose. She had witnessed her uncle's rise in the 1930s when Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was elected the president of the Indian National Congress in 1938. She was also very close to Netaji's wife, Emilie Schenk, since she had lived in Vienna in the 1950s, where Schenk also resided. Ray was invited to speak at Schenk's funeral in Germany in 1996. She was married to renowned medical practitioner Dr Sachis Ray.

SC to begin marital rape case hearing today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will on Thursday commence hearing pleas related to the question whether a man should continue to enjoy legal protection for forcing his wife, who is not a minor, to have sex with him.

A bench of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra on Wednesday said it will commence the hearing on the pleas on Thursday.

The hearing assumes significance in the wake of Centre's opposition to the plea seeking criminalisation of marital rape. If sexual acts by a man with his own wife is made punishable as "rape", it may severely impact the conjugal relationship and lead to serious disturbances in the institution of marriage, the Centre



contended in the top court.

Senior Advocate Karuna Nandy, appearing for some of the litigants, mentioned the pleas before the bench at the end of day's proceedings after it could not be taken up during the day.

"Marital rape matter will be first on board, we will start tomorrow," the CJI said.

When Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, sought postponement, the CJI remarked, "It is a fixed matter on board, let them

start tomorrow. The matter has been mentioned several times in the past for an urgent hearing.

Under the exception clause of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), now repealed and replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife, the wife not being minor, is not rape. Even under the new law, Exception 2 to Section 63 (rape) says that "sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 18 years of age, is not rape".

The top court on January 16, 2023, sought the Centre's response on a batch of petitions challenging the IPC provision, which provides protection to a husband against prosecution for forcible sexual intercourse if the wife is an adult.

SIDDIQUE KILLING

Bollywood celebs in crosshairs of underworld



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The brazen killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique, famous for his iftar parties and his connections in Bollywood, outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's Mumbai office has again put the spotlight on the symbiotic relationship between showbiz and the underworld. Siddique, who was gunned down on Saturday night, may

have been targeted by the Lawrence Bishnoi because of his proximity to Salman Khan. Here are some instances of celebrities coming in the crosshairs of the underworld with cases of extortion, threats and even a killing.

GULSHAN KUMAR:

The killing of the T-Series boss in 1997 by the Mumbai underworld was the first major incident that shocked the country. Kumar would visit a Shiva temple in Mumbai's western suburb of Andheri every morning and evening. On August 12, 1997, he went to the temple, prayed for 15 minutes, made his offerings. On his way back to his car, he was fired at by three assailants as he was opening the car door. He was declared brought dead to the Cooper hospital.

Before his murder, Gulshan Kumar had received threat calls on August 5 and August 9 the same year, police said.

SALMAN KHAN:

The superstar's infamous blackbuck poaching case dating back to 1998 continues to haunt him. Incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi threatened to kill the actor during a court appearance in Jodhpur in 2018. Since then, the star has received multiple threats to his life.

In April this year, when gunshots were fired outside his Bandra residence by two shooters reportedly belonging to the Bishnoi gang who were later arrested.

Security around the actor has been upgraded after Siddique's murder because of their close relationship.

RAKESH ROSHAN:

After the success of his 2000 movie "Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai", which marked the acting debut of his son Hrithik Roshan, filmmaker Rakesh Roshan survived an assassination attempt linked to the underworld after he reportedly refused to pay extortion money.

Two men, Sunil Vithal Gaikwad and Sachin Kamble, shot at Roshan on January 21, 2000, near his office in Mumbai's Santacruz area. One bullet hit his left arm and the other grazed his chest. Roshan was able to get into his car and drive to the Santacruz police station. He was then taken to Nanavati Hospital, where he was operated on.

SHAH RUKH KHAN:

The "Jawan" star has had many run-ins with the Mumbai

underworld and is known for standing up to threats. The actor, who was given Y+ security cover from the Maharashtra government in light of threats to his life in October 2023, was threatened by gangster Abu Salem on multiple occasions in the 1990s.

PREITY ZINTA:

Zinta publicly shared her experiences of receiving threats after speaking out against underworld involvement in the film industry during legal proceedings related to the 2001 film "Chori Chori Chupke Chupke". The film's producer Nasim Rizvi and financier Bharat Shah landed in jail for receiving funds from the underworld.

Zinta told a court in Mumbai that she received calls asking for Rs 50 lakh.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Election time

The elections in the two states, along with by-elections, will provide a clear snapshot of the public sentiment

It is election time once again. The last round of elections in 2024 would be held in November. The Election Commission has announced that Assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand will begin on November 13. Jharkhand will go to the polls in two phases, on November 13 and 20, while Maharashtra will hold a single-phase election on November 20. The votes for both states will be counted on November 23. Additionally, dates for several Lok Sabha by-elections, including in Wayanad, Kerala, where a bypoll is needed after Rahul Gandhi vacated the seat, have been announced. The Assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand are critical for both the ruling and the Opposition parties, as they serve as key battlegrounds to gauge their standing. In Maharashtra, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) faces a formidable challenge from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition, comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress.



The MVA aims to capitalise on public dissatisfaction over issues like economic distress and governance failures while projecting a united front despite internal tensions.

In Jharkhand, the contest is equally poised, with the incumbent Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-Congress alliance seeking to fend off the BJP's challenge. The ruling coalition is banking on Chief Minister Hemant Soren's popularity and social welfare schemes to retain power. However, the BJP is expected to emphasise issues like law and order and tribal rights to swing the vote in its favour. Apart from the Assembly polls, by-elections will be conducted on November 13 for four Assembly seats in Punjab—Dera Baba Nanak, Chabbewal (SC), Gidderbaha, and Barnala. These bypolls are seen as indicators of the prevailing political sentiment in the regions, potentially setting the tone for broader electoral battles. In addition, the by-election for the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat in Kerala presents another crucial contest. Speculation is rife that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra may make her electoral debut from this constituency, adding a significant dimension to the Congress's campaign strategy. Elections in India are not only a period of heightened activity for political parties but also a monumental task for the Election Commission and government machinery. Conducting elections in the country is no small feat, as ensuring a peaceful, free and fair process presents significant challenge. The upcoming assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, along with the bypolls, will serve as critical indicators of India's evolving political dynamics. As the states prepare for high-stakes battles, various political scenarios could unfold, influenced by factors like coalition strategies, regional issues and leadership challenges. But ultimately it would be the unpredictable and elusive voters who would decide the fate of the political parties.

On the contrary, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav's statement a day after the defeat indicated that the alliance with Congress would continue. Akhilesh said, "I want to say that the INDIA bloc will be there. The UP and Congress alliance will remain intact..." The Aam Admi Party has said it will go solo in the Delhi Assembly poll, while it allied with the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls three months ago. Congress won no seat. The other allies criticise Congress for its overconfidence and rigid attitude toward seat sharing. The resurgent Congress, which had doubled its tally in the Lok Sabha polls, weakened after its Haryana shocker. Most exit polls suggested an astounding win for Congress in Haryana because the BJP faced a 10-year anti-incumbency and dealt with a section of disgruntled people. However, the BJP sprung a surprise and registered its most impressive victory in Haryana. No party has ever won a third term in the rural state. Discussions occur between the Congress, the Shiv Sena

Haryana setback exposes cracks in INDIA Bloc

The Congress defeat has not only dampened the party's resurgence narrative but also underscored the need for a recalibrated approach to coalition politics



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Grand Old Congress Party faces criticism from its INDIA coalition partners for mishandling the recent Haryana Assembly polls, allowing the BJP to win for a third time despite ten years of anti-incumbency. Most exit polls had predicted a clear win for the Congress, but the BJP secured 48 out of 90 seats, a victory even the BJP itself was surprised by. A win in Haryana would have boosted the Congress resurgence story. However, Congress lost this fifth Assembly election recently due to internal conflicts, adding to its previous losses in Punjab, Uttarakhanda, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It is uncertain whether the partners will be united in fighting against the BJP. Questions like whether an alliance with AAP would have favoured Congress to win in the Haryana polls are being debated. Secondly, the defeat would impact the upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The immediate impact of the Haryana result is likely in seat sharing in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Delhi, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Thirdly, it is uncertain whether the Congress and AAP will have an alliance. The AAP has already said it will go solo. The INDIA bloc performed well in the 2004 Lok Sabha polls due to its adaptability and compromise. The main aim of the Coalition was to give a one-to-one fight with the BJP and not split the anti-BJP votes. The Coalition put irritable issues on the back burner and managed to work well. They functioned with the sole aim of defeating the BJP and, to a certain extent, succeeded. The BJP majority was reduced, and the government had to be formed with the help of JD (U) and TDP. The Haryana defeat has altered the situation within the Coalition, with the INDIA bloc getting an edge over the Congress. The partners would probably deal with a slightly more restrained and sobered Congress. No one has said so far that the INDIA bloc is finished.



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THE MAIN AIM OF THE COALITION WAS TO GIVE A ONE-TO-ONE FIGHT WITH THE BJP AND NOT SPLIT THE ANTI-BJP VOTES. THE COALITION PUT IRRITABLE ISSUES ON THE BACK BURNER AND MANAGED TO WORK WELL

(Uddhav) and the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra. Congress needs to be more responsive to the seat-sharing formula and Sena's demand for Thackeray to be projected as the CM's face even before the polls. The AAP won no seat in the Haryana election but got roughly 1.78 per cent of the votes. It would have undoubtedly added to the INDIA bloc's kitty if Congress had allied with AAP. According to Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut, the Congress ignored the smaller parties and their offers for collaboration. Leaders from the Trinamool Congress, AAP, Shiv Sena (Uddhav), National Conference, RJD, Nationalist Congress Party, and others were critical of the Congress for messing up the Haryana polls. Shiv Sena mouthpiece Saamna said, "No one thought the BJP government would be elected in Haryana again. It seems Congress's overconfidence and arrogance of local Congress leaders led to the party's defeat," the Marathi paper said in its editorial on Wednesday. Repeating the formula adopted during the

Lok Sabha polls for seat sharing is crucial, at least in the Maharashtra and Jharkhand polls. The subdued Congress will not have the upper hand in seat sharing with most of its allies. The present mood in the INDIA coalition must impact Congress's relations with its partners. The Opposition may not be able to withstand any more shocks. Congress must focus on the 286 seats in a direct fight with the BJP. The 2024 polls proved the Congress' strike rate against the BJP rose to 29 per cent from 8 per cent in 2019. Significantly, the number of seats in which the Congress fought with the BJP was 286, down from 370 in 2014. Congress came to power in 2004 and 2009 because of its cordial relationships with the partners. The onus for keeping the alliance is broadly on the Congress. It must realise that every partner, small or big, is essential. Congress has had introspection sessions, and Panchmadi and Shimla are good examples. It is time for one more such session. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

PICTALK



A vendor arranges earthen lamps (Diya) for sale, in Bikaner

PTI

Why Indian women deserve support, not judgement

We must start questioning the unrealistic expectations placed on women and inculcate a culture that promotes shared responsibilities and duties

Indian women are increasingly taking on obligations that exceed 55 hours per week. They manage to pursue their professional careers while also managing a household—what one may refer to as the "second job." It reveals an unsettling fact about the intimidating pressure on women to perform above their capabilities. Although this problem between job and private life affects women all over the world, it is especially difficult for Indian women due to cultural expectations, societal standards and the long-held conviction that they "must do it all."



The question arises: why is there so much pressure on Indian women to push themselves beyond their breaking point? The answer lies in deeply ingrained gender roles and societal expectations. While strides have been made in women's empowerment, the onus of managing the household and caring for children continues to largely fall on their shoulders, even as they excel in their careers. As more women enter the workforce and pursue professional goals, the expectation

to continue fulfilling traditional roles has not diminished. Instead, it has expanded, creating an unsustainable juggling act. Are women taken for granted? In many ways, yes. The concept that women are born to balance this act manifests itself in the belief that they can easily handle a high-demanding profession while also serving as primary carers, homemakers, and support for the rest of the extended family. However, such an assumption ignores the impact on their physical and mental well-being. Each woman's drive is influenced by the societally imposed "superwoman" image, which puts undue pressure on them. And when

this? Absolutely not. Let us not forget that many Indian women are also teachers, a profession that requires nurturing, patience and a relentless dedication to the betterment of future generations. These women are shaping young minds in the classroom while simultaneously caring for their own families at home. The least society can do is give them the space and freedom they deserve, without the weight of judgement. It's time we, as a society, recognise that women's worth is not measured by their ability to "do it all." We must start questioning the unrealistic expectations placed on them and, instead, advocate for a culture that promotes shared responsibilities. Supporting women in their endeavors—whether in their careers or at home—by giving them the freedom to make choices without judgement is essential. Only then can we begin to alleviate the unnecessary pressures that have, for too long, weighed on the shoulders of Indian women. (The author is a motivational speaker and a freelance writer; views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

INDIA-CANADA DIPLOMATIC CRISIS

Madam — Apropos to the article 'Souring relations', on October 16, India is withdrawing its High Commissioner from Canada after Canadian PM Justin Trudeau again accused India of masterminding the June 18, 2023, killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia. Trudeau's accusation and mischaracterisation of India is based on the American intelligence's raw data supplied to Canada. But, Sikh militants in both Canada and California are deeply involved in organised crime and gang violence. Perhaps, Trudeau believed the volume and frequency of the accusation could trump the truth. He also may believe that doubling down on Sikh militants might win him votes in key districts. On both points, he is wrong. After Khalistani terrorists blew up Air India Flight 182, ignorance can be no excuse about the movement's lethality. Left unchecked, the Khalistani extremists Trudeau's government shelters can be as lethal as Al Qaeda. The movement would be impotent without funding, however. Here, Canadian banks are as complicit as the Arab and Somali hawala agents who ultimately helped move money around prior to Al Qaeda's 1998 East Africa embassy bombings and the September 11, 2001, terror attacks in New York and Washington. Hence, Canada is guilty of abetting terrorism.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

END COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Madam — It is indeed a matter of concern that communal clashes are again showing their ugly faces. No religion can recommend violent reactions for any reason. But every religion suggests being patient even under utter provocation. Therefore, clash in the name of God and religion is only an organised attempt to disturb peace and take undue advantage of it. But the history is clear with its messages that such chauvinists can

Firecracker ban insufficient



This refers to the news, "Delhi government imposes ban on firecrackers to combat air pollution" (October 15). Besides the increasing population density, the air in Delhi remains polluted and it is being inhaled by the majority of the populace and people commuting there. Recently, the AQI level is showing

alarming conditions. Apparently the decision of the Delhi government to ban the production, storage, sale and use of firecrackers till January 25 seems to help in reducing the worsening pollution condition, but it will irritate the majority of Hindus in view of the upcoming Ghathh pooja and Diwali festivals. The State BJP President Virendra Sachdeva has raised a valid question to the Delhi government that the main reasons for pollution are the burning of stubble in the neighbouring state of Punjab and dust is flying on many broken roads. Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee President Devendra Yadav has argued the bitter truth that the arrangements made to control pollution have been inadequate. It would be better to discourage the use of firecrackers in social and religious events. Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

attract some people for sometime but not all for all the times. People have their basic livelihood issues and any group interested in relieving them of their plights should come out with constructive ideas and suggestions.

But sharpening the frictions and promoting clashes should be understood by the people as anti-social acts that aim at reaping advantages for the self or the group. If any group plans to promote its cause by promoting differences and violent reactions, it should remember that the results of such activities will be only negative in the long run and the gains, if any, will be purely ephemeral. However, it is for the people to identify such persons and groups and keep them at a distance without falling prey to their deceptive traps.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Madam — In our daily lives, mindless scrolling on social media has turned into an addiction fuelled by the constant overflow of news and information.

People often find themselves endlessly scrolling through content without any specific purpose. We must try to acknowledge that this scrolling addiction can lead to a decrease in cognitive ability leading to various psychological disorders, or sometimes it may also hamper the mental well-being of an individual, resulting in a reduction and a lack of focus and attention while doing any job or specific task. Scrolling might give us temporary pleasure, but at what cost?

We are just making ourselves more vulnerable and slowly becoming a puppet of social media and mobile phones. Setting a limit on scrolling, planning a digital free period, and bringing offline leisure activities into our daily routine can help an individual to alleviate this dangerous addiction. So, don't lose yourself for some momentary pleasure because ultimately health is wealth.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

REVIVING FAMILY BONDS

A family can transform a person into an achiever by right encouragement and support



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJI

Small family, Happy family (Chhota Parivar-Sukhi Pariwar) & 'Hum Do Hamare', these two jingles coined by the administration had changed the family planning scenario in India over the years. But it's so ironic that despite becoming the first country to adopt a national policy for limiting a great Indian proclivity, India is expected to overtake China in 2034. At the time of independence, there were 345 million Indians. The world took 454 years to go from 345 million in 1310 AD to a billion, but India took just 52 years. Looking at the above facts and figures one wonders as to what would be the societal structure in a country that takes the burden of a population of a billion people. Sadly, the situation is quite grim, because today we see fewer families and more individuals living their lives on their terms with an 'I care a damn attitude' which is quite common in the metropolises. Our forefathers were brought up with strong family values, but with passing time and ever-changing scenarios, today those core values have been left behind to adopt new so-called modern values. It's so unfortunate that today very few of us know the importance of living or growing up in a family. One must understand the fact that a family is the first school where the literate and the illiterate have got their first lessons in the art of living and values, traditions, customs and conventions. Also in a family, everyone feels secure and protected. Everyone feels strong because of the strength of the family. Everyone feels that others welcome him or her. Everyone feels a kind of support, sustenance and encourage-



ment. It is, therefore, essential to help and facilitate the growth of good supportive families for foundation as a family tradition rather than promoting an individualistic lifestyle for the sake of the next Gen & future to come.

There is some kind of magnetic force that holds the members of a family together. In other words, it is a feeling of closeness and belongingness in the mind of every person and the feeling of acceptance on the part of the whole group that gives it the nomenclature of a family. This feeling of acceptance is always based on the feeling of mutual love, loyalty and trust and also understanding and accommodation. Today we see that families are splitting up.

Certain values like mutual affection, love & genuine caring that make a family work are vanishing because everyone wants to live an independent life without any kind of family interference. However, if the younger ones continue to give regard to the elders and the elders continue to give love to the younger ones, then the family life will continue to be undisturbed and everyone will act responsibly. But, if each one gives up their responsibility and the feeling of concern for others, then cracks would appear and get deeper. Hence to preserve the family structure & tradition, one needs to have tolerance, sobriety & humility because family is very essential to civilised life, be it a spiritual family or the society as a family or of nations. Hence we should consider family as a place where we can work for physical, mental, moral and spiritual growth and can create an environment where others also can grow. A family can change a person into a great leader, disciplinarian, soldier, criminal or scholar by encouraging or discouraging, supporting or condemning certain positive or negative traits in him.

We must, therefore, pay attention to the transformation of families because families are the breeding grounds for good or bad human beings. So, let us awaken people to observe family values such as mutual love, trust, acceptance, accommodation, consideration and care for the wellbeing of others, the spirit of adjustment, tolerance, responsibility and cooperation because if these family values flourish, the nation and the whole humankind will flourish too.

(Writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

Stubble burning crisis needs practical solutions



BISWAJEET BANARJEE

Without swift and sustained efforts, northern India would face yet another year of deteriorating air quality, leaving millions to grapple with bad air quality



The Supreme Court has taken a strong stance against the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for its failure to control stubble burning, a major contributor to air pollution in Delhi-NCR. The court's rebuke, delivered during a hearing on October 3, emphasised the need for effective ground-level interventions and questioned why the Commission had not implemented any provisions of the relevant Act to curb pollution from crop residue burning. Stubble burning, especially in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, has been a major environmental challenge for years. Farmers often resort to burning crop residue after harvesting paddy and wheat due to the increasing mechanisation of farming, the use of combined harvesters, a shortage of labour, and rising labour costs. This practice, prevalent in October and November following the paddy harvest, results in the release of large amounts of particulate matter into the atmosphere, contributing to the hazardous air quality in Delhi-NCR.

The Supreme Court's criticism of the CAQM reflects a broader frustration over the Commission's inability to effectively tackle this issue. Despite being set up three years ago to address pollution in the National Capital Region and surrounding areas, the CAQM has been criticised for its slow pace and lack of tangible outcomes. The court particularly highlighted that the Commission meets only once every three months, a frequency deemed inadequate for addressing a recurring crisis like stubble burning.

Moreover, the Commission has issued only 82 directives since its inception, a number that the court described as insufficient to deal with the scale of the problem. A significant concern raised by the Supreme Court is the lack of adequate staffing within the pollution control boards of Delhi-NCR and other affected states, including Uttar Pradesh. The



FARMERS OFTEN RESORT TO BURNING CROP RESIDUE AFTER HARVESTING PADDY AND WHEAT DUE TO THE INCREASING MECHANISATION OF FARMING, THE USE OF COMBINED HARVESTERS, A SHORTAGE OF LABOUR, AND RISING LABOUR COSTS

court ordered that these vacant posts be filled by April 30, 2025, to improve monitoring and enforcement capabilities. Effective staffing is critical for implementing measures on the ground, particularly when dealing with farmers who rely on burning crop residue as a quick and cost-effective way to clear their fields.

Despite repeated interventions from both the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Supreme Court, stubble burning incidents continue to surge. Last year alone, more than 33,000 incidents of stubble burning were recorded in Punjab, even after explicit instructions to engage with farmers to explore alternatives. The lack of a coordinated effort between the state governments and the CAQM has only exacerbated the pollution crisis during the winter months.

Turning Stubble into a Resource: While the focus remains on the failures of the CAQM and the continued challenges in states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a notable example of how stubble can be managed more sustainably. The state has successfully implemented initiatives that transform stubble into an energy resource and natural fertiliser, benefiting both the environment and the agricultural community.

The key to this transformation has been the establishment of Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants that convert crop residue into energy and high-quality compost. This approach has not only addressed environmental concerns but has also created an additional income stream for farmers, who sell stubble as raw

material for the CBG process. In this way, stubble has shifted from being a burden to becoming a valuable asset in Uttar Pradesh's rural economy. As of last year, Uttar Pradesh led the country in CBG production, with ten operational plants. Currently, 24 CBG units are active, and another 93 are under construction. The state aims to have more than 100 CBG plants operational soon, a goal endorsed by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri. During a March 2024 announcement, he highlighted the state's plan to double its bio-coal and biodiesel production by 2025. The success of CBG production in Uttar Pradesh has been bolstered by the Uttar Pradesh State Bio-Energy Policy 2022, which offers various incentives for establishing bio-CNG and CBG units using agricultural waste.

The policy aims to set up CBG plants in every district, providing local solutions for managing stubble while promoting energy self-sufficiency. A significant milestone in this journey was the inauguration of a CBG plant in Dhuriyapar, Gorakhpur, on March 8, 2023, by Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The plant, built for Rs 165 crore, processes 200 metric tonnes of straw, 20 metric tonnes of press mud, and 10 metric tonnes of cattle dung daily. It produces 20 metric tonnes of biogas and 125 metric tonnes of organic manure, contributing to higher agricultural yields while reducing dependency on chemical fertilisers. This initiative allows farmers to diversify their income sources and play

a crucial role in the energy sector. By reducing the practice of stubble burning, the state is making strides in environmental protection. The Yogi Adityanath government has expressed confidence that the enhanced production of bio-coal and biodiesel will help reduce air pollution in the region over the next five years.

The Supreme Court's critique of the CAQM underscores the urgency of finding a balanced approach to stubble burning that respects both environmental concerns and the practical challenges faced by farmers. Uttar Pradesh's model of converting stubble into a resource could serve as a blueprint for other states grappling with similar issues. However, the broader challenge remains: implementing such solutions at scale requires consistent policy support, adequate resources, and a willingness to engage with farmers directly. The court's directive for the CAQM to improve its approach and for state governments to fill vacant posts by 2025 is a step towards accountability.

Yet, the real test will lie in translating these directives into action before another winter brings the familiar, suffocating haze back to the skies of Delhi-NCR. The question remains whether the CAQM, in partnership with state governments, can adapt and adopt innovative solutions like those seen in UP. Without swift and sustained efforts, the region risks facing another year of deteriorating air quality, leaving millions to grapple with the health consequences of inaction.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer; views expressed are personal)

Urbanisation and youth: Building a healthier future amid rapid growth

By 2050, with 70 per cent of the global population expected to live in cities, engaging youth in shaping sustainable urban future is more crucial than ever

Urbanisation, an engine for economic prosperity and resources, sits at the centre of modernity and impacts health outcomes. With rapid urbanisation, the UN projects that by 2050, 7 of 10 people will live in cities, and the youth will likely be the most dominant population. The future will be forged by the ever-increasing global youth, who are integral to playing a dynamic and revolutionary role in creating and building strong, prosperous, sustainable, and vibrant societies. In recent years, international organisations have emphasised the meaningful involvement of youth as vital to accelerating progress towards the SDGs while development continues to grow globally. The approach also coincides



ASHWAJIT SINGH

with this year's message of World Habitat Day, which focuses on "engaging youth to create a better urban future." However, while we work towards engaging the new generation in planning their urban present and future through participatory processes and local leadership opportunities, ensuring their healthy livelihood is imperative. Urbanisation's positive attributes also mask the inequalities

that exist within it. Not all city residents experience or can access these benefits equally. For instance, 40 per cent of India's population will reside in the urban setup by 2030, with 24 per cent being the youth (15-29), making it a relatively young country. Although rapid urbanisation will continue to improve India's average household socio-economic condition and child health status, it is expected to disproportionately affect the health of urban youth, who are likely to become more vulnerable to health challenges.

Urbanisation without accounting for the primary healthcare amenities results in significant health disparities. As gentrification grows with urbanisation, a large chunk of the youth is likely to reside in

urban slums and low-income areas. These areas carry distinct health challenges that are influenced by broader socio-economic determinants such as poverty, education and employment.

Youth from low-income families and areas are more likely to face barriers to accessing education, which in turn limits job opportunities and perpetuates a cycle of poor health outcomes.

These informal settlements may sit adjacent to an affluent neighbourhood. Still, the people living there lack access to safe water and sanitation infrastructure, becoming hotspots for waterborne and vector-borne diseases due to flooding, open sewers, and overcrowding. With such poor hygiene, increased rates of malnutrition



among children and young adults worsen the burden of diseases.

In addition to infectious diseases, urban youth in lower-income areas are increasingly exposed to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, which are often exacerbated by poor diet, stress, and lack of access to early diagnosis or regular health checkups.

These substantial regional disparities affecting urban youths

living and health conditions are also caused by the inequitable distribution of clinics and healthcare centres, which limits care options. According to NFHS-3, only 39.9 per cent of urban poor children get full immunisation compared to 65.4 per cent of urban non-poor children. Lower vaccination rates and a lack of awareness of ongoing health issues negatively impact school attendance and cognitive development.

The National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), launched in 2013, has been instrumental in meeting the regulatory, reformatory, and developmental public health priorities for urban settings.

Over the years, NUHM has improved access to healthcare, allowing the urban poor

to choose public over costly private services. Among the other initiatives to focus on urban youth health, the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2021 outlines a 10-year vision for youth development by 2030, aligning with the United Nations' SDGs.

The NYP prioritises youth health as essential for India's holistic growth and progress by addressing critical health components of urban youth and acknowledging mental health. Further, India's pioneering step towards building inclusive health that benefits all and focuses on the youth also found prominence in the recent G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration in 2023.

The report encompasses ways to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and advance with

more health collaborations, especially when facing challenging mental health. While policies like NUHM and NYP have made strides in addressing urban youth health, more needs to be done and implemented to improve primary healthcare.

Many urban healthcare centres still struggle with understaffing, lack of resources, and accessibility issues for slum-dwelling youth. To ensure that India's urban youth thrive, it is crucial to increase investments in health services, prioritise mental health care, and continue engaging youth in the decision-making process for urban development.

(The writer is the Founder and Managing Director of IPE Global; views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold hits fresh record high of Rs 78,900 per 10g

Gold prices touched a new all-time high of Rs 78,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, gaining Rs 250 due to sustained buying by jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had closed at Rs 78,650 per 10 grams in the previous session on Tuesday. Silver also followed the suit and surged Rs 1,000 to Rs 93,500 per kg due to fresh buying from industrial units and coin makers. On Tuesday, it had finished at Rs 92,500 per kg. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 250 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 78,500 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 78,250 per 10 grams. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices due to strong demand by local jewellers. Besides, the decline in equity markets also aided the rally in the yellow metal as investors moved towards the safe haven assets like gold.



RBI passes condolence resolution in memory of Tata

The Reserve Bank's Central Board of Directors on Wednesday passed a condolence resolution in memory of industrialist Ratan Tata. Ratan Navul Tata died at a Mumbai hospital on October 9 at the age of 86 years. The Board passed a condolence resolution in memory of Shri Ratan N Tata, a former Director of the Central Board, the RBI said in a statement after the 611th meeting of its Central Board of Directors in Bhubaneswar. The central bank further said the Board reviewed the current economic and financial situation, including challenges posed by evolving geopolitical conflicts. It also discussed the functioning of various sub-committees of the Central Board, the Ombudsman Scheme and the activities of select central office departments. The Central Board members also took the Integrity Pledge in observance of the ensuing Vigilance Awareness Week 2024.



India to help Myanmar in setting up 5G mobile systems

India has offered to help Myanmar in setting up 5G mobile systems in that country, a government official said on Wednesday. In 2022, India had launched the 5G telephony services that promise to provide ultra high-speed internet on mobile phones. About 98 per cent of districts and 90 per cent of all villages were covered with 5G in a span of just 21 months in India. "In the field of 5G, we have offered to help Myanmar in setting up their 5G systems," Joint Secretary in the department of commerce Siddharth Mahajan told reporters here. The issue among others were discussed during the eighth India-Myanmar joint trade committee meeting here last month. Both the sides have also discussed cooperation in shipping sector. "We are looking at coastal shipping agreement," he said.

ISA Assembly to focus on solar adoption, technology: Joshi

The upcoming assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) will focus on empowering member countries for solar adoption, sharing technology and encouraging startups, besides having discussions on finances, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday. Joshi, who is also the President of the 120-nation alliance, was speaking at the curtain raiser event for the 7th ISA Assembly scheduled for November 3-6 in the national capital. The event will also see the election or re-election of ISA President and Co-Chair. It will also see the election of new Director General

(DG). While the new president and co-chair will take over the office immediately after the assembly, the new DG will assume the charge after the term of present DG Ajay Mathur ends on March 14, 2025. "I call upon members, signatories and prospective countries to unite on a 3-fold agenda empowering member countries to adopt solar energy as the energy source of choice, make energy access universal by supporting solar entrepreneurs to scale up local solutions and mobilise finance to speed up solar deployment," he said addressing the gathering which included delegates of member countries.

'Need to promote natural farming to improve soil health'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Agriculture Ram Nath Thakur on Wednesday stressed the need to promote natural farming to improve soil health.

He was addressing an event organised by Sulabh International, a social service organisation.

The minister asked Sulabh International to work in the areas of natural farming and also the creation of storage infrastructure in rural areas for agricultural crops.

According to a statement by Sulabh, Thakur said the government has given special attention towards the development of the agriculture sector and a huge amount has been allocated to boost storage of all kinds of agricultural produce, including vegetables and fruits. There is a vast possibility of work in this sector, he said.

Thakur further stressed the need for intensive research to improve soil conditions to ensure high yields and quality production.

With special reference to north Bihar, the minister stressed the need to max-



Thakur said the government has given special attention towards the development of the agriculture sector and a huge amount has been allocated to boost storage of all kinds of agricultural produce, including vegetables and fruits

imise the uses of availability of ponds in seven districts suitable for Makhana (fox nuts) and fish farming.

During this event, Sulabh gave an opportunity to women farmers from across India who have benefited from Sulabh's food programme, offering them a platform to showcase their produce.

Sulabh International, traditionally known for its pioneer-

ing work in sanitation and water, President Kumar Dilip said the decision to focus on food security emerged from its founder late Dr Bindeshwar Pathak's commitment to holistic development - one that addresses not just sanitation but also the underlying factors contributing to poverty and inequality.

"By empowering rural women through agriculture, we aim to create sustainable livelihoods, improve household nutrition, and foster community resilience. This approach aligns with our broader mission of social justice and upliftment of marginalised communities," he added. On Sulabh Food programme Vice President of Sulabh International, Sutirtha Sahariah said, "Our programme has since empowered over 2,500 rural women by helping them cultivate climate-resilient indigenous crops."

'China emerges as India's top import source'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

China has emerged as India's top import source with USD 56.29 billion worth of inbound shipments during the April-September period of this fiscal, according to the commerce ministry data.

During the period, the US emerged as the top export destination for the country with outbound shipments increasing by 5.62 per cent to USD 40.38 billion.

The imports from China rose by 11.5 per cent during the first half of this fiscal. The imports stood at USD 50.48 billion during April-September 2023.

During the period, the top 10 import sources of India were China, Russia, the UAE, the US, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Korea, Switzerland and Singapore, the data showed.

Imports from Russia rose to

USD 32.18 billion during April-September this fiscal from USD 30.43 billion a year ago.

Similarly, the inbound shipments from the UAE rose to USD 31.46 billion from USD 20.70 billion in the first half of the last fiscal.

During the period, the top 10 export destinations of the country were the US, the UAE, the Netherlands, the UK, China, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Germany and South Africa.

Exports to the UAE rose from USD 15.47 billion during April-September 2023 to USD 17.24 billion during April-September this fiscal.

Similarly, outbound shipments to China increased to USD 6.91 billion from USD 7.63 billion in the first half of the last fiscal.

In 2023-24, the US was India's largest trading partner, followed by China.

India, Uzbek to ensure quality in pharma

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation from Uzbekistan met officials from India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation and discussed areas of collaboration, including the development of a pharmacovigilance system and reducing adverse effects of pharmaceutical products, officials said on Wednesday.

The delegation led by Alisher Temirov, Director of the Center for Pharmaceutical Products Safety, Uzbekistan had detailed discussions with Ranga Chandrashekar, Joint



Drugs Controller of India's regulatory body for drug control, regarding the quality and safety in the pharma sector,

they added. "Several important issues were discussed during the meeting, including the development of a pharmacovigilance system, reducing the adverse effects of pharmaceutical products, and identifying ways to prevent potential risks. It was emphasised that strengthening international cooperation in this area is crucial for ensuring public health," an official statement said.

Temirov stressed the importance of developing effective mechanisms to prevent the

entry of low-quality and counterfeit drugs into Uzbekistan's pharmaceutical market.

"He emphasized the need for specific measures and close cooperation in verifying the authenticity of regulatory documents.

The Indian officials expressed readiness to further improve internal control mechanisms and enhance cooperation with the Center to prevent the entry of pharmaceutical products that have not passed quality control into the Uzbek market," the statement added.

BharatPe Group narrows losses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BharatPe Group on Wednesday said it has narrowed its consolidated losses before tax by about 50 per cent to Rs 474 crore in 2023-24. It had reported losses of Rs 941 crore in FY23, according to a company statement. The

firm's consolidated revenue from operations rose by 39 per cent to Rs 1,426 crore in FY24 compared to Rs 1,029 crore in the previous financial year. "FY24 was a milestone year for us as BharatPe turned EBITDA positive in October 2024. Also, we considerably slashed our cash burn in

FY24 and are on track to build a sustainable and profitable business. Over the last year, we have been able to partner with renowned financial institutions to extend credit access to merchants, which is a great validation for our business," BharatPe CEO Nalin Negi said.

ACs in India to consume more power than entire Mexico: IEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will over the next decade add more than 12,000 cars a day, expand built space equivalent to the built space in South Africa, and its air-conditioners will consume more electricity than entire power consumption in Mexico, the IEA said.

It is likely to see a rise in demand for all forms of energy -- from oil and gas to coal, electricity and renewable energy -- through 2035, making it the growth engine for energy demand globally, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its World Energy Outlook 2024.

India, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, will see its demand for oil rise by almost 2 million barrels per day by



2035 and become the main source of oil demand growth in the world. According to IEA projections, the country is on track to become the third-largest economy in the world by 2028. It was the world's fifth

largest economy and the fastest growing major economy in 2023, with output increasing by 7.8 per cent.

India overtook China in 2023 to become the most populous country in the world, even as its fertility rate dropped below replacement level. "The population size and the scale of rising demand from all sectors mean that India is poised to experience more energy demand growth than any other country over the next decade," IEA said.

In stated policies scenario (STEPS), "India is on track to add over 12,000 cars every day to its roads over the period to 2035. Built space is set to increase by over 1 billion square metres annually, which is larger than the total built space in South Africa today," IEA said.

'Operate at full capacity till Dec 31'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The power ministry has asked all thermal plants using imported coal to operate at full capacity for another two and a half months till December 31 to avoid electricity shortage amid rising demand in the country.

Earlier this year, the ministry invoked Section 11 of the Electricity Act to mandate imported coal-based plants to run at full capacity. "In view of the power demand scenario in the country, it has been decided to extend the time period for the Section 11 directive to generating companies having Imported Coal Based (ICB) plants till 31.12.2024," the Ministry of Coal said.

Musk thanks Scindia for not agreeing with Ambani, Mittal



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech billionaire Elon Musk thanked Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia for not agreeing with Indian tycoons Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Bharti Mittal on auctioning spectrum for satellite services, saying he is looking forward to serving Indians.

Reacting to Scindia's statement that satellite spectrum will not be auctioned, Musk, in a post on X, said, "much appreciated! We will do our best to serve the people of India with Starlink".

Elon Musk and Indian tycoons Ambani and Mittal are locked in a standoff over satellite spectrum and nuances of its allocation.

Jio recently sought a revision of a consultation paper on recommending norms for "terms and conditions for the assignment of spectrum for certain satellite-based commercial Communications services".

"We have received a reference from the Telecom Department and we have initiated a consultation process in response to the

reference that has been received from DoT, and it covers issues that have been referred to Trai by the DoT...the consultation process is on, we will consider all inputs and views that are received during the consultation process and we will come out with our considered recommendations," Trai Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti told reporters on the sidelines of IMC on Tuesday.

Asked about the demand by Reliance Jio that the Trai consultation paper be revised to ensure a level playing field between terrestrial and satellite players, the Trai chairman said, "Different stakeholders raise different demands on the consultation process, and we consider all these viewpoints and inputs and take a considered view".

The world's richest man Musk has taken on Indian billionaires Ambani and Mittal over the allocation of spectrum used in wireless communication using satellites, calling their demand for the auction of such airwaves "unprecedented".

'Awareness about retirement planning rising'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Awareness about retirement planning has been rising in urban India with growing number of people feeling the need to start planning for their post-work life early, a report said.

As much as 44 Indians consider the right age to start planning for retirement is before 35 years, as per the India Retirement Index Study (IRIS) released by Max Life Insurance.

Encouragingly, 63 per cent respondents have already begun investing for retirement, leading to reduced concerns about meeting both basic and luxury needs, as well as securing their children's futures, it said.

A notable 68 per cent of



urban Indian working women have begun investing for retirement, it said.

The study also highlights regional opportunities in retirement planning across India, with the east zone lead-

ing in overall preparedness, the west zone showing financial and health progress but needing emotional focus, and the north and south zones improving in health preparedness index, it said.

"Although urban India's retirement index has improved with positive gains in the financial and health indices, 1 in 3 Indians still feel underprepared.

This year, we also focused on gig workers due to the rapid growth of India's gig economy, and found that they lag with a lower retirement readiness," Max Life MD & CEO Prashant Tripathy said.

This signals a huge opportunity area to bring the cohort at par with the national average through focused interventions, he said.

what's brewing?

Taylor Swift turns author

Taylor Swift made a groundbreaking announcement on *Good Morning America* on October 15, revealing she's set to add "author" to her impressive resume. The singer-songwriter will release her debut book, offering a unique perspective on her highly successful Eras Tour, which wraps up in December. Titled *The Most Wondrous Tour Of Her Life*, the 256-page book will feature never-before-seen tour photos and personal anecdotes from Swift herself. Additionally, she'll release physical copies, providing insight into her latest album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, a project fans have eagerly anticipated. Both exclusives will be available at Target starting Black Friday, as per reports. Swift shared the news on X, sparking widespread excitement among her fanbase. Rumours had circulated about Swift penning a memoir or even secretly writing under a pseudonym (with some speculating she was behind *Argyle*). Now, fans' wishes are finally granted as Swift expands her creative horizons into literature. With this move, Swift transitions into a new chapter of her career, offering an intimate look at her artistic journey and cementing her status as a multifaceted talent.



LOOKBOOK

The Victoria's Secret Fashion Show made a triumphant return, after a five-year break, featuring an all-star lineup of iconic Victoria's Secret Angels, including Tyra Banks, Gigi and Bella Hadid, Candice Swanepoel and other legendary models.



KANIKA DHILLON ON GOLDEN ERA FOR B'WOOD WRITERS

Ace writer-producer Kanika Dhillon is all geared up for her upcoming release *Do Patti*, starring Kajol and Kriti Sanon along with Shaheer Sheikh. The mystery thriller is set to release on October 25th exclusively on Netflix. The writer-producer has already been receiving praise for the gripping trailer and now has opened up about the importance of good writers and good stories in Bollywood. Kanika, who has delivered some of the best tales like *Manmarziyaan*, *Kedamath*, *Hasen Dilluba*, *Judgmental Hain Kya* and many more, shed light on how this is a golden era in the industry that has started where writers are given their due credit and the kind of appreciation that was almost nil earlier. Dhillon said, "There was a time when writers were completely ignored and were not being given any appreciation for the great scripts that they were writing, but now I'm so glad to see that there is a shift in the process and writers are receiving their due credit and getting recognition. It is a golden phase for the industry where the spotlight is on the writers and a good story." She further added, "Appreciation always drives people to do better and the spotlight on the writers is now actually making the story better, which is a very happy thing." *Do Patti* marks Kanika's debut as a producer with her Katha Pictures in association with Kriti Sanon's Blue Butterfly Films. Kanika has recently announced her upcoming project *Gandhari* with Taapsee Pannu, which is a revenge drama.



MATCH FIXING BRINGS SAFFRON TERROR TO BIG SCREENS

Directed by Kedar Gaekwad, the highly anticipated political thriller *Match Fixing* is set to hit theaters on November 15. The makers unveiled a motion poster of the film to announce the same. The film stars Vineet Kumar Singh, celebrated for his compelling performances, alongside Anuja Sathé and Manoj Joshi, with a script penned by Anuj S. Mehta. Produced by Pallavi Gurjar under Artarena Creations Private Limited, the film draws inspiration from Kanwar Khatana's controversial book, *The Game Behind Saffron Terror*. The film explores the murky world of political conspiracies and alleged collusion between India and Pakistan's intelligence agencies. A gripping tale inspired by real events, *Match Fixing* sheds light on a series of blasts and terror attacks that, as the book suggests, were orchestrated under a ruling political dispensation to implicate a few prominent members of the opposition parties. With a release date locked for November 15, *Match Fixing* will certainly appeal to audiences interested in political thrillers, especially those intrigued by the complex dynamics between India and Pakistan.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



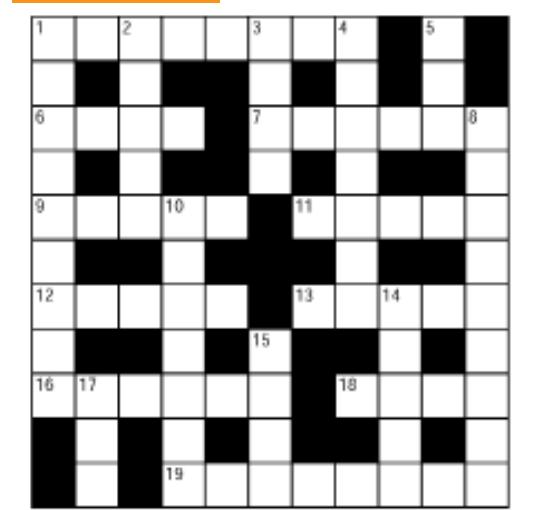
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 9 1 4 3 7 2 6 8 5
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Rules
 • Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
 • The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS
 1 Squirmed about
 6 Tidy
 7 The cold ocean at the North Pole
 9 Perhaps
 11 A gloved fighter
 12 Permitted by law
 13 The remains of a fire
 16 Become smaller
 18 A fruit with a stone
 19 Always ready to give or share

DOWN
 4 Health professionals
 5 7 in Roman numerals
 8 An annual festival for Christians
 10 Burning strongly and flaming brightly
 14 A greeting
 15 The body's covering
 17 Cured meat from a pig

SOLUTION
 S Q U I R M E D
 T I D Y
 A R C T I C O C E A N
 U N D E R
 G O O D M O R N I N G
 H E D E E
 T E A R S T Y R E S
 E R A T I T
 R E C O V E R I N G
 S H E E P

GINGER MEGGS



Kalari-fying Hyderabad streets!

PNS| HYDERABAD

In a world increasingly captivated by flashy combat sports and fitness trends, an ancient martial art form is quietly gaining ground in the heart of Hyderabad—thanks to a passionate instructor, Hari Krish, who has dedicated his life to reviving Kalaripayattu, often referred to as the mother of all martial arts.

When asked about his journey into the world of Kalari, the ancient Indian martial art, the practitioner smiled and said, "It all started with Taekwondo." His story is not uncommon for martial artists who begin their journey in one discipline and eventually find their true calling in another. For him, it was an unexpected encounter that changed everything.

In the eighth grade, he embarked on a nine-year-long Taekwondo journey. However, curiosity led him to explore something more—a deeper connection with traditional weaponry. It was during a casual visit to buy some items when fate introduced him to Kalari. "I saw a training group practicing nearby and it piqued my interest. I didn't know much about it back then, but when I saw the weapons, I knew this was something I had to learn."

This discovery led him to Ayodhanak Kalari, a renowned Kalari school under the guidance of his guru. He began training under experienced gurus who guided him through the rigorous curriculum. "I started with basic training and continued through the lockdown, attending online classes. I even advanced to training with metal weapons, which involves camps every few months," he explained. But why bring Kalari to Hyderabad? "Initially, I was content with my own training. But as I delved deeper, I realised how intertwined Kalari is with our traditions. When I spoke to my friends about



In the heart of Hyderabad, Hari Krish is bringing to life the forgotten art of Kalaripayattu, a martial art form born in India over 2,000 years ago. With every swift movement and precise strike, he discusses with The Pioneer about not only mastering a timeless discipline but also uncovering a piece of their cultural heritage

Kalari in empowering women, especially in a time of rising violence, he emphasised its importance. "Kalari is structured in four stages. By the time someone reaches the fourth level, they are proficient in barehanded defense techniques, both against armed and unarmed attackers. The confidence and awareness that comes with Kalari training can be transformative for women."

Interestingly, Kalari is not just for men. "Yes, we have several female students. The ratio is growing and we're seeing more and more women taking an interest in this martial art," he shared.

Although his students haven't yet participated in national championships, he has ambitious plans for them. "The championship syllabus comes after about two years of training. But Kalari has recently been recognised as an official sport, so there's a growing platform for national and even international competitions."

Looking forward, his vision for Kalari in Hyderabad is expansive. "With the support of my gurus, we aim to open more branches while maintaining the highest standards. We're also preparing students for upcoming championships and organising demonstrations to raise awareness. We've even trained a few actors in Kalari. We believe in reaching as many people as possible."

His ultimate goal is to see Kalari gain international recognition. "We want to take this martial art to a global stage. Kalari has so much to offer, not just as a martial art but as a cultural heritage. And we are committed to keeping that tradition alive."

As our conversation wrapped up, it was clear that his journey wasn't just about mastering Kalari—it was about reviving and sharing ancient art, one student at a time, and creating a lasting legacy in Hyderabad.

it, most had never even heard of it. That was the spark. Kalari, the mother of all martial arts, was practically unknown in Telangana."

This lack of awareness, combined with his passion for the art, drove him to establish Kalari training in Hyderabad. "I wanted to reach as many people as possible and ensure they knew about Kalari's rich history and relevance."

Starting out was far from easy. "I

remember the first six months were tough. I'd sometimes have only two or three students, and on some days, none at all." But he never gave up. He used the time to practice alone, honing his skills. Slowly, things began to change. The real turning point came when he shifted to Hyderabad's high-tech city and started holding classes in public parks, which attracted more attention.

With time, his academy grew. "Initially,

we were training outdoors, but recently we've set up a more traditional space, complete with a Kalari dias. It's still on the second floor, but in the future, I plan to create a more authentic setup like the ones in Kerala, where the ground itself becomes part of the practice."

One of his key motivations is preserving and spreading the tradition. "Our gurus always emphasised the importance of passing down the knowledge to

the next generation. That's when I decided that I needed to open a Kalari center in Hyderabad."

Kalari's influence has been steadily growing over the past few years, thanks to social media and support from prominent actors. "Even now, I get calls from people across the city, some of whom are willing to travel long distances just to train."

When asked about the potential of

Where visuals meet vital narratives



With a passion for storytelling and an eye for detail, Vandana Kataria has emerged as a leading light in Indian cinema. In an exclusive interaction with The Pioneer, the visionary director speaks to us about her latest venture Love Sitara, bringing a unique voice to her work and more

AARTI SREENATH
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In an industry where the spotlight is often coveted, Vandana Kataria shines brightly, not as a star on the screen but as the visionary behind it. Having carved her name as one of India's finest production designers, her creative fingerprints are all over films like *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!*, *Shanghai*, and *Detective Byomkesh Bakshi!* But Vandana is more than just the magic behind the sets; she's a filmmaker whose directorial debut, *Nobleman*, left critics and audiences both stirred and spellbound.

If Shakespeare himself could applaud from the afterlife, he'd have been clapping for *Nobleman*, a dark twist on *The Merchant of Venice* set in a boys' boarding school, an unexpected adaptation that added yet another feather to Vandana's cap. "Making films was always my dream," she reflects. "I studied film and visual communication at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad from 1994 to 1999. Becoming a filmmaker has always been my goal; I just chose to carve my path through production design instead of the traditional assistant director route."

Now, *Love Sitara*, backed by the renowned Ronnie Screwvals RSVP, is a film that promises to deliver her signature blend of depth, drama and visual storytelling.

For years, she has been a master of crafting worlds, meticulously designing spaces that not only look beautiful but serve as rich, visual backdrops to the human stories unfolding within them. It was a natural evolution from these artistic roots to her work as a director, though the journey was far from linear.

"I've been a production designer on three feature films and worked in the

industry since 2005," she shares, modestly glossing over her critically acclaimed resume. "I even served as the second unit director on *Gully Boy!*"

But directing *Nobleman* in 2017-18 marked a turning point. The transition from crafting the visual to leading the narrative gave her a platform to explore stories closest to her heart. "The inspiration often comes from a personal place. If something's troubling me, I use the writing process as a kind of exorcism," Vandana reveals. "Sometimes, it's about exploring a subject that piques my interest—whether in my own life or something striking I've read." Her upcoming film *Love Sitara* is a poignant reflection of this philosophy. The story, told through the eyes of Sitara, examines the complex dynamics within a matriarchal household, a world she dove into after immersing herself in a Hindu matriarchal family. "I wanted to explore the complexities of relationships within this setting. It was so different from my own patriarchal Malu Christian home," she says with a laugh.

The title *Love Sitara* holds special meaning for her. "The original working title was just a placeholder," she admits, smiling. "But as the story evolved, I wanted the title to resonate deeply with the narrative. It felt like a letter she's writing to all of us—intimate, personal, yet universal."

She believes that it's in the personal details where a story finds its universality. "The more specific and detailed a narrative is, the more universal it becomes. Writing something intended to be universal is tricky," she reflects. "You have to write from a personal place. Even if you're telling a story about a bank heist, you bring in your perspective."

For her, filmmaking is an ongoing



dance between inspiration and execution, where the initial spark of creativity is continuously reshaped. "Once the script is complete, it's still evolving," she shares. "I find myself rewriting scenes in the editing room, reshaping the entire structure if needed."

Directing *Love Sitara* presented more than just creative challenges. "One of the biggest hurdles was getting the cast's schedules to align with our shooting timeline," she recalls. Shot over 34 to 36 days, the film faced its share of logistical headaches, made even trickier by the COVID-19 pandemic. "We kept that under wraps for a while," she adds, not wanting the film to feel "old and stale" before its release.

But scheduling wasn't her only challenge. The film's song sequences—a new frontier for her—required her to embrace the complexities of choreography, something she had never done before. "It was exciting but daunting," she admits. And then there was the balancing act of managing an ensemble cast. "When you have seven or eight characters to manage, it can feel like trying to juggle flaming swords!" she laughs.

Yet, despite the challenges, her meticulous approach to filmmaking

shines through. Every visual, from the lighting to the colors on the walls, was carefully considered. "In fiction filmmaking, nothing is arbitrary. Every element is designed to immerse the audience in the story."

The location, too, was a key part of the film's storytelling. After an exhaustive search, they found the perfect house for filming—a traditional Malu Tharavad that perfectly reflected the characters' cultural nuances. "We chose to shoot in Kerala during November and December, when the rains had washed away the dusty greens, leaving vibrant colors for the camera to capture," she shares.

As one of the few female directors in Indian cinema, she recognizes the importance of her perspective. "As a woman, I bring a unique voice to my work. My storytelling would be very different if I were a man," she notes. And this voice is more than just her gender—it's her lived experience. "Your socioeconomic, psychological, and cultural background influences your art. If I'm insecure, that will show in my work. If I'm confident, that boldness will come through."

Her passion for telling women's stories continues with her future projects. "All my films center around female protagonists. I believe I can write women more authentically than men," she explains. "My upcoming scripts also feature strong female leads, like a horror story I'm developing with a female protagonist."

Her dedication to elevating women's voices goes beyond her own work. "The industry needs authentic stories from women. Your perspective is invaluable," she advises aspiring female directors. "Stay true to yourself and don't be afraid to take up space."

With *Love Sitara*, she hopes to spark conversations, especially among women. "I'm hoping it resonates with women in their 30s to 60s. My dream is for this film to serve as a catalyst for dialogue—between mothers and daughters, sisters—about the complexities of their relationships."

Though *Love Sitara* has garnered mixed reviews, she remains unfazed, even embracing the polarized reactions. "It's encouraging to see older men offering warm reviews. But the critics and journalists have embraced it more than the general audience, which is something I expected."

As she reflects on the journey of *Love Sitara*, she is already looking ahead to her next projects, a family thriller and a sci-fi horror script. "Each project offers a different avenue to engage with audiences," she says excitedly.

For her, every film is a new adventure, a new challenge. But one thing is certain: whether she's crafting sets or calling the shots, Vandana Kataria is a force to be reckoned with in the world of Indian cinema.

Smart credit card strategies for secure financial future

Over the last few years, credit cards have wormed into our lives to become a mainstay of personal finance. Cards have become an indispensable financial tool that one relies on as the safety net. We often use credit cards to tide over unplanned, unexpected expenses or expenses that we would like to postpone payments on. Credit cards can be a double-edged sword—an asset when used wisely but a liability when mismanaged. Therefore, it's crucial for consumers to understand how to use them effectively and responsibly. If not managed carefully, they also come with the risk of high-interest debt.

ADVICE TO THOSE CONSIDERING GETTING A CREDIT CARD OR LOOKING TO IMPROVE HOW THEY MANAGE THEIR CURRENT CARDS:

1. SET CLEAR SPENDING LIMITS

Swiping your card is easy, but the consequences will always come around 30 days later. Responsible credit card use starts with self-discipline. Even before applying for a card, set strict spending limits for yourself. This is not just a suggestion, but a powerful tool that puts you in control of your finances. Ideally, the limit should be well within what you can afford to pay off in full each month—a sound strategy to avoid the stress of mounting debt. Always ensure that your spending remains in line with your budget. Setting personal spending limits well below your actual credit limit can also help you stay on track.

2. PAY OFF BALANCES IN FULL

One of the most important habits to cultivate is paying your credit card bill in full each month. An approach that prevents interest from piling up and contributes positively to your credit score. Credit cards should never be treated as long-term loans; instead, they should be a tool for managing short-term expenses. By consistently paying off your balance, you'll keep your financial health intact and avoid the costly mistake of carrying a balance that can quickly grow due to high interest rates.

3. KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON YOUR SPENDING

While it might be tempting to use your credit card in real time is easier than ever. Review your credit card statements regularly and track your transactions. This practice delivers two-pronged benefits: one helps in the timely identification of unauthorised charges that you can dispute, and the second gives you a clear picture of your spending habits. Using financial management apps can further simplify this process, providing alerts and insights that help you stay in control of your finances.

4. UNDERSTAND YOUR INTEREST RATES

Understanding the terms, particularly the Annual Percentage Rate (APR), is a critical step in applying for a credit card. This rate determines how much interest you'll pay if you carry over the outstanding balance to the next month. Choose a card with a lower APR, as it can save you money in the long run but remember that the best strategy is to avoid paying interest altogether by settling your balance in full each month.

5. STEER CLEAR OF CASH ADVANCES

While it might be tempting to use your credit card for a cash advance in a pinch, this option should be avoided or kept as a last resort. Cash advances often come with high fees and start accruing interest immediately, making them an expensive way to access funds. It's important to note that cash advances are different from regular purchases, and they usually have higher fees and interest rates. If you find yourself in need of cash, consider other alternatives, such as a personal loan, which is typically available at lower interest rates and more favorable repayment terms.

6. USE REWARDS WISELY

Most credit cards offer rewards programs that can be highly

beneficial when used correctly. However, it's important not to let the pursuit of rewards tempt you into unnecessary

spending. Instead, focus on using your credit card for regular, planned purchases that you can easily pay off.

This way, you can enjoy the rewards without falling into the trap of overspending, feeling savvy and strategic in your financial decisions.

7. SET UP PAYMENT REMINDERS

Missing payments can result in significant fees and harm your credit score, so it's essential to keep track of your payment due dates. To stay on schedule and avoid missed payments, set up automatic payments or reminders. Staying organised with calendar reminders or financial tools can prevent the stress and financial consequences of missed payments.

8. LIMIT NUMBER OF CREDIT CARDS YOU HOLD

While opening multiple credit cards for the advantage of their various rewards programs might be tempting, managing multiple accounts can quickly become overwhelming. Keeping the number of credit cards you hold to a minimum simplifies your financial life and reduces the temptation to overspend. It's easier to track your spending, manage payments, and monitor your financial health when you have fewer accounts to juggle.

9. MONITOR YOUR CREDIT UTILISATION

Your credit utilization ratio—the percentage of your available credit that you're using—is a key factor in your credit score. It's important to keep this ratio below 30% to maintain a healthy credit score. Regularly checking this ratio and adjusting your spending habits to stay within a safe range is a good practice. A healthy credit score requires utilization below 30%. Check this ratio regularly and adjust your spending habits to stay within a safe range.

10. USE CREDIT FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY

Credit cards can be a lifeline in emergencies, such as unexpected medical expenses or car repairs. However, it's important not to rely on them as your only source of emergency funds. Building an emergency fund is crucial to cover unexpected expenses and avoid high-interest credit card debt. When you do use your credit card for an emergency, have a repayment plan in place to pay off the balance as quickly as possible.

11. STAY INFORMED ABOUT YOUR CARD'S TERMS

Credit card terms can change, so it's important to stay informed. Ensure you understand the fees, interest rates, and rewards program details associated with your card. Keeping up with any changes ensures you're not caught off guard by unexpected costs, making you feel knowledgeable and prepared for your financial decisions.

AUSTRALIA START OVERWHELMING FAVOURITES AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

PTI ■ DUBAI

Australia will start as overwhelming favourites in their quest for an unprecedented eighth final appearance when they take on South Africa in the semi-final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Thursday. Australia have now made it to the semi-finals of the global T20 tournament in all its nine editions held so far since 2009 in England. The six-time champions take on the Proteas women in a last-four clash in what seems to be a repeat of the summit showdown during the 2023 edition in South Africa, which the Southern Stars won by 19 runs. Going by pure statistic, South Africa are no match for Australia who have won nine out of the 10 WT20I games, with the former's only win coming in January this year. The head-to-head record at



Women's T20 World Cup is even more intimidating as Australia have won all the

seven encounters. The best part about the current Australian team is the core

which has remained intact for years now with only Meg Lanning retiring from

international cricket. All the 10 others, who played in the 2023 final are here with the likes of Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Ashleigh Gardner being the pillars of the team. On a slow Dubai track, the depth in batting has been Australia's biggest strength, with Phoebe Litchfield and Annabel Sutherland capable of muscling the balls to the fence. For South Africa, one of their biggest assets has been slow left-arm orthodox Nonkululeko Mlaba, who has so far taken 10 wickets in four group league games. Skipper Laura Wolvaardt, her opening partner Tazmin Brits and the seasoned Marizanne Kapp are all match-winners in their own rights but they have always come up short against Healy and company. Hopefully, the Proteas women would be eighth time lucky against familiar foes in their bid to win the maiden global T20 trophy.



Day 1 of first Test between India and NZ called off due to rain

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Unrelenting rain wiped out play on day one of the opening Test between India and New Zealand here on Wednesday. The play was called off at 2.34 PM as heavy rain lashed the M Chinnaswamy Stadium after relenting for about half an hour earlier. The match officials came out to inspect the pitch around 2 PM after outfield and first layer of covers were removed around 1.50 PM. But there were large damp

areas on either side of the pitch as hessians were brought out in a last-ditch attempt to get some game time. However, it was a futile effort as extensive damage was already done by rains of varying intensity from early morning. Earlier, even the toss, which was scheduled at 9 AM, could not take place as rain came down relentlessly over the city from morning. There was a smattering of spectators at the stadium despite the inclement weather. But the only moment of

excitement for them was the sighting of star batter Virat Kohli and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who went for an indoor net session along with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar. They might have to wait further for action even on the second day as the current forecast is for more rain on Thursday at least till noon. It may be recalled that even the training sessions of both teams were washed away by heavy downpour on Tuesday. Play on day two is scheduled at 9.15 am and toss at 8.45 am.



When Rohit Sharma explained "significance of Gabba" to young Pant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For some time, Rishabh Pant couldn't understand why fans had gone hysterical after his unbeaten 89 against Australia at the Gabba in 2021 until Rohit Sharma stepped in to tell him that his knock was not just another match-winning effort in an epic Test. A second string India, without its then regular skipper Virat Kohli, senior player KL Rahul and three main bowlers, had beaten Australia by three wickets at a venue which was considered a fortress for the home team which hadn't lost a single game there since 1989. It was a chase of 328, and Pant's counter-attacking knock was not just a match-defining one. It was to find a place among the greatest innings by an Indian in adverse overseas conditions. "Sometimes, there are performances that you remember for a lifetime, and one of them for me is the Gabba Test," the 27-year-old told Star Sports' 'Star Nahi Far' event. Initially, it was just satisfaction of winning a tough Test for India but as time went by, Pant understood the magnitude of his achievement, something that Rohit had told him about. "At the time, I didn't realise how significant it was. Rohit bhai was there, and he told me, 'You have no idea what you've done.' I was like, 'What have I done? My aim was just to win the match.' Rohit bhai said, 'Later, you'll understand what you've done,'" he recalled. "Now, whenever I hear people

talking about that Gabba match, I understand what he meant and how important it was," the Delhi player said. No greater feeling than beating Australia Pant has commanded the cricketing world's awe and respect for coming back after recovering from a life-threatening car accident in 2022. This was after he made a name for himself Down Under for being a significant contributor to India's back-to-back Test series wins. His career-best 159 came in Sydney during the 2018-19 series. In the 2021 series, he scored 97 in Sydney and an epic 89 not out in Brisbane to earn respect and adulation from both the fans and the opposition team. "When you go to Australia, you have to work more on handling the bounce and short balls because the wickets are different there, and the atmosphere is different," he explained. "They don't want you to win, which makes it more fun. There's no greater feeling than going to Australia and beating them in their home." What impresses Pant about Australia is their strategy to always hunt in a pack and the gutsy keeper-batter is a firm believer in counter-punching. "In general, Australia fights as a team. They don't give you anything easy, and they play aggressive cricket. I won't throw the first punch, but if someone throws the first punch at me, I won't hold back. "That's the kind of mentality you need to have when playing against them," he said.

Neetu David becomes second Indian woman to be inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India spinner Neetu David, who still holds the record for the best figures (8/53) by a woman in an individual Test innings, on Wednesday became only the second female cricketer from the country to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame. David, the current chairman of selectors for Indian women's team, enters the ICC Hall of Fame a year after the induction of former captain Diana Edulji. David made more than 100 appearances (10 Tests and 97 ODIs) for India as a prolific left-arm spinner and was inducted alongside South Africa and England legends AB de Villiers and Alastair Cook, joining a long list of great cricketers. The 47-year-old David is the second-highest wicket-taker for India in ODIs cricket with 141 scalps and was also the first female player from the country to claim 100 wickets in the 50-over game. Topping the wicket-taking list at the World Cup in 2005, to inspire her country to their first-ever final, is also among her standout achievements. David said in an ICC release: "It is truly an honour to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame, something that I consider to be the highest recognition available to anyone who puts on their national team jersey. "This comes after a lifetime of dedication to this great sport, and it caps a very special journey for me to get to this point. "To be considered a Hall of Famer alongside the greatest players that ever lived is humbling, and I am thrilled to be part of this exclusive club." Following some impressive performances with the ball at domestic cricket for Uttar Pradesh, David won a first international appearance for India as a 17-year-old in a



Test against New Zealand in Nelson in 1995. She impressed with four wickets in that contest and was again selected for the ODI leg of that tour as India claimed the New Zealand Women's Centenary Tournament. In late 1995, David truly rose to prominence as she recorded sensational figures of 8/53 — still the best individual bowling spell in a single innings of a women's Test — against England in Jamshedpur as India fell to a narrow two-run loss. While David excelled at Test cricket with 41 wickets from 10 matches, it was in ODI cricket that she performed best with 141 scalps from 97 matches at a miserly bowling average of 16.34. David retired from international cricket in 2006, only to reverse that decision two years later for a brief return in ODI cricket at the Asia Cup and on India's tour of England. She played her final domestic match in 2013, calling time on an illustrious career by helping Railways to the 2012-13 Senior

Women's T20 League title. Cook represented England over 250 times in international cricket, making his most significant impact in the longest format. He retired from international cricket in 2018 as England's highest Test run-scorer and century-maker, spearheading notable successes both home and away with the bat and as captain. In his 14-year-long career, de Villiers hit over 20,000 international runs across all three formats. De Villiers, fondly known as "Mr 360", excelled in Test and T20I cricket while setting South African records for the fastest fifty, century and 150 in ODI cricket to earn a reputation of being one of the most feared, destructive batters in the history of the game. The ICC Hall of Fame was launched in January 2009 as part of the global governing body's centenary celebrations. The Class of 2024 will be celebrated in a special series of engagements in Dubai this week, coinciding with the conclusion of the Women's T20 World Cup.



Handling pressure will play a big part in Jaiswal's success in Australia: childhood coach

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Yashasvi Jaiswal was oblivious to the cheers of a handful of spectators as he walked across a soaked M Chinnaswamy Stadium turf on Wednesday, chatting intensely with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar. There was no pressing demand for him to spend an hour at indoor nets as rain held up the first day's play of the opening Test between India and New Zealand. After all, he is going through a roseate phase in Test cricket for over a year now. But that deep caring for his craft and a focused mind will come handy when Jaiswal crosses over to Australia next month for the biggest challenge yet in his fledgling career, feels his childhood coach Jwala Singh. "At this level, it is more about how you handle pressure. You can always work on technique, but if you don't have the right attitude and mindset then you will end up as a failure. But fortunately, Yashasvi has a mature head on his shoulder," Jwala told PTI when he was informed about skipper Rohit Sharma's high evaluation of his younger colleague. "It is even more true when you go and play in Australia because they play some hard cricket there and put a lot of pressure on opposition," he added. As someone who saw Jaiswal from a very young age, Jwala feels that the 21-year-old has grown as a batsman since making his debut in 2023 against the West Indies. "I think being around players like Rohit and Virat has helped him a lot. After all, there is nothing like learning from such masters," he said. Since his baptism in international cricket, Jaiswal has made 1217 runs from 11 Tests at an average of 64.05 and has three daddy knocks - 171, 209 and 214. So, what are the changes that he has observed in the left-hander in the last one year or so? "He always has been aggressive as a batsman. Earlier, he had a tendency to attack almost every ball, especially fast bowlers, but now he uses aggression more judiciously. "Yashasvi now has more awareness of his game. He has

better awareness about which ball to attack and which one to let go. Of course, he has also become a very good fielder now, especially in slip region," Jwala noted. The trait was visible in Jaiswal's batting while going through a breakout series against England earlier this year. The way he handled English legend James Anderson was impeccable. At Rajkot, Jaiswal respectfully patted a fuller length delivery from Anderson back to the bowler in the 85th over. But once the pacer erred in length, Jaiswal creamed the Lancastrian's next three balls for sixes — a sweep over square leg, a loft over mid-wicket and straight mouse over the bowler's head. Jaiswal was highly effective against Anderson throughout the series — extracting 98 runs from 150 balls that he faced off the quick and getting out twice. It was not entirely surprising then that he became only the second Indian batter after the legendary Sunil Gavaskar to score over 700 in a series. But then it is always easy to play down that wonderful run citing home advantage, as Australia offers a vastly different challenge. What are the challenges a sub-continent batter will face Down Under? "First thing first, what India did in Australia during their last two visits here has been fantastic. Not many teams have managed that (winning back-to-back series). So, the Aussies will go hard at Indians to overturn it. "I am sure they are going to pepper them with some short stuff and I guess the pitches too could offer some more spice. "In that sense, I think the batters coming here should be well-prepared to play a few more cuts and pulls," former England pacer Alan Mullaly, who is now settled in Perth, told PTI. India skipper Rohit Sharma had little doubt about the skill level and adaptability of Jaiswal. "He has got the game to play in all sorts of conditions. You can bet on him and expect him to do wonders for the team. We've found a great player. "Now, it is just about how he manages himself in the next couple of years," said Rohit.

Cricket Australia says 2025-26 Ashes series will begin in Western Australia

AP ■ SYDNEY

Cricket Australia said on Wednesday that the five-Test Ashes series between Australia and England in 2025-26 will begin in Perth, Western Australia. That first Test is scheduled for November 21-25, 2025 with the second a day-night Test at the Gabba in Brisbane from December 4-8. Adelaide Oval will host the



third Test from December 17-21. The Melbourne Cricket Ground will host its traditional Boxing Day Test beginning December 26, with the Sydney Cricket Ground also maintaining its usual time slot for the January 4-8 fifth and final Test. Australia currently holds the Ashes, having retained them with a draw in the 2023 series in England.

WKL unveils plans for women's Kabaddi in upcoming season

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

Women's Kabaddi League (WKL) on Tuesday announcing updates for the upcoming season. This event marked as a significant step toward establishing women's kabaddi as a national sport and creating a thriving ecosystem for female athletes across India. The league will feature several teams, including the Bengaluru Hawks, Delhi Durgas, Gujarat Angels, Haryana Hustlers, Great Marathas, Rajasthan Raiders, Telugu Warriors, and UP Ganga Strikers. The selection trials for WKL are set to be a major highlight of the upcoming season, as they will open doors for thousands of aspiring female players nationwide. The league aims to identify the most talented athletes who will then be selected for the auction process and logically segmented for the

playing. The WKL's structure follows a round-robin & Home-away format during selection trials, promoting an exciting and competitive atmosphere that is crucial for player development. This format allows teams to face each other multiple times, fostering not just competition but also camaraderie among players. The league seeks to in still a sense of unity and collaboration, essential elements in building a robust sporting community for women. WKL is not just focused on the present; it is actively laying the groundwork for future generations of female athletes. By emphasizing inclusivity and providing resources for training, mentorship, and exposure, the league is cultivating an environment where young women can thrive in sports. WKL's initiatives will include



workshops, coaching clinics, and partnerships with schools to inspire and engage the next generation of kabaddi players. HARSHIT MANAV, COO, WKL expressed his excitement for the future of women's kabaddi, stating, "We are committed to creating a strong platform for women athletes, ensuring they receive the recognition and respect they deserve. This is about building a legacy—a national game for women that encourages participation at all levels." As WKL prepares for the upcoming season, the anticipation builds not only for the matches but also for the numerous initiatives aimed at supporting female athletes. With plans for international participation and more exciting announcements in the pipeline, the WKL is poised to elevate women's kabaddi to new heights.

Rajinikanth starrer Vettaian director TJ Gnanavel talks about his experience with the Superstar and the inspiration for his film, upcoming project and more

I WANT TO MAKE PREQUEL OF VETTAIYAN: DIRECTOR TJ GNANAVEL

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Rajinikanth's latest film *Vettaian*, directed by the critically acclaimed TJ Gnanavel, is poised for blockbuster success. Gnanavel's previous film, "Jai Bhim," garnered widespread acclaim for its socially relevant narrative inspired by real events and premiered directly on OTT platforms. "If you speak to people in your surroundings and look at society, you will get a number of stories. I do the same. I would like to tell these stories only," said TJ Gnanavel.

Coming to the story of his latest project, is it taken from a fake encounter that happened in Chennai? "It's not one particular encounter; I have taken so many of these incidents and inspirations. I would not only want to talk about these encounters but also educate people with my stories," he said.

About the education part also, he said that he doesn't want to name any particular one. "In Chennai only there are many coaching centers, and many students are suffering," he said. Talking about how he met Rajinikanth for this film, it was Rajinikanth's daughter Soundarya, who had called Gnanavel.

"Soundarya Rajinikanth called me and asked me a story for Rajinikanth, sir. When I met him, I told him that I can come up with story-driven films and can't do a typical commercial film like *Jailer* or *Coolie*. Then Rajini sir replies, 'If I want to do a commercial film, I can call directors Nelson or Lokesh Kanagaraj, so I want to do a serious film with you,'" said Gnanavel. It was then that he wrote *Vettaian* and later narrated it to him.

Gnanavel said that if you look at Thalaiva's career, he has done many story-driven films in the 80s and 90s. "Since the last decade onwards, his films changed a bit, with most of his characters shown in a slow-motion kind of scene with more commercial value. He knows how I am going to show him, and after his



assurance, I have the clarity," she said about the film. Meanwhile, talking about Fahadh Faasil's character, he revealed not having anyone else in his mind but Faasil. "When I wrote the script, I had Fahadh only in my mind, and he was my first choice," said Gnanavel. He revealed it was the same for Rana Daggubati's character too.

TJ Gnanavel always goes with a bound script for the shoot. "After I wrote my complete script, it is then that I go for the star cast," he said. Sathyadev had no choice except for Amitabh Bachchan.

"I never feel pressure, but I want to satisfy his fans too, so I have shown his character that completely matches Rajinikanth's aura and style," said Gnanavel.

The film was released in Telugu with the title in Tamil, and the director says that for him, the content is important and not the title. "If you look at some of the Telugu and Hindi films, they are released with the same title everywhere. For example, *Devvara* was released with the same title in Tamil, but there is no meaning in Tamil; even *Dangal* and *Jawan* were released with the same titles. I believe in content, not in the title," said the director.

He is now enjoying the success of this film. "I am not thinking about my next project; I want to enjoy the success of this film till Diwali," he said. He added that he always wanted to tell stories based around society. "If you are meeting and talking with people and watching your surroundings and society, you will definitely get stories. I want to tell our stories, Indian stories; I don't want to remake or take from any other film. I want to inspire society with my stories," he said, and he wanted to continue the same in the near future for all his films.

When asked about, is there any sequel to this film? "I want to do a prequel to this one. Because I didn't show much background about Fahadh Faasil, like how he became a thief and what did he do? Same like Rajinikanth's character too. How he became popular as an encounter specialist and what is his background? So, there is a chance to do a prequel to do this *Vettaian*," said Gnanavel.

So many Telugu production houses also approached Gnanavel for making films. "Yes, I am getting calls from Telugu production houses and letting them know if I have a story that they want to produce," said the director.

Music should not overpower lyrics: Sekhar Chandra

Sekhar Chandra is one of the busiest music directors, with many small filmmakers seeking his expertise. Several of his songs have become popular on YouTube, amassing millions of views, and now he is providing the music for the upcoming film *Pottel*. "The film has a completely rural backdrop, and when director Sahith narrated the story to me, I got emotional. It tells the story of how some parents struggle to educate their children," said Sekhar Chandra. He added that composing music for a film like this is a challenge.

"Previously, I worked on a film called *Amabijpeta Marriage Band* with a rural setting, but this project is entirely different. There are many natural scenes, so it took time to adapt to that organic process. I took on this film as a challenge because the story of *Pottel* is very emotional, and I had to create music that would elevate those scenes," he explained.

These days, many songs tend to overshadow the lyrics, making it difficult to catch the words even after listening multiple times. However, Sekhar Chandra emphasized that he always prioritizes lyrics. "Many lyricists have shared their appreciation, saying they are happy to hear their lyrics clearly in my compositions. I never

want the music to overshadow the lyrics, so I compose with a focus on highlighting the words," he said.

Another challenge in this film is the richness of its content. "Kasarla Syam has penned the lyrics, and they carry a lot of depth. One particular song is filled with emotions and meaning, so I had to tailor the music accordingly and even did re-recordings to match those emotions," shared Sekhar Chandra.

The songs from *Pottel* have already gained popularity online. The music director also mentioned his commitment to staying updated in the industry. "I watch both mainstream and world cinema, listen to various songs, and keep an eye on new trends in music," he said.

Sekhar Chandra is the son of renowned cinematographer Hari Anumolu, making his entry into the music world unexpected. "Even I didn't see this coming, as I always felt a certain energy pulling me towards music. My father was surprised when I chose this path, saying it was not our domain. But with God's grace, I've found success and continue to thrive in this field," said Sekhar Chandra. He studied music extensively, earning grades in piano, and took classes in Carnatic classical vocals and violin. "Once I felt ready, I stepped into the music world," he added.

First look of Prithviraj Sukumaran in L2: Empuraan unveiled



The Malayalam film *Lucifer* was a massive hit in 2019 and was also successfully remade and dubbed into Telugu. With Mohanlal in the lead, the film featured Prithviraj Sukumaran, Tovino Thomas, and others in pivotal roles. Now, a sequel is underway, directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran himself, with Lyca Productions backing this high-budget project. The sequel continues the story with Mohanlal reprising his lead role. After Mohanlal's look was released earlier on his birthday, which received a great response, the first look of Prithviraj's character, Zayed Masood, was recently revealed on his birthday. He plays the trusted right-hand man of Qureshi Abram.

Most of the original cast, including Tovino Thomas, Manju Warrier, Nandu, and Saniya Iyappan, return for the sequel. The film is being shot in multiple locations like Chennai, Kottayam, the US, and the UK, with the current schedule in Thiruvananthapuram and upcoming shoots in Gujarat and the UAE. *L2: Empuraan* is set for a 2025 release across multiple languages.

BALAKRISHNA AND BOYAPATI'S AKHANDA 2 LAUNCHED

Nandamuri Balakrishna and director Boyapati Srinivas combination has been a superior duo. Both had earlier delivered films like *Simha*, *Legend*, and *Akhanda*. Now, they have joined hands together for their fourth film.

The film was officially launched on Wednesday at a private studio. The title of this film is *Akhanda 2* and the tagline is *Thanadavam*. Balakrishna's elder daughter gave the clap to this film at the launch, and his younger daughter also joined in the production of this film.

The interesting part about this film is that Miriyala Ravinder Reddy produced *Akhanda*, but the sequel to this film is produced by Raam Achanta and Gopi Achanta. Thaman, who provided music for *Akhanda*, is providing the same for *Akhanda 2* also. Balakrishna rendered a lengthy dialogue in his style at the muhurat launch, which is now going viral on social media and the internet.



VIJAY ANTONY'S NEXT VENTURE IS A GRIPPING MURDER MYSTERY

Tamil actor Vijay Antony, well-known in Telugu cinema, is taking on a new challenge with his upcoming project, a gripping murder mystery-crime thriller that dives deep into the world of detective fiction. The film is titled *Gagana Maargan*, which translates to "one who travels through air" in the Siddhar dictionary, hinting at the film's unique storyline. The first look poster has also been released.

Leo John Paul, a renowned editor known for his work on many successful films, is making his directorial debut with *Gagana Maargan*. He previously won the Tamil Nadu State Film Award for Best Editor for *Idharkuthane Aasaipattai Balakumara* in 2013. The film features a talented cast including Samuthirakani, Mahanadhi Shankar, Prithika, Brigida, and Anthagaram Natarajan. Vijay Antony himself is composing the music for the film. Notably, the project includes underwater sequences shot in Mumbai and impressive visual effects. The film is produced by Vijay Antony's own production house, Vijay Antony Film Corporation.



Massive set for Sharwanand, Sampath Nandi

Film Actor Sharwanand is occupied with multiple projects, and one of his upcoming films is directed by Sampath Nandi. The film is tentatively titled *Sharwa38*, with KK Radhamohan as the producer. It is a gripping period action drama set in the rural backdrop of North Telangana, along the Telangana-Maharashtra border, during the late 1960s. The story unfolds in a world ruled by fear, where bloodshed resolves many conflicts.

The makers commenced the set work after a traditional Bhoomi Pooja. A massive, meticulously crafted set designed by Art Director Kiran Kumar Manne is being built on a sprawling 15-acre area on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

The team is investing significantly in the set to authentically capture and recreate the look, feel, world, and culture of the North Telangana-Maharashtra border during the 1960s.

This extensive set will embody the essence of the heartland, with intricate details and nuances of the bygone era, bringing this gripping period action drama to life and transporting viewers back to a pivotal yet unexplored time in history. Key sequences will be filmed on this remarkable set. Sharwanand is taking on a role unlike any he has played before, undergoing a complete transformation for this film. The makers plan to release the film in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi.

