

# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

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



**Africa emerged as key destination: Murmu**



**LOGISTICS COST WILL COME DOWN TO 9% OF GDP: GADKARI**




**TFI gearing up for Gaddar Film AWARDS**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**The pioneer**

These people who claim they would give their lives for the country are opposing the VLF Navy Radar Station. This is a matter concerning national security. If you don't love the country, you are worse than Kasab. KTR is talking like Kasab. If you have an issue with the project, why didn't you stand in front of Rajnath Singh's Land Cruiser instead of bothering me? This is cheap politics

**- Revanth Reddy, CM, Telangana**



**DON'T MISS...**

**Anagani promises industrial park in...**

Minister for Revenue, Anagani Satya Prasad, has assured the establishment of an industrial park in the Gudivada constituency. The Revenue Minister inaugurated the newly modernised sub-registrar's office in Kowthavaram, Gudivada constituency, on Wednesday. The office was upgraded at a cost of Rs 23 lakh. He was accompanied by Minister for Excise Kollu Ravindra, MLA Venigandla Ramu, and Krishna District Collector Gitanjali Sharma at the event. In addition, the Minister, along with the MLA, inaugurated a Hindustan Petroleum petrol...

-PAGE: 4

**BJP marks win with show of...**

Nayab Singh Saini, the proverbial dark horse who became star of the BJP's victory in the Haryana assembly elections, was sworn in as chief minister of the state on Thursday in a grand ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a galaxy of NDA leaders. Thousands of people packed into the Dussehra Ground to watch Governor Bandaru Dattatreya administer the oath of office to the low profile OBC leader and 13 others. For the BJP, the messaging was not just in its show of strength...

-PAGE: 5

**Enhanced insurance benefits...**

Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandavaya on Thursday announced extension of the enhanced insurance benefits for all members of retirement fund body EPFO under Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) scheme. The move will ensure up to Rs 7 lakh of life cover to more than 6 crore EPFO members. The scheme has been extended with retrospective effect from April 28, 2024 onwards, Mandavaya told reporters here. EDLI Scheme, launched in 1976, seeks to provide insurance benefits...

-PAGE: 8

**Ganguly named director of cricket...**

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly was on Thursday appointed Director of Cricket for JSW Sports, his role covering all its cricketing properties including the Delhi team in the IPL and the WPL along with the Pretoria Capitals franchise in SA20. JSW Sports and GMR Group co-own Delhi Capitals in the IPL and WPL (Women's Premier League) while Pretoria Capitals is owned solely by JSW Sports. "In his role, Ganguly will spearhead all cricketing properties owned by JSW Sports, including..."

-SPORTS

## Best time to invest in AP: CM

**SAYS STATE IS EMERGING TOP CHOICE FOR BUSINESSES**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has announced that there has never been a better time for investments in Andhra Pradesh. Speaking at the swearing-in ceremony of Haryana's new Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini, Naidu extended a "red carpet invitation" to industrialists and entrepreneurs, positioning Andhra Pradesh as a business-friendly destination.

Highlighting the state's proactive measures, Naidu stated, "Andhra Pradesh is now extending invitations with a new and improved policy framework designed by experienced industry experts. Our goal is to foster entrepreneurship and boost business growth."

The Chief Minister emphasized that Andhra Pradesh is emerging as a top choice for businesses, backed by a supportive ecosystem. He remarked, "The Andhra Pradesh government is fully committed to driving development. There's no better time than now for investments, both in the state and across the country. We eagerly await new investments, presenting an opportunity for businesses and the state to grow together."

Naidu called on investors to join the state's "exciting growth journey," indicating Andhra Pradesh's readiness to welcome new business ventures and partnerships.

During the NDA CMs Council

**Along with Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Naidu attended the meeting alongside Union Ministers JP Nadda, Amit Shah, and Rajnath Singh, as well as the chief ministers of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Odisha, Manipur, and Chhattisgarh.**



■ CM Naidu attends Haryana's new CM Nayab Singh Saini's, swearing-in ceremony. ■ Naidu says AP govt is fully committed to driving development. ■ He invites investors to join the State's 'exciting growth journey', indicating AP's readiness to welcome new business ventures and partnerships. ■ During the NDA CMs Council meet held in Chandigarh, chaired by PM Modi, Naidu highlights AP's investor-friendly policies.

meeting held in Chandigarh, chaired by Prime Minister Modi, Naidu highlighted Andhra Pradesh's new investor-friendly policies.

Along with Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Naidu attended the meeting alongside Union Ministers JP Nadda, Amit Shah, and Rajnath Singh, as well as the chief ministers of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Odisha, Manipur,

and Chhattisgarh. The Chief Minister reiterated that Andhra Pradesh is a business-friendly state, stating, "We have developed a new policy framework designed by industry experts to foster an entrepreneurial spirit and business growth. Our aim is to create the best business environment in the country. The state government takes full responsibility for driving

development." Chandrababu emphasised, "There has never been a better time for investments, both in the country and in Andhra Pradesh. We invite businesses to join us on this exciting journey of growth. There are vast opportunities for businesses and the state to expand together, and we eagerly await new investments in Andhra Pradesh."

## Minister to banks: Promote MSMEs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Agriculture Minister K. Achannaidu has called upon banks to adopt a humanitarian approach in extending loans to tenant farmers across the State. Speaking as the chief guest at the 228th State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) meeting held at the State Secretariat on Thursday, the Minister stressed the need for greater support from banks to benefit farmers and other sectors.

The meeting reviewed the progress achieved in the first quarter of 2024, up to June, covering topics such as the approval of the previous SLBC meeting minutes, key banking indicators, and the achievement of the Banks' Annual Credit Plan (ACP) targets for the first quarter of 2024-25.

Achannaidu

highlighted the government's efforts, mentioning that while 9 lakh Crop Cultivator Rights Cards (CCRC) have been issued to tenant farmers in the state, loans have been extended to only 2 lakh of them so far.

**Achannaidu highlighted the government's efforts, mentioning that while 9 lakh Crop Cultivator Rights Cards (CCRC) have been issued to tenant farmers in the state, loans have been extended to only 2 lakh of them so far. He reiterated the need for banks to step up and offer loans to these farmers with a more compassionate perspective.**



Continued on Page 2

## Betting app racket busted, 7 arrested

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam police have arrested seven people and seized several assets in connection with an illegal online betting app with international links.

Acting on a tip-off from Ahmedabad, a special police team conducted raids at various locations in the city, uncovering a well-organised betting operation connected to China.

During the raids, the police seized 10 laptops, 8 desktops, a car, a bike, and around 800 debit cards and cheque books.

Continued on Page 2

## MUMBAI MODEL CASE YSRCP leader Kukkala's remand extended

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The remand of Kukkala Vidyasagar, a YSR Congress Party leader and prime accused (A1) in a case involving alleged harassment of Mumbai-based actress Kadambari Jethwani, has been extended till October 29.

Vidyasagar was arrested by the police in Dehradun on Friday in connection with a false case filed against the actress. The arrest followed a complaint lodged by Jethwani at the Ibrahimpatnam police station, where she accused Vidyasagar of wrongfully implicating her using forged documents. She alleged that this led to her unjust arrest and harassment, ultimately forcing her to withdraw a sexual assault complaint she had filed against another individual in Mumbai.



The case has garnered attention due to the involvement of senior IPS officers PSR Anjaneyulu, Kanti Rana Tata, and Vishal Gunni. They are also named as accused in the illegal case, arrest, and harassment of Jethwani and her family members.

The case has garnered attention due to the involvement of senior police officials, including IPS officers. Senior IPS

officers PSR Anjaneyulu, Kanti Rana Tata, and Vishal Gunni are also accused in the illegal case, arrest, and harassment of Jethwani and her family members. Investigations and legal proceedings are ongoing.

## Cops quiz Sajjala in TDP office attack case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has criticised the TDP government for filing false cases against YSRCP leaders, describing it as a clear political vendetta aimed at silencing the opposition. He stated that such actions are intended to distract the public and harass party members.

Speaking to the media after appearing at Mangalagiri Police Station in connection with an alleged illegal case related to the attack on the TDP office, Sajjala



made it clear that YSRCP leaders would not be intimidated by these tactics and are determined to fight back against the baseless charges. He also urged the ruling party to

cease this harassment or face consequences.

He emphasised that the TDP has been relentlessly fabricating cases against YSRCP leaders, arbitrarily increasing the number of charges. He revealed that he was not even in Mangalagiri on the day of the alleged attack, as he was campaigning in Badvel for the by-election. Despite this, a false case was lodged against him, and a Lookout Circular (LOC) was issued to further harass him upon his return from abroad.

Continued on Page 2



## Bangla tribunal issues arrest warrant against Hasina

PNS ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on Thursday issued arrest warrants against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted after student-led protests in August, and 45 others for alleged crimes against humanity.

The warrants against Hasina, 77, and others, including her party Awami League's top leaders, were issued on the first day of the judicial proceedings begun by the re-constituted tribunal, Dhaka Tribune newspaper said.

The Tribunal, led by its chairman Justice Md Golam Murtuza Majumdar, passed the orders after the prosecution filed two petitions seeking arrest warrants, Chief Prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam was quoted as saying by the Daily Star.

The ICT also directed the authorities concerned to produce Hasina and 45 others before it by November 18.

So far more than 60 complaints of enforced disappearance, murder and mass killings have been filed at the ICT against Hasina, other leaders of her Awami League party and the 14-party alliance, journalists and former top officials of law enforcement agencies.

Continued on Page 2

## Dy CM Pawan all praise for MGR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan conveyed his heartfelt wishes to the AIADMK on the occasion of its Founding Day.

In a social media post, he lauded the party's founder, MG Ramachandran (MGR), as a transformative political leader who uplifted the poor and prioritised welfare in Tamil Nadu. Kalyan emphasised that MGR's leadership balanced welfare and development, contributing to Tamil Nadu's prosperity.

He also praised Jayalalitha for continuing MGR's legacy and urged the current leadership under Edappadi Palaniswami to uphold these values despite the challenges. Kalyan described AIADMK as the voice of the people of Tamil Nadu, rooted in values that have guided the party's success.

## 25 die in Bihar after consuming hooch

PNS ■ PATNA

In one of the biggest hooch tragedies in Bihar since the state went dry in 2016, at least 25 people have died after consuming spurious liquor in the adjoining districts of Siwan and Saran, a top officer said on Thursday.

Director General of Police Alok Raj said that while Siwan accounted for 20 fatalities, five deaths have been reported from Saran even as 12 people have been arrested for allegedly selling spurious liquor and they were likely to be "tried under the most stringent laws and punished by the court."

"Two special investigating teams have also been set up in the aftermath of the incident. The one set up at the local level will be looking into the criminality involved in the latest episode. "Another SIT has been set up by

the Department of Prohibition in Patna which will carry out a comprehensive study of all such incidents that have taken place in the recent past, based upon which a plan of action will be drawn out," the DGP said.

"The name of a liquor mafioso has cropped up. He happened to be involved in a similar case earlier and is currently out on bail. We are investigating the matter from all angles," he added.

According to officials in the two districts, tragedy befell Maghar and Auriya panchayats of Siwan and Mashrak in Saran on Tuesday night when a number of locals treated themselves to liquor, the sale of which was completely banned in the state by the Nitish Kumar government way back in April, 2016.

The officials also said that more than 20 people were still battling for



Two special investigating teams have also been set up in the aftermath of the incident. The one set up at the local level will be looking into the criminality involved in the latest episode.

life at hospitals, many of them having lost their eyesight as a side effect of the spurious liquor.

State Prohibition Minister Ratnesh Sada vowed to bring in a stringent "CCA" (crime control act) to rein in liquor mafia, but snapped at reporters when asked whether he saw the latest incident as a "failure" of the much-touted prohibition law. "Do not talk like an idiot. I am sit-

ting here at my residence. If I do something wrong inside my house, will the police station concerned get to know about it beforehand?" Sada asked. State Congress president Akhilesh Prasad Singh lashed out at the government, saying, "Why only CCA? Let them hang the culprits. Let them not spare anybody, even if the suspects happen to be connected with

any opposition party. But it is high time that the government reviewed its prohibition policy which has failed to check the sale of spurious liquor, even as its draconian provisions tend to treat hapless family members of the victims as criminals and deprive them of a much-needed compensation from the government."

The Rajya Sabha MP also said the party has set up a seven-member fact-finding team which would visit the affected localities and submit its report to the Congress leadership.

CPI(ML) MLA Satyadeo Ram, who represents Darauli seat of Siwan, toured the affected areas and alleged, "The administration seems intent on brushing the entire thing under the carpet. Residents of at least 60 villages have consumed liquor.

Continued on Page 2



# RTI in trouble in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

The Right to Information Act 2005 is in trouble, at least now in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Unfortunately, even in Telangana, the state government is yet to think of appointing the Chief Information Commissioners and State Information Commissions, despite High Court orders as well as several judgments of the Supreme Court.

When ten thousand plus second appeals were pending for several years, how could the Information Commission not even attend to this statutory office, as reportedly mentioned in the report of the SCIC sent to the Governor? Can an office of the Governor or Chief of Commission ensure strict attendance on take-up hearings of the appeals? It is neither accountability nor transparency. **Strike at 'work'**

It is a simple duty that

every Commissioner should be attending the office at least to dispose of second appeals to make it 'work'. But they were neither attending duty nor on leave. They should learn from the sub-courts under the superintendence of the High Courts how to work. Though there was huge pendency of cases, the judges worked from 10.30 am to around 5.30 pm, posted more than 2 hundred cases, and disposed of dozens of them.

It was surprising to note what has been happening in the Andhra Pradesh State Information Commission. **Report of Chief against Commissioners**

Based on a complaint, a report was submitted to Governor Syed Abdul Nazeer by State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC) R. Mahaboob Basha on October 3, which exposed several unwelcome happenings at the

**When ten thousand plus second appeals were pending for several years, how could the Information Commission not even attend to this statutory office, as reportedly mentioned in the report of the SCIC sent to the Governor? Can an office of the Governor or Chief of Commission ensure strict attendance on take-up hearings of the appeals? It is neither accountability nor transparency.**

Andhra Pradesh Information Commission (APIC). The SCIC, Mahaboob Basha, has complained about the alleged irregularity in attendance of the Commissioners, delay in adjudication of the cases, and others. **No accountability?**

An RTI activist, Emmanuel Dasari Chakradhar Buddha, co-convenor of the United Forum for RTI Campaign - AP (UFRTI-AP), has complained against some State Information Commissioners

of Andhra Pradesh. According to a report from RTI activists, media, and the SCIC, Basha studied the complaint to Governor Syed Abdul Nazeer of AP. Chakradhar Buddha has rightly asked to ensure accountability in APIC and their office. The reading of this 46-page report exposes the pathetic stage of the RTI. The State Information Commissioners (SICs) could not draw a full salary for September, as their payslips were reportedly prepared



**PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU**  
Professor of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

attitude and misbehaviour of the concerned SICs is depriving the APIC to achieve its objectives and such conduct of SICs tantamount to breach of oath."

He also explained that "to ensure punctuality, discipline, and accountability in the functioning of the APIC, this office passed an administrative order on August 29, 2024, directing all the quasi-judicial authorities, including SCIC and SICs, to mark their entry and exit attendance through Facial Recognition System (FRS) and by signing in the entry and exit manual attendance register."

It is a tragedy that, except for himself, none of the SICs working at the APIC have marked their attendance in the register. Later, the Drawing and Disbursement Officer, in consonance with the administrative order of the APIC, prepared the salary bills of

SCIC and SICs as per the monthly attendance report and uploaded the same on September 25.

It is further said that "the SICs are attending the office without adhering to the timings, and remaining absent without applying for leave but drawing full salary". The APIC introduced the manual attendance system and directed the DDO to prepare the salary bills based on attendance reports, he added.

The SCIC exposed that one of the SICs, Chavali Suneel, intruded into his chamber, sat on the floor, and instructed his office subordinate to serve food, demanding a new dining table along with chairs. At present, four SICs are working viz. P. Samuel Jonathan, Chavali Suneel, Rehana Begum, and Allareddy Uday Bhaskar Reddy.

The SICs alleged in their let-

ter that, "The SCIC has been formulating orders with an undue intention of subjugating, exercising undue influence and creating a sense of fear and panic among the SICs, thereby causing unnecessary trauma and interference in the daily functioning of the SICs."

**Don't we have right to know?**

Let us remind the people and the Governments to know that it is right to information and right to know! Right to Information Day is celebrated on October 12 --this is the day the Right to Information Act of 2005 came into force. The act's goals include making the government more accountable to the people, promoting transparency, and containing corruption. Internationally, on September 28, Right to Know Day should have been celebrated.

(The writer is former CIC)

## AP Chambers hails govt's new policies

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President of AP Chambers, Potluri Bhaskara Rao, praised the recent policies announced by the State government, stating that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had previously assured that Andhra Pradesh would introduce some of the best policies in the country across various sectors. Keeping to his word, the government unveiled six policies aimed at attracting investment and boosting the State's economy.

He highlighted that the government is planning to develop industrial parks through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), focusing on improving the speed of doing business. These parks will be set up on privately owned lands, with the government developing the necessary infrastructure. With the announcement of these new industrial policies, Rao expressed



confidence that Andhra Pradesh's economy is on track for significant growth and prosperity.

He also mentioned that the government has reduced the land rates in Mallavalli Industrial Park in Krishna district to the earlier rate of Rs. 16.5 lakh per acre, coupled with infrastructure development, which is expected to encourage more investment. Rao extended his gratitude to the Chief Minister, Ministers, and Secretaries for their efforts in introducing these progressive policies.

AP Chambers' General Secretary, B Raja Sekhar, lauded

the policies, noting that many of the suggestions put forward by the Chambers had been incorporated. He stated that the government has announced separate incentives for companies based on their investment scale and employment potential. By 2024-29, the government is aiming to attract investments worth 10 billion USD, creating 2 million jobs (both direct and indirect), with approximately 1.5 billion USD expected to be reimbursed to investors.

MS Ramachandra Rao, General Secretary of the AP MSME Industries Association, welcomed the inclusion of

MSMEs and entrepreneurs in the State's industrial policy. He explained that the government is planning to set up an industrial estate in every assembly constituency, with the ambitious goal of bringing an entrepreneur from every household.

The policies include initiatives like ideation assistance, trade-related support, technical know-how centres, global market linkages for 500 top MSMEs, seed capital incentives, local procurement policies, energy conservation measures, and skill development to enhance local employment prospects. Rao emphasised that these initiatives indicate a bright future for the State.

AP Chambers' Energy Committee Vice Chairman B Phani Chandra, Affiliates Council Vice Chairman G Radhika, and Board Member D Aparna also shared their views on the occasion.

## SAAP chief seeks MPs' support for Central funds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chairman of the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP), Animimi Ravi Naidu, met Vijayawada MP Kesinini Sivanath (Chinni) and Rajamahendravaram MP and BJP State president, Daggubati Purandeswari, at their offices in Vijayawada on Thursday. He sought their support in securing funds from the Union Government for the revival of the Kreedha Vikasa Kendras (KVKs) in the state.

During his discussions with the MPs, Ravi Naidu expressed that the NDA government is committed to the development of KVKs, which had been neglected under the previous administration. He outlined SAAP's plans to promote sports and games in the state, leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

He further emphasised that if the Centre released sufficient funds, the NDA government would restore the former glory of sports and games in Andhra Pradesh. The SAAP, he added, aims to develop Visakhapatnam as a cricket hub, Tirupati for



SAAP Chairman Animimi Ravi Naidu and VC & MD PS Girisha inspecting the Vidyadharapuram Stadium in Vijayawada on Thursday.

kabaddi, and Kakinada and Rajamahendravaram for other regionally suitable sports.

Ravi Naidu also discussed plans to establish a tourism hub focused on sports, which would revive traditional rural games and introduce them to the younger generation. He appealed to the MPs to help facilitate the release of necessary funds from the Union Government.

In response, MP Purandeswari assured that SAAP could submit a detailed proposal, which she would bring to the attention of the Sports Ministry to expedite the

release of funds. She also promised to advocate for more funds for the KVKs and the Khelo India Scheme in the state.

**Vidyadharapuram stadium inspected**

Meanwhile, SAAP Chairman Ravi Naidu, along with Vice Chairman & Managing Director (VC&MD) PS Girisha, inspected the site of the Indoor Stadium under construction at Vidyadharapuram in Vijayawada. Alongside engineering officials, they reviewed the stadium's design.

During the visit, Ravi Naidu

directed the engineering officials to ensure the stadium is developed for the benefit of athletes. He highlighted the state government's commitment to enhancing sports infrastructure across Andhra Pradesh, with a particular focus on promoting sports and encouraging student participation. He reiterated SAAP's readiness to provide necessary facilities to support athletes.

SAAP Executive Engineer Siddhaiah, NTR District Sports Development Officer (DSDO) SA Azeer, and others were present during the inspection.

## 25 die in Bihar...

Continued from Page 1

This could not have happened on such a large scale unless those involved in the illicit trade were being patronised by the local administration."

Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav came out with an angry statement saying, "Hooch deaths have become a routine in Bihar but never ever has a high-ranking official faced the music for the lapse. If spurious liquor is available despite prohibition, it is also a failure on part of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who has held on to the home portfolio all through his tenure."

Meanwhile, the chief minister chaired a high-level meeting to review the situation where he instructed officials concerned to visit the site and ensure strongest possible action against those found guilty.

Kumar, who is the state's longest-serving CM, also made an impassioned appeal to the people of the state to "be on guard against elements who are trying to encourage consumption of liquor which plays havoc with people's lives and disrupts peace in families".

## Villages are the backbone of nation: R & B Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BC Janardhan Reddy, Minister for Roads, Buildings, Investments, and Infrastructure, emphasised that villages are the backbone of the nation. He highlighted that the government is committed to improving the living standards in rural areas by providing enhanced infrastructure. The minister remarked that the coalition government is focused on strengthening the Panchayati Raj system, which had weakened over the last five years, and is working to revive local governance in village panchayats.

As part of the week-long "Palle Panduga" (Village Festival) celebrations initiated by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Minister Janardhan Reddy visited Kaia village in Banaganapalle Mandal, Nandyal District, on



Thursday. During the visit, he laid the foundation stone for the construction of new CC roads in the village. Speaking on the occasion, he reiterated that the coalition government is committed to ensuring a balance between welfare and development to provide effective governance. He also assured that the government would soon deliver on the "Super Six" promises made in the election manifesto.

The minister further pointed out that many village

roads had been neglected in the past five years. However, since the coalition came to power, efforts have been made to restore these roads. During the event, he patiently listened to the grievances of local residents and assured them of a swift resolution to the issues raised.

The event saw active participation from villagers, panchayat and revenue officials, staff from various departments, as well as leaders and workers from the coalition parties.

## Minister to banks...

Continued from Page 1

Acchannaidu also called on banks to provide assistance to the youth and align with the targets set for various schemes under the central government, such as the PM Mudra Yojana and PM Vishwakarma Yojana. He urged banks to create awareness about these schemes among the public.

Union Bank of India's MD and CEO, A. Manimekhalai, praised the state government for implementing several innovative schemes under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, aimed at achieving the vision of 'Swarna Andhra @2047'. She commended the government's focus on digital initiatives, infrastructure, and economic and industrial development, assuring that banks would continue to support these efforts.

She discussed the performance of banks, noting that under the Annual Credit Plan for 2024-25, loans worth Rs 3,75,000 crore were to be disbursed to priority sectors. As of June 30, Rs 1,36,657 crore—36 per cent of the target—had been achieved. In the agriculture

sector, Rs 89,438 crore (34 per cent) had been disbursed, while the MSME sector had received Rs 87,000 crore in loans, reaching 51 per cent of the target.

Nagaraju Maddira, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services, highlighted that the credit flow in agriculture and MSME sectors is satisfactory. He suggested that the central government should ensure timely loans for schemes like PM Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Jeevan Jyoti Yojana, PM Atal Pension Yojana, and PM Mudra Yojana.

Special Chief Secretary for Agriculture, B. Rajasekhar, pointed out that nearly 90 per cent of farmers in the state are tenant farmers, many of whom struggle to obtain proper loans. He urged banks to extend loans to tenant farmers holding CCRC cards to support them effectively.

Principal Secretary for Finance, Peeyush Kumar, emphasised the State's long-term goal of eliminating poverty by 2029. He noted that both central and state governments are focusing on a variety of welfare schemes to achieve this objective.

## Betting app...

Continued from Page 1

Commissioner of Police Dr. Shanka Brata Bagchi said, "This is a major action against the illegal betting industry." He explained that the app was being operated without proper approval, putting users' money at risk. The investigation showed that the money made through the betting app was being sent to China and Taiwan.

The police are now working with international law enforcement to take down the entire network. Further arrests are expected as the investigation continues.

This case highlights the growing problem of illegal online gambling and the need for stricter rules to protect users.

## Strengthen party, Jagan tells YSRCP cadre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy chaired a State-level workshop at the party's central office in Tadepalli on Thursday. The workshop saw the participation of district presidents, heads of affiliated wings, and representatives from across the State.

During his address, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed party leaders to strengthen the party organisation by establishing a systematic framework, starting from the state level down to the village level. He stressed the need for forming committees to empower the party and urged leaders to ensure the involvement of affiliated units at the grassroots level, with a particular focus on women's participation. He set a six-month deadline to form active village-level committees, incorporating youth, women, students, and booth-level units,

and emphasised the importance of regular supervision by party leaders at all levels.

The YSRCP leader expressed grave concerns about the current government's failures across key sectors. He pointed out that Rs 2,400 crore in unpaid bills under the Aarogyasri health scheme have delayed healthcare access, raising doubts about the government's commitment to public health. He further highlighted issues in the education sector, where welfare schemes like Vidya Deevana and Vasathi Deevana have not been fully implemented. He noted that plans to introduce English medium education and update the syllabus to the CBSE curriculum have stalled, resulting in a lack of progress.

In the agriculture sector, YS Jagan criticised the inefficiencies in schemes like Rythu Bharosa and crop insurance. He noted the government's failure to provide minimum support prices and

timely financial aid, which has left farmers struggling. He also raised concerns about the poor state of healthcare services due to governance issues and condemned the liquor policy, stating that it has fostered corruption and mafia-like control over sales, leading to increased lawlessness.

YS Jagan underscored the growing influence of social media, urging party leaders at all levels, from constituency in-charges to village representatives, to actively engage on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. He stated that the party is not only contesting against Chandrababu Naidu but also battling a corrupt system that is supported by biased media and misleading social media narratives. He called on every leader to take responsibility for sharing the truth and countering misinformation through their own social media channels.

## Bangla tribunal...

Continued from Page 1

Following unprecedented anti-government protests over a controversial quota system in government jobs that peaked on August 5, Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled to India and is currently believed to be living at an undisclosed location there. Hundreds of people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government, taking the death toll to more than 1,000 since the massive protest by students against a controversial quota system in government jobs first started in mid-July.

After taking over on August 8, Bangladesh's interim government had said it would try in the International Crimes Tribunal those involved in

the killings during the mass movement of the students against the Hasina-led government. Hasina faces almost 200 cases mostly for murders during the mass student protests. Advocate Tajul Islam, the chief prosecutor of the tribunal, said on Sunday that Interpol's assistance would be sought to bring back fugitives, including Hasina. After the interim government was formed, ICT's judges, prosecution team and investigation agency appointed by the previous government, had stepped down and the body was re-constituted recently.

The interim government has not ruled out seeking Hasina's extradition.

Chief Adviser of the interim government Muhammad Yunus, in an interview to PTI in September, had said Hasina.

## Cops quiz Sajjala...

Continued from Page 1

Sajjala condemned these actions as a deliberate attempt to restrict the movement of YSRCP leaders and suppress their political freedom. He pointed out that other party leaders, including Thalasila Raghuram, Lella Appi Reddy, and Devinnee Avinash, have been summoned for questioning multiple times, while former MP Nandigam Suresh has been unjustly jailed. He asserted that such actions are politically motivated and aim to distract the public from the growing popularity of the YSRCP and its leader, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Sajjala noted that the government has now transferred the case to the CID, which could lead to further unlawful arrests. However, he assured that the YSRCP leadership and cadre would not be deterred by such baseless accusations and illegal actions. Instead, these attempts would only strengthen their resolve and determination to fight back.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**  
**RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT**  
**E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE**

No. 31 to 182024-25(AE) Date: 16-10-2024

Name of the work: Bids are invited for operation and maintenance of 18 Comprehensive protected drinking water schemes in Vizianagaram and Parvatipuram districts. Estimated Cost: Rs. 1501.00 lakh. Dates of availability of tenders: From 11.00 am on 23-10-2024 to 3.00 pm on 30-10-2024. For details, contact www.approcurement.gov.in or call 9190129737.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
RWS & S Circle, Vizianagaram

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.



## Minister assures medical care for diarrhoea victims

Orders comprehensive investigation into water contamination

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, SERP, and NRI Affairs, Kondapally Srinivas, has announced that immediate and top-quality medical assistance is being provided to those affected by a diarrhoea outbreak in Gurla mandal centre. The outbreak, which occurred three days ago, has resulted in several victims being admitted to various hospitals in the district.



Upon learning about the situation, medical teams swiftly set up a camp in the village to treat the affected persons. The victims were admitted to multiple hospitals in the district for further monitoring and treatment

Upon learning about the situation, medical teams swiftly set up a camp in the village to treat the affected persons. The victims were admitted to multiple hospitals in the district for further monitoring and treatment. On Thursday, Minister Srinivas visited Gurla village to assess the situation first-hand and inspect the medical camp established at the Zilla Parishad High School.

During his visit, the Minister discussed the root causes of the diarrhoea outbreak with local officials, with a particular focus on the village's water supply. "We have collected water samples from several boreholes, and early reports suggest contamination in some of them," the Minister explained. He ordered that comprehensive reports be compiled on the quality of water being supplied through drinking water schemes in the area.

"Until the full analysis is complete, we will provide the village with water through

tankers from nearby areas. Boreholes and other water sources should not be used until we understand and resolve the issue," Srinivas said. He also emphasised the importance of educating villagers on safe water usage once the contamination problem is addressed.

In his interaction with the media, the Minister assured that the authorities are leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to tackle the outbreak. "We are testing samples from various water sources in the village and will soon identify the root cause of contamination. The discharge of village waste into the Champavati River appears to be one of the contributing factors," he said. Srinivas announced that immediate steps would be taken to prevent future waste discharge into the river.



Fishermen staging a protest as dead fish wash ashore at Upputeru in Nakkapalli mandal of Anakapalli district.

## Fishermen protest as pharma effluents kill tonnes of fish

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLY

Fishermen in Nakkapalli mandal are raising serious concerns after tonnes of dead fish were found washed ashore at Upputeru, a tidal basin, on Thursday. The mass fish deaths are being blamed on untreated pharmaceutical effluents released into the water by a private drug company operating in Rajayyapeta mandal. The effluents, reportedly discharged directly into the tidal basin without treatment, are devastating marine life and threatening the livelihoods of local fishermen.

CPM leader M Appala Raju said, "Untreated pharmaceutical effluents are getting into the catchment area, and it is badly impacting the fish catch. This is not only destroying the marine habitat, but also severely affecting the livelihood of the fishermen who rely on these waters. Despite this issue persisting for a long time, the authorities, including the AP Pollution Control Board

(APPCB) officials, have failed to take any meaningful action."

The fishermen's distress is palpable, with many reporting severe financial losses due to the diminishing fish population and deteriorating water quality. G. Someshwar Rao shared his frustrations: "The quality and quantity of our catch have been severely impacted by the untreated effluents being dumped into the water body. We are struggling to make ends meet. We demand that the government provide compensation to the affected fishermen and take strict action against the pharma company responsible for this."

In response to the crisis, fishermen leaders, including B. Nookaraju, K. Kasi Rao, Ch. Somesh, and Gurranna, along with dozens of fishermen, staged a protest at Upputeru. They raised slogans against the drug company's negligent behaviour and called for immediate government intervention to prevent further environmental damage.

# NTR district stronghold of NDA: MP Kesineni Chinni

Says win in Krishna-Guntur Graduate Constituency election will strengthen NDA's presence in district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath alias Chinni has emphasised that securing a decisive victory for Alapati Rajendra Prasad, the MLC candidate for the Krishna-Guntur Graduate Constituency, will play a critical role in solidifying NTR district as a stronghold for the NDA led by the TDP. He underlined that a win in this election would significantly strengthen the NDA's presence in NTR district, which has strategic importance in the State's political landscape.

Former Government Whip and senior leader, Samineni Udayabhanu, who recently joined the Jana Sena Party (JSP) in the presence of the party chief and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, has been appointed as the JSP NTR district president. He called on Kesineni Chinni at the NTR Bhavan in



MP Kesineni Chinni felicitating the newly appointed NTR district JSP president Samineni Udayabhanu at the NTR Bhavan in Vijayawada on Thursday

Gurunanak Colony on Thursday. The MP congratulated Udayabhanu on his new position. Later, both the leaders held a meeting with NDA leaders.

Speaking on the occasion, Kesineni Chinni emphasised that NTR district is a stronghold of the NDA. He hoped that the trend would be wit-

nessed in the ensuing Krishna-Guntur Graduate Constituency elections and NDA candidate Alapati Rajendra Prasad would secure victory. TDP, JSP and BJP leaderships are working together for the comprehensive development of NTR district, he added. Meanwhile, he stated that he is normally not

interested in the Graduate Elections; however, after seeing the NDA governance under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, people are keen on voting for the NDA candidate, he said.

Samineni Udayabhanu said that he would strive to strengthen the NDA in all seven Assembly constituencies in the district. He is ready to take the district ahead under the leadership of MP Kesineni Chinni. The entire State is witnessing development under the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan, he added.

JSP Andhra Zone convener Baditha Sankar, Vijayawada Central in-charge Boliseti Vamsi Krishna, Mylavaram in-charge Akkala Gandhi, Nuzvid president Kamesh, leaders Tankasala Subba Rao, BJP leader Reddipalli Raju and others were present.

## 'Outreach activities will greatly help publicise govt programmes'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional Director General of the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Rajindar Chaudhry, has emphasised the need for coordinated and collective efforts to effectively engage with the public through outreach activities.

Speaking at the Inter-Media Publicity Coordination Committee (IMPCC) meeting held here on Thursday, Chaudhry noted that these outreach activities would have a significant impact in publicizing government programmes that benefit the public. He addressed various stakeholders from Central Government offices and Public Sector Organisations, urging them to collaborate in disseminating information.

Chaudhry highlighted that the IMPCC meeting aims to provide a platform for better and timely coordination among government organizations, enabling the sharing of information and data, and addressing crises or negative news. He stressed the importance of IMPCC's role in show-



ing the various initiatives and activities undertaken by Central and State media units, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and other government organizations. He also emphasized the need for a robust public relations network to enhance media integration and synergy.

He further outlined PIB's role in Andhra Pradesh, stating that its mandate is to share information on government policies, programmes, initiatives, and achievements with print, electronic, and social media. He noted that PIB serves as an interface between

the government and the media, providing feedback on public sentiment as reflected in media coverage.

Chaudhry reiterated that the purpose of the meeting was to develop a comprehensive communication and management strategy among government departments to ensure the public is informed about the government's welfare measures.

Representatives from various organizations shared their roles and functions aimed at benefiting the public and sought PIB's support in amplifying their outreach efforts.

## Address unemployment issue in AP: YS Sharmila

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila Reddy has said the State is facing a serious unemployment crisis. She said there is a lack of political accountability. She pointed out that there was no mention of any of the 'Super Six' schemes at the Cabinet meeting.

At a press conference held at the Andhra Ratna Bhavan here, on Thursday, Sharmila

said unemployment is an invisible epidemic eating into the vitals of the State. She said that her party expected some good news for women for this Diwali, however, it was unhappy with the government for not grounding even 'low budget' schemes like the distribution of free cooking gas cylinders and free bus travel for women in the APSRTC buses.

Meanwhile, referring to the government's thrust on a new industrial policy, she said it



should bring investments, which in turn, would create jobs. The government has claimed that it will bring investments worth Rs.30 lakh crore and create 20 lakh jobs in the next five years. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's 'Job First' slogan is the need of the hour, but will it translate into reality is a million-dollar question," she said.

## 'Pournami Garuda Seva' held



PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The monthly 'Pournami Garuda Seva' was observed with utmost religious fervour in Tirumala on Thursday evening. Sri Malayappa Swamy in all His splendour blessed the devotees along the four mada streets on the mighty Garuda Vahanam. Both the Pontiffs of Tirumala, CVSO Sridhar, SP Subbarayudu, DyEO Bhaskar, Temple Peishkar Ramakrishna, AEO Naik, Parupattendar Himatgiri, other staff, were present.

## Paderu to host two-day festivals to promote tribal tourism

PNS ■ PADERU

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has announced plans to host two or three-day festivals in key tourist areas of Paderu and Rampachodavaram divisions during the upcoming tourist season. These festivals, held under the banner of Tourism Week, will spotlight tribal cultural traditions from the region and beyond, featuring a variety of stalls, enter-

tainment programmes, and adventure activities.

At a District Tourism Council meeting held on Thursday, the Collector stressed the need to identify and enhance infrastructure at 10 major tourist spots in Paderu and five in Rampachodavaram. This includes ensuring adequate park-

ing, accommodation, transport facilities, food stalls, drinking water, sanitation, and toilets. "We envision these festivals as a platform to bring the unique tribal heritage of our region to a global audience," said District Collector Dinesh Kumar. "Our goal is to develop these events into major national festivals over the

next 10 years." The Collector also proposed forming a Destination Management Plan Committee, which will include ITDA, Forest Department, TDC, and local communities. This committee will draft a comprehensive plan addressing transportation, accommodation, and infrastructure gaps, along with a study of

the social and environmental impacts of tourism development.

Addressing concerns of tourists, the Collector also highlighted complaints about high fees and restrictions on personal vehicles at popular tourist spots like Gudisa and Katika Falls. The Collector emphasised that a regulated fee structure should be put in place to ensure fairness for visitors.



# Students study in shed despite Nadu-Nedu promise

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Despite being selected under the Nadu-Nedu scheme, students in the Tadipalem village of Gondipakalu panchayat, Chintapalle mandal, are forced to attend classes in a makeshift shed due to a lack of released funds. "Every day is a struggle for our children," lamented a local parent. "They deserve better than studying in a shed. We were promised a proper school building, but nothing has materialised."

Tadipalem, home to 65 tribal families, has 25 students enrolled in the local government primary school, which serves Classes I to V. The village lacks adequate educational infrastructure, prompting the local tribes to construct a temple less than 15 years ago. As the temple deteriorated, the community built the present shed five

25 students are studying in local government primary school in Tadipalem, home to 65 tribal families



years ago through their combined efforts. However, this structure is far from suitable; it leaks during rain, forcing

teachers to relocate students to the verandahs of nearby houses when the weather turns inclement.

"We have to teach our lessons wherever we can," said one teacher. "It's disheartening to see our students shivering in the cold during winter or struggling with heatstroke in summer because of the cramped conditions." Previously, the TDP government allocated funds for a permanent school building, and construction began up to the foundation level. However, with the transition to the YCP government, the project came to a halt as essential funds were never released to complete the building. As a result, the site remains with only the

foundations.

"The Nadu-Nedu scheme was supposed to transform schools like ours," a tribal leader explained. "We celebrated when we were selected for it, but two years later, we are still left with nothing." The previous YSRCP government had touted improvements in government schools and the promise of better facilities for students through the Nadu-Nedu initiative. However, the lack of funding has left the Tadipalem school in limbo, forcing students to continue their education in inadequate conditions.

"We were hopeful for change," a student said. "But instead, we are still here, learning in a shed. We just want a real school."

# KGH grappling with shortage of staff, medicines

Patients endure hours-long waits for basic services

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

King George Hospital (KGH), an essential healthcare facility for the Visakhapatnam region and beyond, is grappling with severe challenges in meeting the surging demand for medical services. An investigation by The Pioneer has unveiled alarming issues, including long wait times, medication shortages, and insufficient staffing.

On a recent visit to KGH, The Pioneer's Principal Correspondent witnessed the overwhelming conditions faced by patients in need of medical attention. The outpatient (OP) counter, blood test centres, and medicine dispensaries were inundated, with patients enduring hours-long waits for basic services. The digitisation of the OP process



through the ABHA app has further exacerbated delays, particularly for those without access to smartphones. "The process of obtaining an OP slip is a significant burden," lamented a frustrated patient. "For those who do not have smartphones, it is even more challenging." Once patients final-

ly entered the OP departments, they were met with additional barriers. Key departments, such as gynaecology and gastroenterology, were operating with a scarcity of senior doctors, forcing junior staff to shoulder excessive workloads. In orthopaedics, patients reported being solicited for unofficial

fees for necessary services like bandaging. "We expect to receive treatment, not additional expenses," said a patient who chose to remain anonymous.

The issue of medication shortages is particularly acute. Many patients are unable to secure the full range of prescribed medications. Essential drugs for common ailments such as gastric disorders, heart disease, thyroid issues, and pain relief are in dangerously short supply. Patients requiring costly injections for chronic conditions find themselves forced to seek these medications elsewhere. "Every time I visit KGH, at least one or two of my prescribed medicines are unavailable," said Kumar (name changed), a patient from Kancharapalem. Delays in medical testing have emerged as another significant hurdle.



# Anagani promises industrial park in Gudivada constituency

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Revenue, Anagani Satya Prasad, has assured the establishment of an industrial park in the Gudivada constituency.

The Revenue Minister inaugurated the newly modernised sub-registrar's office in Kowthavaram, Gudivada constituency, on Wednesday. The office was upgraded at a cost of Rs 23 lakh. He was accompanied by Minister for Excise Kollu Ravindra, MLA Venigandla Ramu, and Krishna District Collector Gitanjali Sharma at the event.

In addition, the Minister, along with the MLA, inaugurated a Hindustan Petroleum petrol filling station, which was set up with the cooperation of the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Society. Speaking on the occasion, the Revenue Minister emphasised that over 30,000 developmental works have been initiated

The Minister, along with the MLA, inaugurated a Hindustan Petroleum petrol filling station, which was set up with the cooperation of the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Society. Speaking on the occasion, the Revenue Minister emphasised that over 30,000 developmental works have been initiated across the state, with a total investment of Rs 4,500 crore.



He mentioned that officials are investigating irregularities related to government lands. The Minister also committed to establishing an Industrial Park in the Gudivada constituency, as requested by MLA

Venigandla Ramu. He further added that the government is working to implement its six flagship welfare schemes soon, and the free gas cylinders scheme will be rolled out from Diwali.

Later, on Thursday, Minister Satya Prasad, along with MLA

Venigandla Ramu, visited the Tahsildar and RDO offices in Gudivada. They also inspected the premises of the government guest house.

During the visit, MLA Venigandla Ramu brought up the issue of frequent power fluctuations and requested the

establishment of an indoor power substation. The Revenue Minister promptly contacted the Energy Minister, Gottipati Ravikumar, who assured swift action to resolve the issue by setting up a substation in Gudivada.

Minister Satya Prasad stressed that the Cabinet prioritises the development of Gudivada, given its significance as the native district of TDP founder and former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao.

Speaking to the media, the Minister highlighted that the Tahsildar and RDO offices in Gudivada are currently housed in buildings constructed during British rule. He assured that new buildings for these offices would be constructed soon.

RDO Balasubramanyam, JSP in-charge Buragadda Srikanth, and former municipal chairman Yalavarti Srinivasa Rao were among those present with the Minister.

# Raise awareness on child marriages among girls:DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K. Vetri Selvi has stressed the importance of creating awareness among girl students about the harmful effects of child marriages. She urged the public to take active steps to curb this practice. The Collector was speaking at a meeting of the 'Mission Vatsalya' held on Thursday.

In her address, Collector Vetri Selvi highlighted the need to expand the use of the 1098 toll-free helpline across the district, so that information on child marriages can be easily reported. She emphasised that every citizen should be vigilant and contribute to eradicating child marriages. Displaying the 1098 helpline number in all public spaces is crucial, she directed the officials.

"Through 'Mission Vatsalya', the government ensures protection for all children under 18 who are in need of shelter and care, helping them build a bright future. It's vital for children to enjoy their childhood and not fall prey to social issues like child marriages, school dropouts, child labour, migration, and begging," said the Collector. She further added that children should only be admitted to care centres after obtaining proper permission



"Through 'Mission Vatsalya', the government ensures protection for all children under 18 who are in need of shelter and care, helping them build a bright future. It's vital for children to enjoy their childhood and not fall prey to social issues like child marriages, school dropouts, child labour, migration, and begging," said the Collector.

a supportive environment for victims of sexual abuse, providing financial support through victim compensation and counselling to help them recover and build a better future.

Collector Vetri Selvi also advocated for counselling family members and ensuring that strict punishments are imposed on offenders under the POCSO Act, without any compromise. She directed the police and Women and Child Welfare departments to work together to ensure justice swift in such cases.

District Legal Services Authority Secretary, K. Ratna Prasad, spoke about improving facilities in girls' hostels and elaborated on the victim compensation process. He also stated that, as per the Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act, each police station should have a designated

# Minister opens new building of KDCC Bank's Mopidevi branch

Praises the bank's management for providing loans to farmers in difficult times

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Excise and Mines, Kollu Ravindra, inaugurated the newly constructed Krishna District Cooperative Central (KDCC) Bank building in Mopidevi on Thursday. The new KDCC Bank building was completed at a cost of Rs 1.10 crore. Minister Ravindra was joined by Avani Gadda MLA, Mandali Buddha Prasad, and Krishna District Collector, Gitanjali Sharma, during the inauguration.

Speaking at the event, Minister Ravindra highlighted that the KDCC Bank was established in 1915 by freedom fighter and Congress leader Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramaiah, with support from local farmers. He also recalled Sitaramaiah's significant role in founding Andhra Bank and LIC. The KDCC Bank now operates 57 branches across Krishna and NTR districts, with 531 societies affiliated to it.

The Minister praised the KDCC Bank's management



for providing loans to farmers during difficult times and supporting education. He also mentioned that ATMs have been set up to offer greater convenience to depositors. He commended cooperative banks for their vital role in strengthening the Indian economy.

Minister Ravindra further revealed that KDCC Bank holds deposits worth Rs 3,200 crore and has contributed Rs 20 lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) for flood relief operations. He criticised the YSRC government for

neglecting the cooperative sector during its five-year rule while affirming that the Chandrababu Naidu-led government has strengthened cooperative societies and banks in the state.

MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad noted that the KDCC Bank continues to generate profits and provide services, especially to the farming community. KDCC Bank CEO A Shyam Manohar, General Manager Chandrasekhar, and AGM G Surya Prakash Rao were also present at the event.

# Desiltation works taken up in Nellore city: Narayana

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Municipal Administration P Narayana has said that the desiltation works have been taken up in the city at a cost of Rs 54 crore. He noted that the desiltation would help to prevent clogging of water during heavy rains. He made it clear that all massive efforts were launched to develop Nellore city and urged the cooperation of the people.

The Minister visited some localities in the city on Thursday accompanied by district Collector O. Anand and other officials. The Minister ordered the officials concerned to remove the flex banners which were erected on dividers. He said that three sand stock reaches would be opened at the river Penna, near here, and sand would be supplied to the consumers from Monday onwards.

The Minister inspected the opening of new sand reaches on the left side of the Penna River in the Nellore City constituency today. Speaking on the occasion, he said that at present, 6000 tonnes of sand is being extracted at the three stock points in the district.



The Minister said that 22000 tonnes of sand could be mined after the opening of three sand reaches in the river Penna. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has taken a decision in the Cabinet meeting to reduce the price of sand. According to the Chief Minister's orders, the authorities were instructed to take steps to start all three reaches from Monday on the left side of Penna River in Nellore city.

The increase in the production of sand in the district would lead to a decrease in sand price, he hoped. "Steps will be taken to start 4 more sand reaches in the district soon. As much as 22000 tonnes of sand will be produced in the district by dredging the Penna River. The sand produced in Nellore district will be supplied for the needs of Prakasam and Bapatla districts, besides meeting the requirements of Nellore district," he revealed.

# 2 die in mishap

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLY

Two persons lost their lives after an unidentified vehicle collided with their motorcycle at Kasimkota, located near here on the national highway, in the early hours of Thursday. According to the police, the incident appears to be a hit-and-run case. The victims, Kuramdas Pratap (30) and Barnikula Rajesh (25), were on their way to Nellipalalli village in Nakkapalli mandal when their bike was struck from behind by an unknown vehicle, resulting in their instant death.

CI Allu Swamy has registered a case and the bodies have been shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for post-mortem.

# CPM demands return of SEZ land to farmers

PNS ■ KAKINADA

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao has demanded that the government return the land in the Special Economic Zones to the farmers instead of keeping it vacant for years together.

The CPM leader told media persons here on Thursday that the Kakinada SEZ was started with ten thousand acres but even after one and half decades not even a single industry has come out and the local people were deceived under the pretext of giving large-scale employment. At least now Chandrababu Naidu should fulfil his promise and encourage setting up of industries creating large scale employment in the SEZs, he added. Srinivasa Rao further demanded the state government to discuss in depth with the trade unions on the industrial policies

before finalizing them. The SEZ was started when Chandrababu Naidu came to power for the first time as the Chief Minister and till now no industries have come up.

The government announced six new industrial policies under which in the next five years there would be Rs.30 lakh Crores investment creating employment for 20 lakh people. But what happened to the three industrial policies announced previously and the progress achieved in investments and employment? he asked.

Srinivasa Rao said that under the agitational programme 'Praja Poru' planned from November 8 to 15 the party would organise agitations statewide highlighting the problems faced by the people of the state. CPM leader AV Nageswara Rao was among those who were present.



# Maharshi Valmiki's birth anniversary celebrated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Maharshi Valmiki's birth anniversary celebrations were held on a grand note at the RTC House in Vijayawada on Thursday. APSRTC Executive Director (Engineering) T Changan Reddy, Chief Manager (Personal) Swaroopananda Reddy, Deputy CPM (HRD) Samrajyam, Vigilance AD Shobha Manjari, Deputy Chief Traffic Manager (PNBS) N Srinivasa Rao and several RTC officials, besides the various union leaders, participated in the programme and paid floral tributes to Maharshi Valmiki.

Speaking on the occasion, ED (Engineering) Changan Reddy said that the current generation should know the greatness of Maharshi Valmiki.

APSRTC officials and staff work for the development of the corporation and they should follow the message of 'Marpu', he added.

Meanwhile, NTR district in-charge Collector Dr Nidhi Meena paid rich tributes to Maharshi Valmiki at a programme organised by the BC Welfare Department at the Pingali Venkaiah Meeting Hall on Thursday. DRO V Srinivasa Rao, BC Welfare Officer K Srinivasa Rao, Civil Supplies District Manager G Venkates warlu, DM & HO Dr M Suhasini, DSDO SA Azeez and others were present.

Also, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation organised birth anniversary celebrations at the Command Control Room on its premises.

# Durga temple nets Rs 6.27 crore



Hundi collection counting in progress at the Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam on the premises of the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varia Devasthanam in Vijayawada on Thursday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Devasthanam in Vijayawada has earned Rs.6,26,97,047 hundi income in 15 days. The temple authorities opened the Hundis and held counting on October 16 and 17. In addition to the Hundi collection, 412 grams of gold ornaments and 15,823 kg of silver jewellery were offered by the devotees.

The Durga temple authorities opened the Hundis after the Dasara festivities concluded. On the first day (October 16), Rs.3,50,28,700 was counted and on the second day, Rs.2,76,68,347. Also, the temple authorities said that the Hundi counting process would be conducted even on October 21.

The temple authorities started the Hundi counting at Sri Mallikharjuna Maha mandapam on Wednesday.

Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao, Deputy EO Ratna Raju and other officials supervised the counting. Also, devotees offered 355 USA Dollars, 5 Europe, 50 Canadian dollars, 20 UAE Dirhams, 1.5 Omani Riyals, 900 Bysa, 20 Fiji Dollars, 2 Malaysian Ringgits, 35 British Pounds (England), 5 Kuwaiti Dinar, 16 Saudi Riyals, 160 Australian Dollars, and 6 Singapore dollars.

# SP unveils live CC Cameras

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Superintendent of Police (SP) R Gangadhara Rao inaugurated the newly installed CCTV cameras, an initiative funded by Rs.40 lakh with the support of local donors with-

in the jurisdiction of Kankipadu Police Station. During the inauguration on Thursday, SP Rao highlighted the importance of the enhanced surveillance system as a key measure to curb crime and ensure public safety in the district.

# Col CK Naidu U-23 multi-day match between Andhra and Meghalaya

Team players, officials arrive in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) Cricket Grounds at Mulapadu, near Ibrahimpatnam in Vijayawada, are set to host the Col CK Naidu Under-23 Men's Multi-Day Cricket match between Andhra and Meghalaya from October 20 to 23. In light of recent rains, the ACA has taken precautionary measures to ensure that the pitch remains dry, covering it to prevent any water damage.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has allotted this multi-day match to the ACA, bringing both the Andhra and Meghalaya teams to Vijayawada. The players and officials arrived on Thursday, and the ACA has arranged accommodation for them in the city. In the lead-up to the match, both teams will conduct practice sessions at the ACA stadiums in Mulapadu on October 18 and 19.

According to ACA officials, the Andhra



team will start their net practice sessions at 9 AM, followed by the Meghalaya team at 11.30 AM. The ACA preparations aim

to ensure that the players are ready for the upcoming match, despite the challenges posed by the weather.

# CM blasts KTR for opposing Dammagundam VLF Station

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy lashed out at opposition BRS leader KTR, calling him 'Kasab' for criticizing the Dammagundam VLF Station Project. Revanth, while addressing the media, defended the project as vital to national security and accused KTR of politicizing the issue for personal gain.

"This is connected with national security. 3,500 Navy families are going to stay at Dammagundam. If it's really difficult for

human existence, why are big officers coming to stay there? There are many cell phone towers in the city, did we die? This VLF station emits far lower frequencies than those towers," said Revanth.

He pointed out that the project is strategically significant as it can monitor all three major water bodies in the region.

Revanth revealed that 2,900 acres had been allotted for the project, with only 8 to 10 per cent of the land designated for construction. He noted that a similar VLF station was estab-

lished in Tamil Nadu in 1990 and requested the opposition to visit the site if they had any concerns. "This is about national security. The clearances for the project, from 2014 to 2023, were all granted by the BRS government, including forest, environmental and land acquisition approvals. Now, they want to blame Revanth for it," he said.

In a scathing attack, Revanth compared KTR to Ajmal Kasab, the notorious 26/11 terrorist, saying, "These people who claim they would give their lives for the country

are opposing the Navy's radar establishment. If you don't have love for the country, you are worse than Kasab. KTR is speaking like Kasab."

He accused KTR of engaging in "cheap politics" and pointed out that the BRS leader had given all permissions for the project during his government's tenure but was now attempting to deflect blame on to him.

Revanth also dismissed concerns about the environmental impact, stating that the claim of 12 lakh trees being cut down was totally exaggerated.



ACROSS THE STATES



**Bomb threats: Govt plans strict norms**

The civil aviation ministry plans to put in place strict norms to prevent incidents of hoax bomb threats to airlines, including placing the perpetrators on the no-fly list, a senior official said on Thursday. Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on Thursday said the ministry is looking at amending civil aviation regulations to ensure strict action is taken against incidents of bomb threats to airlines. In four days, at least 25 flights of various Indian airlines received bomb threats, including international flights, and some of them were diverted. Most of the threats have turned out to be hoaxes. "We are taking things seriously... we will take action," Naidu said about the bomb threats. He also emphasised that there needs to be changes in civil aviation rules and regulations to ensure strict action with respect to bomb threats to airlines.



**Indian airlines will operate 25,007 weekly flights**

Indian airlines will operate 25,007 flights every week to and from 124 airports in the winter schedule starting October 27, according to aviation regulator DGCA. The number of flights is three per cent higher than 24,275 departures per week from 125 airports in the current summer schedule. In comparison to the winter schedule 2023, the number of flights has increased by 5.37 per cent. The winter schedule is from October 27, 2024 till March 29, 2025. "Out of these 124 airports, Pondicherry airport is proposed by the scheduled airlines whereas operations from Pakyong and Tezpur airport were suspended in the winter schedule 2024," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a release on Thursday. More than half of the total 25,007 domestic departures per week during the winter schedule will be handled by IndiGo.



**'eShram 2.0 portal roll out on Monday'**

The second version of the eShram portal will be launched next week on Monday with new features like eligibility criteria for various welfare schemes, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday. Talking to reporters, the minister said the eShram portal will also allow job aggregators to enrol their workers on the portal, created for maintaining a national database of unorganised sector workers. He also explained that the registered workers would be able to see their eligibility for various welfare schemes on the portal. The Ministry of Labour & Employment launched the eShram portal (eshram.gov.in) on August 26, 2021, for the creation of a comprehensive National Database of Unorganised Workers verified and seeded with Aadhaar. The eShram portal is meant to register and support unorganised workers by providing them with a Universal Account Number (UAN).

**Kharge, Rahul offer prayers at Valmiki temple in Delhi**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday offered prayers at the Valmiki temple on Mandir Marg here on the occasion of Valmiki Jayanti. Saint Valmiki is the author of the Hindu epic Ramayana and a revered figure, especially among Dalits. While Gandhi visited the temple in the morning, Kharge prayed at the temple in the afternoon. Speaking with reporters after offering prayers at the temple, Kharge said, "The Valmiki community is very weak in economic and education terms in the whole country. If this community has to come up, it is important for all of us to pay attention to their education." "When we pay attention to education, social justice will



also be achieved in the society and everyone will move forward, especially the youth need education and they should try their best to get education," he said. The Dalit community has to come forward in terms of education and should also have economic strength, he said. The third thing is that along with economic strength, there should be unity, Kharge said. In a post in Hindi on Facebook, Gandhi extended best wishes to people on the birth anniversary of Maharshi Valmiki.

**Africa emerged as key destination: Murmu**

PNS ■ LILONGWE (MALAWI)

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said Africa has emerged as an important trade and investment destination, highlighting that there are growing investments by Indian companies in the continent in a range of sectors including telecommunications, IT, education and petroleum among others.

Addressing the India-Malawi Business Meet here, Murmu said she was happy to be the first Indian President to visit Heart of Africa. "Africa has emerged as an important trade and investment destination," said Murmu, who arrived here earlier in the day on the final leg of her three-nation visit. She is the first Indian Head of State to visit the African nation.

The President said there are growing investments by Indian companies in multinational and small and medium enterprises in Africa in various sectors, including telecommunications, IT, education, water treatment and petroleum.

Noting that India was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Malawi

"Africa has emerged as an important trade and investment destination," said Murmu, who arrived here earlier in the day on the final leg of her three-nation visit. She is the first Indian Head of State to visit the African nation.



soon after its Independence in 1964, she said commercial ties between the two countries are historic. But people-to-people contact between the two countries spans over 140 years, she added. "Bilateral trade between India and Malawi has been growing despite the Covid pandemic-induced downturn," she said. "India is currently the fourth largest trading partner of Malawi, and it is also one of the largest investors in Malawi, with over USD 500 million worth of investment in various sectors," she added.

Underscoring that Malawi is rich in natural reserves and fertile agricultural land, and India has a large consumer base

with increasing demand for energy, minerals and food, she said the two countries can "come together to find synergy in many areas." She added that there is scope for enhancing cooperation in the areas of agriculture, mining, energy, etc. The President also noted that this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Malawi.

During her two-day visit, she will hold bilateral talks with Malawi's top leadership and address the diaspora.

Upon her arrival at the Kamuzu International Airport here earlier in the day, she was received by the Vice President

of Malawi Michael Usi, and was accorded a ceremonial welcome.

"In the final leg of her three-nation visit, President Droupadi Murmu landed at the Kamuzu International Airport, Lilongwe, Malawi," her office said in a post on X.

Children greeted President Murmu at her arrival at the airport, and a traditional cultural performance was also presented before her, her office said. "This is the first-ever State visit from India to Malawi," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a post on X.

Murmu is visiting Malawi from October 17-19 at the invitation of the Malawian President Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera.

During her visit, Murmu "will hold bilateral meetings with Malawi's leadership; interact with key trade and industry leaders and the Indian diaspora; and visit places of cultural and historical significance," the MEA said in a press release before her visit.

The President arrived here after successful visits to Algeria and Mauritania, where she held talks with her respective counterparts to enhance bilat-



**SAINI TAKES OATH AS HARYANA CM**

**BJP marks win with show of strength**

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Nayab Singh Saini, the proverbial dark horse who became star of the BJP's victory in the Haryana assembly elections, was sworn in as chief minister of the state on Thursday in a grand ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a galaxy of NDA leaders.

Thousands of people packed into the Dussehra Ground to watch Governor Bandaru Dattatreya administer the oath of office to the low profile OBC leader and 13 others. For the BJP, the messaging was not just in its show of strength with a power packed dais seating its chief ministers, ministers and NDA partners but also in its choice of the day - Valmiki Jayanti.

Congress. Saini is heading the BJP's third consecutive government in the state, a strategic victory after the Lok Sabha elections that many party leaders hope sets the pace for next month's crucial assembly polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

Thousands of people packed into the Dussehra Ground to watch Governor Bandaru Dattatreya administer the oath of office to the low profile OBC leader and 13 others. For the BJP, the messaging was not just in its show of strength with a power packed dais seating its chief ministers, ministers and NDA partners but also in its choice of the day - Valmiki Jayanti.

The BJP won 48 seats in the 90-member assembly. Three Independents, including Hisar MLA Savitri Jindal, also extended support to the party.

Haryana can have a maximum of 14 ministers, including the chief minister.

The 13-member council of ministers includes the party's most senior leader Anil Vij, Ahir leader Rao Narbir Singh and Jat leader Mahipal Dhanda. It also has two women - former Congress leader Shruti Choudhary, daughter of Rajya Sabha MP Kiran Choudhary, and first time MLA Arti Singh, the daughter of Union minister Rao Inderjit Singh. Rajesh Nagar and Gaurav Gautam took oath as state ministers (independent charge).

**Congress slams Mahayuti govt for 'undermining' Shivaji's legacy**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday accused the Mahayuti government of "undermining" the legacy of one of India's greatest sons, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and said those who reject Maharashtra's glorious history and composite culture will face their comeuppance next month.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also alleged that the Mahayuti didn't spare

the Chhatrapati from its "extortion and loot" as his 35-ft statue at Rajkot Fort in Sindhudurg was made so "shoddily" that it collapsed within a year of its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself.

"The Mahayuti Government in Maharashtra, as also its patron in New Delhi, has been undermining the legacy of one of India's greatest sons," Ramesh said in a post on X.

"Seven years ago, the non-biological PM laid the foundation stone for a 696 feet statue

of Shivaji Maharaj in the Arabian Sea near Mumbai. It has since been silently abandoned by his government. The jumble-baz have had the temerity to deliver a jumla to Shivaji Maharaj himself," the Congress leader said.

"BJP leaders, in their attempts to ingratiate themselves to the self-proclaimed divinity, have belittled the Chhatrapati by comparing him to the non-biological PM," he said. In a petty effort to spite the people of Maharashtra after



their stinging debacle on June 4th, they removed the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from its place of prominence outside the Parliament House, Ramesh said. "Those who reject Maharashtra's glorious history and composite culture will face their comeuppance next month," he said.

**Every mobile user a broadcaster: Murugan**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Every mobile user is a content creator and broadcaster and has the moral responsibility to ensure the veracity of the information shared by them, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L Murugan said here on Thursday.

Addressing a symposium on the 'Emerging Trends and Technologies in Broadcasting Sector' on the sidelines of the India Mobile Congress, Murugan said content was the "hero" of the emerging broadcast revolution and anybody providing good quality content would be successful. He said the government has recently approved establishing Indian Institute of Creative Technologies in Mumbai to promote the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR) sector and encourage film-



makers to 'shoot in India', utilising the talent pool and locations across the country.

Murugan said that when a person publishes news or information, it is incumbent on him to authenticate it, verify it and ensure that it is correct. "We have the social responsibility, we have the moral responsibility. Every mobile user and broadcaster must think carefully before broadcasting whether this news would affect anyone's personal life, whether it is

**BJP plundered Jharkhand for 20 yrs: Hemant Soren**

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren accused the BJP of plundering Jharkhand for about 20 years since its creation and claimed that he tried to strengthen the roots of the state during his five-year tenure.

In a post on X, Soren mentioned various social welfare programmes such as financial assistance scheme 'Maiyan Samman Yojna' and housing scheme 'Abua Awaw Yojna' formulated by his government.

"Today marks 100 days since I returned from jail and took charge of the state... In December 2019, with the blessings of the people of Jharkhand, I took over the reins of the state. My sole purpose was to irrigate the tree of Jharkhand and strengthen its roots. The BJP had plundered this tree with both hands



for 20 years. It had dried it up," Soren said in a post in Hindi on Wednesday.

"This was the reason that in the 20 years of Jharkhand, the poor, deprived and exploited people yearned for basic needs like social security. The tribals, Dalits, backward and minorities yearned for their lost identity, and the children yearned for good education. The youth wanted jobs and employment while hardworking farmers

were crushed under the burden of debt and this land yearned for its identity," he added.

He also wrote how his government brought back lakhs of migrant labourers of the state from different parts of the country during the lockdown.

To tackle the pandemic, the entire government machinery worked on improving healthcare facilities, and Jharkhand became the first state to supply oxygen to the entire country, he said.

"Unless the social security of the poor, deprived and exploited class is ensured, their food, clothing and shelter are ensured, no state can progress," Soren mentioned, listing schemes for providing free electricity and pensions.

"Loans of up to Rs 2 lakh of our hardworking farmers of the state were waived off," he said.

**Army Captain commits suicide in Delhi, husband in Agra**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An army captain was found hanging from the ceiling of her officers' mess in the Delhi Cantt area, hours after her lieutenant husband posted in Agra Air Force station also committed suicide, police said Thursday. Captain Renu Tanwar posted at Military Nursing Service in Agra was found hanging at the Garuda Sharat Officers mess on Tuesday. In a note found in the room she blamed no one for her death, they said. According to a police officer, Tanwar was in Delhi for the treatment of her mother at the AIIMS when she heard the news about her husband's suicide in Agra. She was staying with her mother and brother at Gaurauda Sharath officers' guest house. On Tuesday morning, her husband Deen Dayal Deep, who was deployed as a Flight Lieutenant in the Indian Air Force, was found hanging at the officers' quarter in Agra, the officer said.

**High blood pressure affects breathing capacity: Study**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

High blood pressure impairs one's breathing capacity by hardening the airways in the respiratory system, thereby increasing resistance, a study has found. However, being physically active can help by improving the functioning of respiratory muscles, resulting in better coordination between ventilation and blood flow in the lungs, researchers from the Federal University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, found. Hypertension, in which one's blood pressure remains unusually high, is known to thicken the blood vessels and harden the arteries.

The researchers said that

"This is very important as the more hardened the bronchi becomes, the more difficult it becomes for air to enter and leave the lungs. In the long run, this accelerated process of hardening of the bronchi makes breathing difficult for older people.

something similar happens with the bronchi -- branches of the main windpipe (trachea) -- in the respiratory system as well. "This is very important as the more hardened the bronchi becomes, the more difficult it becomes for air to enter and leave the lungs. In the long run, this accelerated process of hardening of the bronchi makes breathing difficult for older people. Worse still, it's a

cycle: lower oxygen saturation accelerates the aging process throughout the organism," last author Rodolfo de Paula Vieira, an invited professor at the Federal University of Sao Paulo, said.

However, performing physical activity was found to partly protect the airways from hardening due to increased blood pressure. "We conclude that sys-

temic arterial hypertension compromises lung function and mechanics in older adults and that a physically active lifestyle seems to partially accentuate these impairments. Thus, having a physically active lifestyle can mitigate these hypertension-induced pulmonary alterations in older adults," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Advances in Respiratory Medicine. While hypertension has been known to impair lung function, the mechanism involved was not clearly understood until now, Vieira said. For the study, the researchers gauged the respiratory function of over 700



men and women aged 60 years or more, with or without high blood pressure, along with air resistance.

Muscle strength was assessed by looking at hand grip, while respiratory muscle strength was assessed by measuring air pressure as the participants inhaled and exhaled. They also responded to questionnaires regarding their physical activity habits and quality of life.

The findings highlighted the need to look at lung

function in patients having high blood pressure, Vieira said. "Our findings show that physicians should refer patients diagnosed with high blood pressure to a specialist for tests to assess lung function and mechanics, especially older patients," Vieira said.

While changes to lung function are expected as one ages, the study showed that physical exercise can partly protect the lungs from the effects of hypertension, the researcher added.





www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Jaishankar holds a mirror

At the SCO Summit, S Jaishankar urges regional powers to tackle terrorism, extremism and separatism

At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit held in Islamabad, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar took the opportunity to deliver a pointed message to China and Pakistan, highlighting the erosion of trust in the region. His address focused on the principles outlined in the SCO Charter, underscoring the need for genuine cooperation, respect for sovereignty and an uncompromising stance against the 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism. Jaishankar's remarks came at a time when India's relations with China and Pakistan have reached a nadir. The minister subtly pointed out the prevailing trust deficit, stating, "If trust is lacking or cooperation inadequate, if friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are sure reasons to introspect and causes to address." His words alluded to China's unilateral border violations along the Line of Actual Control and Pakistan's use of cross-border terrorism as state policy. A central theme of Jaishankar's address was the urgent need to combat terrorism, extremism and separatism—the 'three evils' that, according to him, have plagued the region. He argued that these threats undermine peace and stability, which are prerequisites for development. Without addressing these issues, the prospects for economic growth, trade, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges remain bleak. Jaishankar's participation at the Islamabad summit marked a significant moment in India's diplomatic strategy.



Despite the strained relations, his address indicated India's willingness to engage in dialogue—provided that the foundational issues of trust and security are addressed. The summit showcased the growing rift between India's expectations for regional conduct and the policies pursued by some of its neighbours. It remains to be seen whether China and Pakistan will introspect on Jaishankar's remarks or continue to pursue policies that hinder regional integration. India's position remains clear: trust must be restored through actions that respect the sovereignty and security of all nations. The ball is now in the court of its neighbours to demonstrate a commitment to peace and stability. In his address, Jaishankar effectively used the SCO platform to hold a mirror up to China's border aggressions and Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism, laying bare the challenges to regional cooperation. His words served not just as a critique but as a call for renewed commitment to the principles of the SCO Charter, signalling India's firm stance on upholding peace and good neighbourliness. The question now is whether China's and Pakistan's leaders will see the reflection and act accordingly, or if the region will continue to grapple with a status quo marked by distrust and discord.

### PICTALK



A Royal Bengal tiger yawns at the National Zoological Park, in New Delhi

## Pinarayi Vijayan: A tale of U-turns and controversies

CM Pinarayi's U-turn on sensitive data disclosures, coupled with the BJP's election triumph in Thrissur suggests a shifting balance of power

Man, woman and Child was a novel by best-selling author Erich Segal (1937-2010) which has been translated into many languages. It was made into a movie in English as well as in many languages. Our own Shekhar Kapur shot the movie *Masoom* based on the same novel. Well, *Masoom*, and "Man, Woman and Child" came to mind after seeing the plight of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan over the last fortnight. Vijayan, known for his determination, decisiveness and dictatorial tendencies, was a pale shadow of his old self during the last few weeks. Though he was seen laughing at flippant questions put to him by some of the journalists "studying to become Kerala's own Lutyens media", it was visible that Vijayan had lost most of his demeanour which in the past had silenced his detractors and rivals alike. The U-turn made by him viz-a-viz the data about the seizure of smuggled gold and hawala cash from Malappuram had shocked even his critics. Various Islamist organisations expressed their displeasure



over the quantity of gold and amount of illegal money seized from Malappuram which houses the Calicut International Airport. Though the Chief Minister had disclosed these figures in the 140-minute long press meet held on September 21 at Thiruvananthapuram, newspapers and TV channels did carry it in their reports. The present controversy in Kerala had its roots in the meetings held by M R Ajith Kumar, additional director general of police with two senior RSS leaders in 2023 and the fiasco of the 2024 edition of Thrissur Pooram, Kerala's mega cultural extravaganza, the impressive victory scored by the BJP candidate Suresh Gopi in the Lok Sabha poll from Thrissur constituency and the unprecedented increase in gold smuggling and hawala dealings in Malappuram dis-

trict are much ado about nothing. The ADGP has every authority to meet the people of his choice as part of his policing job is known to one and all. Many IPS officers and intelligence officers with whom this issue was taken up were unanimous in their view that there was nothing wrong with the ADGP calling on RSS leaders. One of the severe critics of the meeting between Ajith Kumar and RSS bosses is Binoy Viswam, the CPI Kerala secretary, who has been crying for the ADGP's blood for violating the Lakshman Rekha (or is it the Lenin Rekha?). But what is left unsaid is that Surya Binoy, daughter of Binoy Viswam, is a standing counsel of the BJP Government the Centre, yet another branch of the RSS! Binoy Viswam, who considers himself the global face of Communism and a stickler for propriety should openly admit that his criticism of RSS is with an eye on the minority vote bank. The Congress, CPI and the Muslim League allege that the CPI(M) had a tacit under-

# AI: Redefining learning in the 21st Century

Teaching methods and workplace demands are evolving rapidly, pushing educational institutions to adopt new paradigms that keep pace with the changing times



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

It is now being increasingly recognised that artificial intelligence and technology use are going to alter the nature of learning, as few things have in the last 100 years. The fundamental nature of change and its pace is nothing new if one goes back over six or seven decades ago. The digitisation process altered the nature of learning numerals. The use of calculators rendered memorising multiplication tables substantially irrelevant. There was a sea change that has only increased its reach and depth with each passing decade. From calculators to the computerisation and successive upward scaling of computerisation competencies rendered not only the tables and the algorithms only marginally relevant, but even the log tables became a matter of history.

After some initial reluctance to allow a mechanical instrument into the classroom and the examination hall, the nature of learning was adjusted to the new realities. The machine-added reality became the new paradigm. The nature of learning changed slowly but surely from working through one's memory to getting used to machines and their algorithm. The orientation changed from falling back on mental collaborations to machine-led solutions. Changes in technology also needed learning but of a different order. The dualism of specialisation was more in demand for staying current in the employment market. Indeed, machines started competing with each other in a manner of speaking and a classical example would be the different technology modes used in the manufacture of a jet plane (Ilyushin) in Russia and the technology used in a Boeing aircraft. The new realities required a new approach to what could be termed as 'new learning'. The nature of teaching arithmetic, mathematics, and more all underwent a change, and a revolution bigger than many had hit the classroom. The nature of this revolution was significant because it was a



continuing revolution, and today, it confronts the learner through various forms of artificial intelligence, also. The notions of mechanical search have not only revolutionised the search for information but even rendered encyclopedias decoration pieces in fancy drawing rooms. They have now, perhaps, become a showcase of how learning used to be not so long ago. All this has implications not only for the classroom but also for the workplace. The exact manifestation of this is not clear, but the rumblings go on. Whereas earlier on, learning organisations used to pay equal focus on how to teach. Now the focus is equally on what and how to teach. The pressure in both the classroom and the workplace is equally intense, calling for a paradigm shift. The real challenge for learning organisations lies in embodying the paradigm shift. It will be useful to remind oneself that learning

TODAY, LEARNING REQUIRES THE COMPETENCE TO APPRECIATE THE NEW AND EMERGING PATTERNS OF TECHNOLOGY. NOT SO LONG AGO, LITERACY WAS IMPORTANT TO THE USE OF A MACHINE BECAUSE ONE HAD TO PUNCH THROUGH THE ALPHABET

organisations is nothing new. As a proposition, the need to keep reinventing oneself has been commonplace. Not so long ago, the focus was on keeping the mind open. Much of that has now metamorphosed into almost a new paradigm: keeping the mind growing. Enhancing of skills and competencies continues to be a defining trait of a learning organisation. It is simply not possible to confine oneself just to 'keeping the mind open'. Today, learning requires the competence to appreciate the new and emerging patterns of technology. Not so long ago, literacy was important to the use of a machine because one had to punch through the alphabet. Now the situation has reached a context where even if one does not have the competence to punch an alphabet, one can speak into a machine and the machine will comply. At the moment, this process is at an early stage, but the problems that it means to tackle are

expanding every day. The change in the gamut of learning is important because if one can solve problems without being able to write, there indeed is a revolution in the entire paradigm of learning. The proposition, therefore of a learning organisation is undergoing several fundamental reformulations. There was a time in the 20th century when technology altered the nature of distance, and now there seems to be an emerging approach to technology that can alter the nature of time itself. Time present and time future are ready to merge into each other through technological interventions, allowing one to pass through a time machine, even if only temporarily. These are fundamental postulates and need rethinking far more deeply than what we have been able to do at present. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute; The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INDIA-CANADA TENSIONS RISE

Madam — The Indian government has once again officially denied the allegations of the murder of Khalistani supporter Hardeep Singh Nijar levelled by the Canadian government. Not only this, it has also taken diplomatic revenge by ordering the Canadian ambassador in India and other officials to leave the country. Have we reached the lowest point in diplomatic history in our relations with Canada? Is it possible that all diplomatic relations between India and Canada come to an end? In some circles of India, even senior journalists of international affairs believe that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is playing all these games to save his chair. Is it really true that the Canadian Prime Minister, due to his lust for power, is hell-bent on ending diplomatic, political and business relations with India? I think this story is not so simple that it will remain just a story of the chair. Because many Sikhs have been murdered in the same way all over the world, for which the governments there have blamed India. For example, in Lahore, Pakistan, on 6 May last year, Paramjeet Panjwar was shot dead, and the Indian government was also blamed for it. Okay, let's assume that Pakistan is our enemy, so it can make false allegations against us. But the United States of America is our friend. It has also made a similar allegation against us. It had alleged that an Indian citizen was involved in the conspiracy to murder Khalistani separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun in New York. Therefore, the Canadian government should also present evidence if it has it in the International Court of Justice and not just raise the issue by holding press conferences.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### EMPOWERING INDIA'S YOUTH

Madam — The government in its Budget this year had proposed to launch a scheme to provide internship opportunities to 10 million youths in the top 500

## Tackle mental health challenges



The most admirable and analytical article 'The invisible battle for mental health in India' (October 16), encourages us to evaluate and recognise our mental wellness and seek counselling for physical illness. The worst part is that we are vitiating and spoiling our mental health despite warnings of being too much glued to our mobile phones, social media, late-night lifestyle, and orientation of ourselves, isolation and so many

other factors. Women suffer more from social and family pressures and they don't speak out. The major enemies are mobile phones and social media platforms, anxiety of getting too much in too little time, gaining public attention all the time, competition with the peers and us, working from home for longer hours, fear of failures, loss of family members, sensory issues and marital discord. The obvious symptoms are anxiety attacks, anger, depression, anger, misbehaviour and violence. However, many easily overcome these symptoms in public posture, delaying the solution and treatment. The work from home should be restricted to prescribed working hours only as scheduled. Yoga is the best option for mental wellness. Vacating, holidaying, playing games, music, bhajans and romanticism with hobbies and passion are the self-healing methods to keep us happy and tranquil, cheerful and bubbly.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

companies over a span of five years. This helps youth to gain exposure to real-life business environments in different areas for a year. Internship schemes are as old as industrialisation as the means to perpetuate skill sets. With rapid mechanisation, it was losing impetus and formalisation.

A pilot for the scheme in 2024-25 was kicked off last week with internship opportunities in 24 sectors, including energy, hospitality, auto, and banking and financial services. Companies are expected to bear the cost of training and 10 per cent of internship costs from their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds. Major corporations over the years have been focusing on health, education and women empowerment. This new internship scheme hopefully should not affect their continued funding.

R Narayanan | Mumbai

### PRIYANKA'S POLITICAL DEBUT

Madam — The bypoll for Wayanad has been announced by the Election Commission and the Congress leader

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is likely to make her debut for Lok Sabha.

The seat went vacant while her brother Rahul Gandhi got elected to Lok Sabha also from Raebareilly in Uttar Pradesh in the general elections. When the elected members who hail from the same place have not used to visit their constituencies, where is the question of Priyanka serving the people of Wayanad once she gets elected? One should recall the promise of the Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi that he vowed that the Congress would construct 100 houses for those who lost their dwellings in the landslides at Chooralmala and Mundakkai during his visit on August 2, 2024. Winning elections matters most for the leaders and by consolidating the dynastic politics, the Congress can increase their numbers on the floor by wooing the voters but there is no justification to serve the people of the constituency in a real sense.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

## UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE

By living according to dharma, we can strive for a higher quality of life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

What is this Big Picture, that finds mention in spiritual talks? Simply stated, it means to know something in its totality. For example, we wish to know about ourselves in great detail, i.e. who we are; where have we come from; where are we going; and so forth. These and many more questions can be answered if we go to the source of everything, i.e. God, who is everything. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 7.19) We, souls, are His parts (15.15); we exist eternally; we are presently in material bodies. This happened because that is all we qualified for. There are superior planets like Heaven and, of course, the Vaikuntha – God's planet (15.6). How are we judged? It is purely based on 'karmas' (our acts), both material and spiritual. Most of us are engaged mainly in material acts. We may have a slight percentage of spiritual acts like occasional visits to a temple, hearing a spiritual talk, etc. These count but are not enough to go to the highest planet, i.e. the Vaikuntha. We keep on getting born on the earth's planet with an occasional visit to Heaven.

What is the role of God in all these? God is the creator of all that we see; He is its controller also. Logically, God must know the Big Picture. He does; God is omniscient. He knows past, present and future also. Just as our present is the result of our past, our future will be the result of our present. God is aware of how we will use our free will because that is influenced by our nature – part of our fate. As the Creation is to last for a very long time, control must be exercised to ensure its continuity. God does that. He uses the



Divine Authority to assist Him; it works under His superintendence. (9.10) They in turn reward and punish us based on our karma. There is nothing like chance, whatever happens to us is already preordained. In short, there are three levels of control. God is the head. Then comes the Divine Authority and, lastly, it is the material nature, which has been set in motion by God.

That is how we have seasons, rains, etc. We must live in synchronisation with it to have a healthy life. Our all acts must be 'yukta', i.e. appropriate according to the highest principles known as 'dharma'. These rules have been formulated by God Himself. The Big Picture won't be complete without a detailed description of our souls and how we can get help from God to improve our lives. We are many, eight billion plus on the earth planet itself. Surely, we are small and need help all the time, especially from God, who only knows the Big Picture. We are relocated after the present lifespan is over, which is preordained. Quality of life is all-important for all of us.

Unfortunately, we seek it from material objects, which are never satisfied. We must serve other souls to be served in turn by others. How can we improve the quality of our lives? We must begin by accepting the reality. This is where the Big Picture enters our lives, whatever we can know with our limitations.

This includes accepting the Cosmic Design, and having faith in God and His System. We should try to be good in whatever we do; we generally know what that is. We must be useful to others, otherwise the world would not have any use for us. We need to be tolerant, because the earth planet is no heaven, but is not a concentration camp either. One can have a reasonably good life.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

## Empower urban local bodies for climate resilience



SONAL SINGH

Despite their economic importance, most urban areas are ill-prepared for the growing risks of climate change; these local bodies must be trained to fight climate changes



Cities are centres of economic growth, contributing around 63 per cent to India's GDP while housing approximately 36 per cent of its population.

This urban population is expected to reach 50 per cent by 2050, further intensifying the challenges cities face from extreme weather events such as heatwaves, floods, and droughts as recently witnessed in Wayanad, Chennai, New Delhi and other cities. According to a study by IIT Gandhinagar, the proportion of urban areas exposed to extreme weather events is set to increase significantly as global temperatures rise beyond 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. While the growing vulnerability is felt across rural and urban centres, the multiplier effect of damage caused to urban infrastructure, lives and livelihood on the larger socio-economic conditions as cities drive national GDP. Moreover, most of the cities are ill-equipped to tackle these climate risks. A lack of clearly mandated roles in climate response, insufficient financial allocations, and limited institutional capacities exacerbate this challenge. To enable transformative, city-led climate action, it is essential to align Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the specific needs and capacities of cities. This requires designing enabling frameworks to help urban areas build climate resilience. Without such frameworks, cities may struggle to cope with mounting climate risks. India has played a very proactive role in shaping policy and strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The country's early adoption of environmental policies can be traced back to the Environmental Protection Act of 1986, a direct result of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in 1972. This laid the foundation for key initiatives such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 and the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) in 2015. India has also spearheaded international efforts, including the establishment of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for



MOST OF THE CITIES ARE ILL-EQUIPPED TO TACKLE THESE CLIMATE RISKS. A LACK OF CLEARLY MANDATED ROLES IN CLIMATE RESPONSE, INSUFFICIENT FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS, AND LIMITED INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES EXACERBATE THIS CHALLENGE

Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

At the sub-national level, 34 States and Union Territories have prepared State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) to address state-specific vulnerabilities in line with the NAPCC framework. Although the concept of city-level Climate Action Plans (CAPs) is relatively new in India, cities are developing these plans to address local risks such as heatwaves, water scarcity, and flooding for example, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Rajkot, Siliguri, and Udaipur.

These climate action plans are often in collaboration with international networks like C40 cities supported by global donor agencies. However, a major limitation remains: Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) do not have a clear mandate to respond to climate challenges. While the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 assigns ULBs certain responsibilities, such as urban forestry and environmental protection, "climate change" is not explicitly mentioned among the 18 functions designated to ULBs. This creates a significant governance gap at the local level. Although the National Mission for Sustainable Habitat (NMSH) 2.0 encourages ULBs to design action plans as one of the key strategies, it falls short of providing concrete guidelines, financial assistance, or incentives to assist city governments in these efforts.

The absence of a designated decision-making authority at the city level further compounds the problem.

While the SAPCC guidelines call for establishing climate cells at the state level, there is no similar provision for cities. Even when ULBs do develop climate action strategies, their implementation is hampered by overlapping mandates across multiple agencies and

parastatals, with no centralised body to oversee or coordinate these efforts.

Additionally, national climate policies such as the Net Zero by 2070 target and NDCs do not mandate the collection of city-level greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data, limiting the ability to undertake data-driven climate actions. As India transitions towards a more urban future, with 50 per cent of the population estimated to live in cities by 2050, amid rising climate risks, the devolution of powers to ULBs for climate governance becomes crucial. Empowering local governments through the principle of "climate subsidiarity"—which ensures that climate action is undertaken at the most appropriate level by adequately resourced and empowered agencies—can be a key step toward achieving climate resilience and national climate goals. One such long-term measure often suggested by experts involves amending the Constitution to include "climate action" as one of the functions of ULBs.

While constitutional amendments may be a long-term goal, an immediate step could involve making a comprehensive central law on climate mitigation and adaptation with the city as a unit of governance. Also, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) could update NMSH 2.0 with detailed guidelines for city-level Climate Action Plans. Such guidelines would ensure a standardised approach across cities while allowing for localized strategies aligned with national goals. Additionally, providing financial incentives—such as climate finance or additional transfers from the State Finance Commission (SFC) or Central Finance Commission (CFC)—would encourage ULBs to initiate climate risk assessments, imple-

ment green mobility projects, and undertake other climate-resilient initiatives.

Institutionalising climate governance at the local level is only the first step. Local governments must also be given clear and measurable targets, necessitating the localisation of NDCs and SDGs. Incorporating cities into future updates of the NAPCC and SAPCC would allow for a more bottom-up approach to planning adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Furthermore, establishing a centralised decision-making body at the city level would facilitate better collaboration among city agencies, ensuring a more coordinated response to climate risks.

As global and national conversations on climate action gain momentum, it is imperative to build a similar focus at the sub-national level to ensure tangible results. The dynamism seen at the national level must be replicated in cities, towns, and districts, which are at the frontline of climate impacts. This will require a realignment of governance structures and a re-evaluation of climate strategies to bring the focus to the smallest units of governance—cities and ULBs.

A blend of long-term strategies and short-term action plans must be developed with sub-national governments to ensure accountability and cohesion in how cities perceive and address climate change. By empowering ULBs with the necessary resources, mandates, and institutional support, India can ensure that its urban centres are not just engines of economic growth but also pillars of climate resilience. This is essential if the country is to meet its ambitious goal of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2070.

(The writer is Research Associate, TERI; views are personal)

## Aurangzeb: A contested legacy shaping India's political discourse

The portrayal of Aurangzeb as a ruthless oppressor reflects a blend of folk tales and myth rather than a verified account of his reign

The figure of Aurangzeb remains deeply embedded in India's contemporary political and cultural landscape, reflecting a blend of historical memory, myth and modern political rhetoric. His name frequently surfaces in electoral campaigns and public debates, evoking emotions and controversies centuries after his reign.

When leaders criticise each other with references to Aurangzeb, it signifies how his legacy continues to shape national politics. In the modern narrative, Aurangzeb is often depicted as a ruthless tyrant—a figure equated with notorious symbols of intolerance, such as Hitler or extremist ideologies. This perception paints him as someone who dedicated his life to eradicat-



NIHARIKA DWIVEDI

ing Hinduism and oppressing Hindus. Consequently, there's a prevalent notion that contemporary Indian Muslims are somehow connected, either by ancestry or ideology, to the Mughal emperor's legacy, which is accused of inflicting harm on India's cultural and religious heritage. This view draws heavily on VS Naipaul's concept of India as a "wounded civilisation," enduring centuries of subjugation by

foreign invaders, including Muslim rulers who allegedly dismantled the country's glorious past. Yet, the belief in deliberate, systematic destruction by Muslim conquerors is not a continuous historical memory nor entirely grounded in verified historical records. Instead, it reflects deep emotional and cultural wounds, often fueled by present-day anti-Muslim sentiments.

Historically, Aurangzeb was the last significant Mughal ruler, governing much of the Indian subcontinent for nearly five decades. His reign is marked by controversies, such as imprisoning his father, Shah Jahan, his perceived orthodoxy, and the inability to consolidate the Deccan region into the Mughal Empire.

Central to the debates on Aurangzeb is the question of his motivations and policies. Some historians, such as Sir Jadunath Sarkar, argue that his primary aim was to establish an Islamic state in India by enforcing Sharia law and converting the population. Pakistani historian Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi asserts that Aurangzeb's policies were intended to preserve Muslim dominance and to maintain the empire's unity.

This included discouraging religious pluralism that could undermine Muslim hegemony in a state where they were responsible for defence and administration. However, Aurangzeb's actions were not always consistent with the idea of enforcing an Islamic state. For example, while he did



destroy certain Hindu temples, including the Vishwanath temple in Banaras, there is little evidence supporting the claim of a widespread, systematic campaign of temple destruction. Many temples, like those in Vrindavan, continued to receive royal patronage. The destruction of some temples appeared more politically motivated than religiously driven, often tied to punitive

actions against local rebellions or defiant rulers. Aurangzeb's revival of the jizya tax in 1679, a levy on non-Muslims, further complicates the interpretation of his policies. While some scholars, like Sarkar, view this as an attempt to pressure Hindus into conversion, others argue that the tax was intended more as a political tool to rally support from conservative Muslim factions. Its reinstatement after two decades of the rule suggests it was not a priority-driven solely by religious zeal but rather a measure aimed at consolidating power during times of conflict, particularly against the Rajputs and Marathas. Qureshi contends that Aurangzeb sought to reverse the damages caused by Akbar's more liberal policies, which

had integrated Hindus into administrative roles. Ironically, the number of Hindus in government service increased during Aurangzeb's reign, reaching 33 per cent by 1689, despite the emperor's reputation for religious intolerance. Dr RP Tripathi view Aurangzeb's actions as primarily politically motivated, aimed at consolidating power in a diverse and vast empire. His policies, while sometimes harsh, were not necessarily born from a deep-seated animosity toward Hindus. Instead, they reflected the complexities of ruling an expansive and multi-ethnic empire where shifting political, social, and military factors required adaptable strategies. Modern scholarship increasingly emphasises the need to

view Aurangzeb beyond simplistic labels of heroism or villainy. His reign is better understood within the broader context of socio-economic, cultural, and political dynamics of the time. While his orthodox leanings and authoritarian tendencies shaped some of his policies, his actions also mirrored the challenges of ruling a fragmented and turbulent subcontinent. Aurangzeb's legacy, thus, remains a complex and contested chapter in Indian history. It serves as a reminder of the intricate interplay between history and politics, and how the past is continuously invoked to influence the present.

(The author is a freelance writer and a documentary filmmaker; views are personal)



IN BRIEF



Gold jumps Rs 450 to breach Rs 79k-mark

Gold prices advanced Rs 450 to hit another record of Rs 79,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday on the back of continued buying by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 78,900 per 10 grams in the previous session on Wednesday. Rallying for the second straight day, gold of 99.5 per cent climbed Rs 450 to hit another fresh high of Rs 78,950 per 10 grams. It had finished at Rs 78,500 per 10 grams. However, silver remained flat at Rs 93,500 per kg. Traders said increased buying by local jewellers to meet festive demand and a rally in the precious metal rates in the global markets mainly lifted gold prices to record high levels. In futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery reached a lifetime high of Rs 77,019 per 10 grams.

Logistics cost will come down to 9% of GDP: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said India's logistics cost will come down to 9 per cent of GDP within the next two years as the ministry is constructing several high-ways and expressways. "Within two years, we are going to reduce our logistics cost to 9 per cent," he said while addressing an event organised by Niti Aayog.



According to Gadkari, currently logistics cost in India is 14 per cent, while logistics cost is around 12 per cent in major European countries and the United States.

He said logistics cost is around 8 per cent in China.

According to quick estimates of the economic think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research

(NCAER), logistics costs in India ranged between 7.8 per cent to 8.9 per cent of GDP for fiscal 2021-22, while the Economic Survey 2022-23 highlighted that it was 14-18 per cent of the GDP, which is significantly higher than the global standard of around 8 per cent.

Gadkari said there is huge potential for India to export alternative fuels and biofuels.

He also pointed out that low-quality coal is useful for making methanol. The minister added that India is making significant strides in the biofuel sector, especially in methanol.

Gadkari also said he aimed to make the Indian automobile industry number one in the world.

Last year, India had overtaken Japan to become the third-largest automobile market in the world, only behind the US and China, he added.

Walmart expands snack sourcing from India for US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US retail major Walmart on Thursday said it is increasing its food and snack products sourcing by adding new popular Indian brands like Bikano, Britannia and Jayanti Spices for the US market ahead of Diwali.

Bentonville-based retail giant Walmart has also set a goal of sourcing goods worth USD 10 billion from India annually by 2027.

The announced lineup of new food and snack products will cater to Diwali celebrations. "Together, they will supply a diverse range of well-loved snacks and food products to Walmart's US customers," a statement said, adding that "offerings include premium tea, ready-to-eat and frozen foods, traditional snacks, spices, and festive packs".

Products by India's leading food companies like Britannia and Bikano will be available this Diwali, while brands, such as Regal Kitchen and VAH-DAM, are already available to the Walmart US customer, it noted.

Jayanti Spices and Hyfun



Foods currently have products under Walmart's Great Value brand.

Walmart, Executive Vice President, Sourcing, Andrea Albright said: "As part of our goal to increase exports from India to USD 10 billion per year by 2027, we are excited to bring a taste of India's rich culture and traditions to our customers in the US during the holiday season and beyond".

These products from Indian food brands and suppliers are being sold in Walmart's US stores, Sam's Club and also online through Walmart.com.

From the house of Britannia Industries, Walmart will sell

the US market under Walmart's Great Value private label. It offers a variety of flavourful spices and herbs, including onion powder, garlic powder, cinnamon powder, crushed red pepper, parsley flakes, black pepper, and cinnamon sticks, bringing spices grown in India to US consumers, Walmart said in a statement.

Vahdam, a premium brand specialising in tea, spices and herbs, is already a favourite at Walmart.

"The brand offers a wide range of spices and powders, including cumin, clove, cinnamon, turmeric, ginger, garlic, onion, amla, and ashwagandha, along with tea products like Turmeric Ashwagandha, Turmeric Ginger, and Turmeric Citrus Ginger and Turmeric Tea variety pack in Walmart stores," the statement said.

HyFun, a Gujarat-based frozen foods brand and first-time exporter to the US market, will also be available under the Great Value brand, offering products like tater tots and seasoned hash browns at a great price.



Direct tax collections jump to over Rs 19.60 lakh cr

Direct tax collections have surged 182 per cent to over Rs 19.60 lakh crore in 2023-24 in the 10-year period of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government. The latest 'Time Series Data' released by the income tax department showed that the corporate tax collections more than doubled to over Rs 9.11 lakh crore in 10 years to 2023-24 fiscal. Personal income tax mop up grew close to four-fold to Rs 10.45 lakh crore during the period. In the first year of the Modi government in 2014-15, direct tax collection was about Rs 6.96 lakh crore. This included about Rs 4.29 lakh crore of corporate tax and Rs 2.66 lakh crore of personal income tax. The number of income tax returns filed (including revised returns) increased from over 4.04 crore in 2014-15 fiscal to over 8.61 crore in 2023-24.

'Will clear all backlogs of recruitment offers soon'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT major Wipro will clear all backlogs of recruitment offers by the end of this calendar year, the company's Chief Human Resources Officer Saurabh Govil said on Thursday. The comment comes amid growing concerns around IT firms delaying onboarding of new recruits for as long as 6 months to 2 years. "By the end of current quarter, Q3, we will make sure there is no backlog of any of the offers made. It will all be taken care of," Govil said during the company's Q2 earnings presser.

Wipro on Thursday reported a 21.2 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 3,208.8 crore in the second quarter of FY25. It had reported a profit of Rs 2,646.3 crore in the year-ago period. The revenue from operations during the reporting quarter was Rs 22,301.6 crore, a 0.95 per cent decline from Rs 22,515.9 crore in Q2 FY24.

Over 100 overseas buyers through India Expo Mart

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Buyers from more than 100 overseas countries are visiting the 58th IHGF Delhi Fair with over 3,000 exhibitors showcasing handicraft items like housewares, furniture, gifts and decor, lighting and leather bags.

The five-day event, which will end on October 20, is being organised at the India Expo Centre & Mart on the Greater Noida Expressway.

Buyers from over 103 countries, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, the Philippines,

Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, the UAE, the UK and the US, have pre-registered to visit the fair.

At the inauguration ceremony, Suresh Khanna, Minister for Finance and Parliamentary Affairs in the Uttar Pradesh government, said it is a "great opportunity for ODOP (one district one product) manufacturers from the state to showcase their products as well as artisans and exporters from all across the country to connect with global buyers".

The IHGF Fair is a major sourcing destination for handicraft buyers from overseas.

During 2023-24, the overall handicraft exports from India stood at around Rs 32,758 crore.



Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 6 lakh cr as mkts slump

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth slumped Rs 6 lakh crore on Thursday as markets fell sharply amid unabated foreign fund outflows.

Falling for the third day running, the BSE Sensex tanked 494.75 points or 0.61 per cent to settle at 81,006.61. During the day, it tumbled 595.72 points or 0.73 per cent to 80,905.64.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms tanked Rs 6,03,862.06 crore to Rs 4,57,25,183.01 crore (USD 5.44 trillion).

"Rising domestic inflation data released this week and continued FII selling weighed on the market sentiments. This along with disappointing Q2 earnings from major companies added to the pressure," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Nestle declined over 3 per cent after the FMCG major reported a decline of 0.94 per cent in its net profit at Rs 899.49 crore for the second



quarter that ended September 2024, as some of its key brands faced softer consumer demand and high commodity prices.

Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Titan, Tata Steel, Maruti and Axis Bank were among the other big laggards. However, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were among the biggest gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,435.94 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 1.65 per cent and smallcap index fell 1.42 per cent.

Among the indices, realty tumbled 3.76 per cent, auto (3.48 per cent), consumer discretionary (2.45 per cent), consumer durables (2.28 per cent), commodities (1.77 per cent), oil & gas (1.54 per cent) and power (1.48 per cent). BSE IT and teck emerged as the only gainers.

A total of 2,690 stocks declined while 1,272 advanced and 102 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Rupee falls 5 paise to close at 84.07 against US dollar

Rupee traded in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 5 paise to 84.07 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, pressured by foreign fund outflows, a negative trend in domestic equities and broad strength of the American currency. Forex traders said rupee witnessed range-bound trade as weak domestic markets and a strong US dollar weighed on the domestic currency, while a decline in crude oil prices and contained geopolitical tensions cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 84.01 and traded in a narrow range of 83.99 and 84.07 and finally settled for the day at 84.07 (provisional), lower by 5 paise over its previous close of 84.02. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on strong dollar and weak domestic markets. FII outflows may further pressurise the rupee. However, soft crude oil prices and contained geopolitical tensions in the Middle East may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

DISBURSAL OF LOANS  
RBI bars Navi Finserv, 3 other NBFCs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Thursday ordered Sachin Bansal's Navi Finserv and three other NBFCs to cease and desist from sanction and disbursement of loans effective from the close of business of October 21, on material supervisory concerns, including usurious pricing.

In a statement, the central bank said the directions have been conveyed on Thursday to the NBFCs -- Bengaluru-based Navi Finserv Limited,

New Delhi-based DMI Finance Private Limited, Kolkata-based Arohan Financial Services Limited, and Chennai-based Asirvad Micro Finance Limited -- through the Reserve Bank's detailed supervisory orders.

"This action is based on material supervisory concerns observed in the Pricing Policy of these companies in terms of their Weighted Average Lending Rate (WALR) and the Interest Spread charged over their cost of funds, which are found to be excessive and not

in adherence with the regulations...", the RBI statement on action against NBFCs and MFIs.

The entities are also found to be not in conformity with the provisions laid down under the Fair Practices Code issued by the Reserve Bank, it added.

A Navi Finserv spokesperson said: "Navi Finserv Limited is committed to conducting its business operations with the highest standards of compliance, customer service, and transparency. The compa-



ny is reviewing the directions received from the Hon'ble Reserve Bank of India and will work with them, and address all the concerns raised with promptness and completeness."

Enhanced insurance benefits for EPFO members extended

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday announced extension of the enhanced insurance benefits for all members of retirement fund body EPFO under Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) scheme.

The move will ensure up to Rs 7 lakh of life cover to more than 6 crore EPFO members. The scheme has been extended with retrospective effect from April 28, 2024 onwards, Mandaviya told reporters here.

EDLI Scheme, launched in



1976, seeks to provide insurance benefits to members of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) in order to ensure some financial assistance to each member's family in case of the member's death.

In 2018, the minimum insurance cover of Rs 1.5 lakh was introduced under the scheme.

Till April 2021, the maximum benefits to the legal heir of the deceased employee was capped at Rs 6 lakh as per the

criteria defined in the EDLI Scheme.

Later, the government, through a notification issued on April 28, 2021, enhanced both minimum and maximum benefits under the scheme to Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 7 lakh, respectively, for the next three years. Further, the condition of continuous service of 12 months in an establishment was also relaxed so as to cover even those employees who changed jobs during that period.

These benefits were effective for the three-year period which came to an end on April 27, 2024.

Asia Index launches BSE Premium Consumption index

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asia Index, a subsidiary of BSE, on Thursday said it has launched a new thematic index -- BSE Premium Consumption -- which will provide investors an opportunity to tap into the future of consumption in the country. The new index measures the performance of companies selected from the relevant industries that broadly have an association with premium spends, selected based on free-float market capitalisation from the BSE 500 Index. "We believe the launch of the BSE Premium Consumption Index is perfectly timed as India's evolu-

ing consumer landscape reflects a shift towards premiumisation, driven by growing disposable incomes, an increasing demand for high-quality lifestyle and wellness products, and the resilience of our thriving economy. This index provides investors a unique opportunity to tap into the future of consumption in India," Ashutosh Singh, MD and CEO of Asia Index, said in a statement. The index, reconstituted semi-annually and rebalanced quarterly, can be used by mutual funds for running passive strategies, such as ETFs and Index Funds as well as gauging the performance of companies in the index.

Personal computers emerge as promising electronic item exports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After smartphones, exports of personal computers including laptops have emerged as a key electronic item shipments from India during April-August this fiscal, according to the commerce ministry data.

The exports of personal computers have recorded healthy growth in five destinations- the UAE, Russia, Bangladesh, the US, and Sri Lanka. The exports of laptops to the top five markets - increased to USD 102.6 million in April-August from just USD 37 million in the same period of the previous year, the data showed.

The government's support to personal computer manufacturing through Production Linked Incentive (PLI) and other measures like ease of doing business have supported this growth.

The biggest market for laptops, palmtops and handhelds is the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which imported USD 64 million worth of these devices in the first five months of the current fiscal. Last year during the same period exports were USD 29.7 million.

The exports to Russia

increased to USD 20.4 million in April-August from USD 4.4 million in the same period of last year.

Other markets for PCs from India are Bangladesh (USD 7.7 million), Sri Lanka (USD 5.6 million) and US (USD 3.7 million) during the period under review.

Further the data showed that the exports of printed circuit boards (PCBs) have gone up by 76 per cent to USD 12.76 million in April-August.

France is the biggest buyer of PCBs from India at USD 3.54 million, Israel at USD 3.31 million and Italy at USD 1.64 million. Smartphones continued to be the top export good in the electronic segment.

These exports stood at USD 5.1 billion in April-August to the top five markets, which is 59 per cent more than what was shipped in the same period of last year. For smartphones, the US was the biggest market with shipments of USD 2.88 billion, followed by the Netherlands at USD 833 million, the UK at USD 517 million, Italy (USD 449 million), and Austria (USD 421 million)





# what's brewing?



## Radhika Apte surprises fans with baby bump at BFI Film Festival

Radhika Apte made a stylish and unexpected announcement at the BFI London Film Festival on October 16, where she attended the screening of her film *Sister Midnight*. The actress turned heads as she revealed her pregnancy, proudly debuting a baby bump on the red carpet. Dressed in a chic black off-shoulder midi dress with her hair styled in a bun, Radhika received an outpouring of love and congratulations from fans. One admirer gushed, "Omg!!! She's pregnant, how exciting," while another commented, "Congrats on the premiere and your pregnancy! You are magnificent on the red carpet." The warmth of the well-wishes only added to the excitement of the night.

Radhika Apte has been married to British violinist and composer Benedict Taylor since 2012. Despite both being in the entertainment industry, the couple maintains a relatively private life, dividing their time between London and Mumbai. Their love story began in 2011 when they met during Radhika's sabbatical in London, where she was studying contemporary dance. They initially had a small wedding in 2012, followed by an official ceremony in 2013. On the career front, Radhika appeared in a cameo in *Merry Christmas*, directed by Sriram Raghavan, alongside Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi. She's also set to star in the revenge thriller series *Akka*, co-starring Keerthy Suresh, under YRF Entertainment, directed by Dharmaraj Shetty. Interestingly, while Radhika posted photos from the event on social media, she kept her pregnancy under wraps, captioning her post simply with, "SISTER MIDNIGHT UK Premier #ff2024."



## Global shock as Liam Payne tragically dies in Buenos Aires!

The global music community and millions of fans are in deep shock and mourning the sudden death of former *One Direction* star Liam Payne, who passed away at the age of 31 in Buenos Aires. The singer, who was enjoying a vacation with his girlfriend Kate Cassidy, tragically fell three floors down from a hotel in the Argentine capital. The circumstances of his fall are still under investigation, but the news has left fans and the entertainment world heartbroken. Just hours before the incident, Payne appeared to be in high spirits, sharing personal moments on social media. According to reports from the Argentine news agency AP, Payne fell into the courtyard of the Casa Sur Hotel in Buenos Aires. Alberto Crescenti, the head of the state emergency medical system, confirmed his death and authorities are now looking into the circumstances that led to the tragic fall. The shocking incident has prompted

an outpouring of grief from fans and fellow celebrities alike, who have flooded social media with tributes and condolences. Payne had released a new single titled *Teardrops* earlier this year, which included an acoustic version, signalling his return to the music scene. His solo work, while not as massive as his *One Direction* fame, had won him a dedicated following and showed his growth as an artist. Throughout his career, Payne had shown an ability to transition between various genres and styles, further showcasing his talent. Liam Payne's untimely death has left a void in the hearts of his fans and peers and his legacy as both a member of one of the most iconic boy bands of all time and a solo artist will undoubtedly live on.



## SALMAN'S EX INVITES LAWRENCE BISHNOI FOR ZOOM CHAT, URGES PEACEFUL RESOLUTION

Former Bollywood actress and women's rights activist Somy Ali, who dated Salman Khan in the 1990s, has reached out to gangster Lawrence Bishnoi via social media, inviting him for a Zoom call. Currently based in the US, Somy posted a message directed at Bishnoi, who is incarcerated at Sabarmati Central Jail. Somy's message to Bishnoi is part of her ongoing efforts to mediate peace after his community's long-standing grievances with Salman Khan over the 1998 Blackbuck hunting case. She had previously appealed to the Bishnoi community to forgive Salman for his actions, emphasising that while she doesn't support hunting, she believes that seeking justice through violence isn't the answer. In her Instagram post on Thursday, Somy shared a photo of Bishnoi, writing, "Namaste, Lawrence bhai, I've heard you're making Zoom calls from jail and I'd like to have a conversation with you. Rajasthan is my favourite place in the world and I'd love to visit your temple for a prayer. But first, let's have a Zoom call and discuss a few things that could benefit you." This isn't the first time Somy has defended Salman, despite their tumultuous relationship. In a previous interview, she had urged the Bishnoi community to let go of their grudge, acknowledging the mistake but requesting a peaceful resolution: "Taking someone's life is not the solution. If justice is what you seek, trust the court of law."

## Why Hailey Bieber skipped Victoria's Secret show!

When Victoria's Secret made its triumphant return after a six-year break, it promised glitz, glamour and the iconic presence of its Angels. But one familiar face was notably missing: Hailey Bieber. While stars like Gigi and Bella Hadid dazzled on the runway, Hailey's absence left many fans wondering why she decided to sit out such a high-profile event. Behind her decision lies a mix of personal priorities, health concerns and underlying controversies. In the months leading up to the show, Hailey Bieber welcomed a new addition to her family—her baby boy, Jack Blue Bieber, whom she shares with a husband Justin Bieber. Becoming a mother has been a life-changing experience for Hailey and those close to her say that she's wholeheartedly embraced her new role. With her baby just seven weeks old, her primary focus has been on her health and well-being as she navigates the challenges of postpartum recovery. "Hailey is nesting with her baby Jack and doesn't want to work right now," a source revealed, adding that she's in full "mama bear" mode, prioritising her child over the demands of the runway. But Hailey's decision wasn't solely about motherhood. Just two years ago, in March 2022, she experienced a serious health scare when stroke-like symptoms led to her hospitalisation. Doctors found a heart condition that required surgery, a reminder of her fragility and the importance of stress management. Since then, Hailey has taken her health seriously, especially during the delicate postpartum period. Sources close to her have confirmed that avoiding stress is a top priority and the hectic nature of the fashion industry likely wasn't conducive to her well-being at this time. Another possible factor in Hailey's decision to skip the event is the ongoing scandal involving music mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs. Her husband, Justin Bieber, has been connected to Combs as a former mentee and as allegations surfaced against Combs, Justin's name was frequently mentioned. Justin reportedly feels "disgusted" by the charges and both he and Hailey have been keen to distance themselves from any association with the controversy. Compounding her personal challenges is Hailey's reportedly strained relationship with her father, actor Stephen Baldwin. The two have faced tension over religious and political differences and Hailey has been said to keep her parents at a distance, particularly when it comes to her new baby. Stephen's outspoken comments about her marriage to Justin didn't sit well with Hailey, adding to the friction.

## Adarsh Gourav joins iconic Alien franchise

Adarsh Gourav is set to make waves once again with his next major Hollywood project, *Alien: Earth*, produced by Ridley Scott and scheduled to premiere in early 2025. The highly anticipated series, created by Noah Hawley, will air on FX in the U.S. and stream on Disney+ in the U.K., offering a fresh take on the legendary *Alien* franchise. This marks Gourav's third major international venture, following his standout roles in *The White Tiger* and *Extrapolations*. *Alien: Earth* is set 30 years before the original 1979 *Alien* film, diving into the early days of the Weyland-Yutani Corporation's dark quest to develop advanced android life forms. With a stellar international cast, the show promises to blend suspense and thrilling action, with Gourav playing a crucial role that could redefine the franchise. Reflecting on his experience, Gourav shared his excitement about joining the iconic *Alien* universe: "Working on *Alien: Earth* has been surreal. Ridley Scott's *Alien* films were a huge influence on me growing up and being part of this world is an absolute dream." Shot entirely in Thailand, *Alien: Earth* is expected to be a major television event, drawing in longtime fans and newcomers alike and solidifying Gourav's place among Hollywood's rising stars.



## Lookbook

Following a glorious legacy of thirteen successful seasons, IFFP achieved yet another landmark feat with its fourteenth edition. The two-day festival emerged as the ultimate multi-disciplinary celebration of creativity by bringing renowned figures from various creative fields under one roof. Day 1 commenced with a bang, hosting celebrated Hollywood actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt on his first visit to India. Building on an eventful first day, Day 2 opened with an insightful session about all things filmmaking with two-time Shoojit Sircar.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



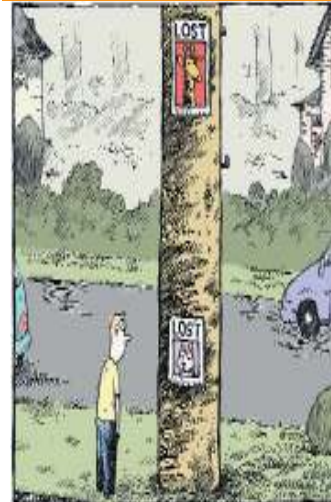
### GARFIELD



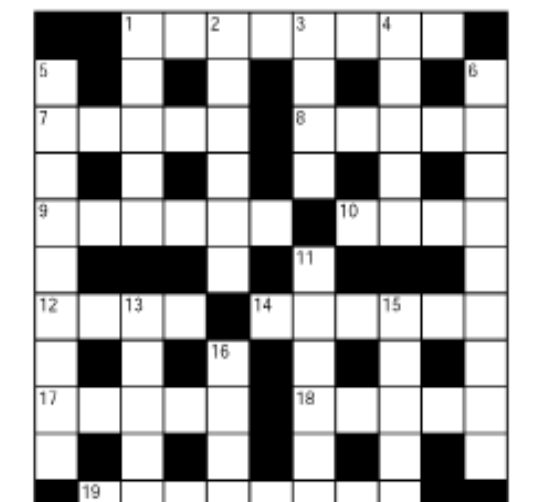
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

### ACROSS

- Observing
- A thrown weapon
- A large stream
- The writer of a book
- A small green creature
- Weapons
- Purchased
- Beneath
- Railway coaches pulled by an engine
- Soft shoes worn indoors
- Not ever
- A green pointy vegetable
- Scares
- A container for a drink
- A soldier's award
- Sheep eat this
- A journey

### DOWN

- Grind this up for flour
- Extreme fear
- Difficult





**THE PIONEER CATCHES UP WITH JAMIE LEVER ONCE AGAIN IN AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION, DELVING INTO HER LOVE FOR EXPLORATION, CULTURAL IMMERSION AND MOUTH-WATERING CUISINE AS SHE RECOUNTS HER THRILLING TRAVEL ADVENTURES**



TRAVELOGUE

## Raveena Tandon's surprise hug in London left Jamie speechless!

TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Travelling is, without a doubt, the best and most powerful way of exploring the unexplored. Well, it is for Jamie Lever as well, as she's one of those who loves exploring, seeing new places and learning about their culture, history and food.

"Thank god that my job allows it," begins Jamie in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer* for our exclusive Travelogue segment. Travelling constantly, either for shows or shooting, she's grateful that it is one of the biggest highlights of the profession she is in.

As we hark back to one of her latest trips, which was to Hong Kong for a show, was a quick trip. "I had a show in the night and the other couple of days, we went up to the Hong Kong tour to see the entire city. It was nice to see Hong Kong, which was impacted badly by the pandemic," she shares with us great exhilaration. In fact, there was an overjoying moment that she had there: "We happened to go to an Indian restaurant where the television was on and my dad's movie was playing. I also realised that people in Hong Kong really love Indian food." Then of course was her trip to Bali, where she had never happened to travel to and here she was for about 10 days. There were these beautiful places she had been to: Ubud and Seminyak. "Ubud is known for the rice fields and there are beautiful locations where you can see this wide set of land just of rice fields. There was this very small thing that I noticed whenever I was out: Outside each shop, they would have, like, a little thing made up of a leaf with flowers and they would place it down on the ground. The locals told me that it is kind of like a prayer and a blessing that they pray to their deities."

Again, it was nice to see that people are very spiritual and very prayerful out there and most of them are Hindu. "They believe in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. In Bali, there are a lot of big structures of Ram and Sita. Then I got to see their cultural dance and the culture there was so mesmerising," says the talented gagster. Oh, Bali and not witnessing the swing? She did experience that too! "I love doing all these small adventure rides. Even though I get scared of it, I do try to push myself to experience it all. In fact, you know, these guys, who were pushing the swing, were having these small conversations with me and asking me where I was from. As I said Mumbai, they started speaking to me in



Hindi, broken Hindi (she giggles)."

There she stayed in this beautiful natural vegan resort, which was no less of an experience for her. And there was a kind of fun incident that happened where, "I watch stuff when I'm travelling. I remember watching a comedy show and it was quite loud. I think there were some laughter tracks going on. I got a call from the property saying, 'Ma'am, could you please turn it down? This is just a silent zone. You're not supposed to make noise. Hahaha! But on a serious note, it was nice to just be quiet and enjoy the peace and the sound of nature. Later, when my friends called me from Mumbai, my voice was very mellow and soft and they were like, Are you okay? I said, no. I haven't spoken in the last 5 days. (She laughs out loud.) But yes, it was nice to be by myself in nature."

Her go-to place for rejuvenation? It's London, folks. "I have a lot of friends there. I've lived in London for 3 years myself. So for me, it's just sort of feels like a second home. I feel very comfortable there. I feel I know everything there—every gully, nook and corner I know. So I really enjoy going to London. But of late, I think all of India is in London. It's like I came out of my country and I'm only seeing my people. So let me tell you this thing: I was in London in the month of July and I was walking on the road when someone from behind squawked Jamie Lever. And guess who it was? Raveena Tandon. She gave me the biggest hug."

Let's not forget, not all trips can be as smooth as expected to be. She had a frightening experience too that left her with no money. "It was quite a frightening thing. I had connected my phone to the Wi-Fi of the hotel. My bank account was hacked. In fact, when I came back, I heard of many more stories of people whose accounts and social media were hacked through the public." Heading toward the end of the chat, we ask her about the next place on her bucket list, and it's none other than Italy.

"It's been on my list for a really long time," shares the *Housefull 4* fame as she continues, "I have and surprisingly, I was just watching *Eat, Pray, Love* of Julia Roberts. She's in Italy and eating this pasta. Seeing that, I felt it was a signal for me to travel there. I want to really explore the south of Italy. I want to eat the food. I want to take my time, probably for a whole month off, to explore different parts of Italy; it's culture and food, of course."



## India's sports tech revolution is here

**Revolutionising India's sports landscape, one match at a time, Suhail's brainchild, is transforming the way Indians engage with sports. *The Pioneer* has the visionary entrepreneur onboard as he discusses bringing innovation to the Indian sports business and more**

SHIKHA DUGGAL  
shikhaduggalwork@gmail.com

Suhail didn't just return from Michigan with a degree; but with a game-changing playbook. In a country where planning a weekend football match feels like coordinating an international summit, he brought some much-needed order to the chaos. Launched in 2016 and turbocharged by tech in 2019, it is that finally answers the age-old question, 'Who's in for a game?' With over 500,000 players and 100,000 matches happening every month, Suhail is turning WhatsApp banter into real competition—one perfectly booked match at a time. Now, all you need to worry about is your fitness level!

Driving innovation in the Indian sports business by fusing his background in academia with more than ten years of expertise in sports is the entrepreneur. So his Hudle is a sports experience that he created in 2016. The concept was inspired by the maturity and scope of American sports! In 2019, he transformed it into a tech platform after seeing the necessity to increase the general public's accessibility to sporting events. Under his direction, it has grown to become the biggest sports community in India, with over 1,200 locations, over 5,00,000 players and over

1,00,000 games played each month.

In an insightful read, he explains, "The main motivation behind developing a software platform to increase accessibility to sport was the idea that sports were becoming a part of people's daily routines and not a one-off event. Put another way, engaging in sports was less like taking a Sunday afternoon movie at the theater and more like going for a daily walk." That's a fascinating bit of knowledge!

To enable 100 million Indians to adopt sports as a way of life is the aim. Consider how SportsTech will grow and impact not only cities but also rural places where there is still a low level of sports engagement! Are you able to come up with it? Well, he's already working on it! "The technology will be essential to increasing sports participation. Access to locations, community connections to locate others with comparable skill levels and AI-enabled tools to better track and enhance your game are all available. All of this is unimaginable without technology," adds the founder and CEO of Hudle.

In the interview, we also talk about how sports and India have a complicated connection, with cricket frequently taking precedence

over other subjects. Thus, he's also trying to develop a culture and opportunity around lesser-known sports like padel and pickleball! Apparently, globally, both pickleball and padel have experienced explosive growth, with pickleball being played in 84 countries by over 5 million players and padel in 110 countries by over 25 million players. He continues, "A widely held belief is that as cricket is the most viewed sport, it must also be the most played. That is untrue. Although cricket is one of the most popular sports, playing football and badminton is also quite similar. Padel and pickleball are quickly catching up. Different factors are taken into account while selecting a sport to play, such as the number of participants needed, venue accessibility, ease of learning, etc."

He is creating a tech platform for this reason, which can be difficult for an entrepreneur who is not tech savvy! He encountered difficulties throughout the tech transition: "Yes, it was quite difficult. However, there were also a few unanticipated advantages. The journey to becoming a tech company took a totally different turn. We were able to hire a reputable outside organisation to handle the tech development for the first year, which allowed us to concentrate more on laying the foundation. It was quite difficult to build a subscription option also. Considering badminton is a communal activity, the frequency of playing varies a lot among persons. However, as it encourages people to take up a sport as a regular activity, we will continue to work on improving for more recent sports. Over the years, Ajinkya Rahane has been a great deal of support. Even though funds and venture capitalists were skeptical about this industry, Ajinkya was the first to invest with me! It remains a crucial partnership from his network and credentials. The concept of sports legends and celebrities collaborating with startups must align both culturally and with the startups' goals. The outcomes could then be exponential."

As corny as it may sound, there are new challenges to face every day. Finding the first group of venues to collaborate with Suhail and developing a digital platform without any tech experience were the early tasks. After then, it was fundraising and expansion! Another unique kind of problem was COVID. Different obstacles arise at different times. However, as he overcame the first few obstacles, he gained the confidence to tackle any task. And you accomplish it that way!



## RAISING WORLD CHANGERS, BEYOND CLASSROOMS

When young learners step out of their homes to acquire an education, their minds and hearts are full of hopes and expectations. Educational institutions have the ethical responsibility to nurture these young minds and nudge them in the right direction. These young minds are the beacon of light for our society and what we give to them through their education is what we get back in our society for all times to come. It is through these young learners that we aspire to build a brighter future for our generations.

Keeping this steadfast goal in mind, educational setups should encourage not just the assimilation of conceptual knowledge but also its real-life application. In addition to this, schools are places where characters are built as well, making it extremely important for education to also focus on the refurbishment of a student's skill repertoire. A 'Whole Person' education is the absolute need of the hour since it allows for an overall development of an individual thereby making them capable, resilient, and empathetic. It is only such well-rounded individuals who can bring instrumental interventions to the world we live in and accelerate positive change.

The biggest mandate of an educational institute is to nurture and facilitate growth of an individual in such a way that they become

capable of enduring any challenge that life may throw at them. Good education is an amalgam of in-class conceptual knowledge that introduces a learner to various domains and an out of the class implementation of this knowledge that makes them equipped with solutions for the real-world. This feat is achievable only when real-life skills are given adequate importance in the developing years of a learner. Holistic education is often misconstrued as only an extra-curricular add-on to academics.

While this acquisition is pertinent for them, they are also alongside, exposed to expressive skills and given an education in communicating effectively, articulating with creativity and innovation and are constantly encouraged to partake in art and performances – where they do and make. This model of education allows them to also engage in experiential learning where they participate in various adventures and sports and explore numerous leadership opportunities during their formative years. Education is not just about learning plentiful things and moving on. It is also about absorbing what has been learnt so that it becomes a part of the students' essential mental framework and stands them in good stead in life. Which is why schools allow for occasions and the right set of circumstances for reflective learning where learners look at

areas of spiritual and moral development, cultivate an understanding of different cultures, become more and more self-aware, interact with people around them in such a way that it exhibits social intelligence and ultimately develop a sense of direction, meaning and purpose in all that they undertake.

This approach helps students to develop a broader perspective, fostering respect and understanding for diverse cultures and a multitude of points of view. It prepares them to thrive amid all and despite challenges that they may face in higher education, future careers, or life in general. The world we live in today is full of activities that happen 24x7. People today multitask like no previous generation had. All kinds of pressures have gone up in people's lives and most people struggle to organise their life and excel at what they do. In such a charged environment, this kind of education lays due emphasis on the building of virtues and character strengths and inculcates critical life skills in the students. This 'Whole Person' education nurtures young learners and their overall academic, social, emotional and ethical dimensions.

(The author, Dominic Tomalin, is the Founding Headmaster, of Shrewsbury International School India.)





# BUOYANT NEW ZEALAND FACE UPBEAT WEST INDIES IN T20 WORLD CUP SEMIFINAL

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Buooyant New Zealand will seek to continue their inspirational run in the women's T20 World Cup when they face the West Indies in the second semifinal here on Friday. New Zealand has undoubtedly been the story of the tournament so far in which they got the better of Asian sides India and Sri Lanka to make the final four from Group A, putting behind their 10-match losing streak before the competition. With her towering presence, Sophie Devine has rallied the Kiwis troops impressively. Their success story features solid contributions at the top from Georgia Plimmer and veteran Suzie Bates, along with the all-round threat posed by Amelia Kerr further down the order. Kerr has been at the forefront of the Kiwis attack with 10 wickets and 85 runs in what has been a largely low-scoring tournament, providing New Zealand with a lot of impetus. Rosemary Mair has also been



at the helm of New Zealand's success in this World Cup with seven wickets on slow pitches of the UAE. Eden Carson set up the tone for New Zealand's high profile clash against India and the Kiwis will hope that the right-

arm spinner is at the top of her game against the West Indies, who are coming off a huge win over England. Hayley Matthews' West Indies topped Group B and like New Zealand they also lost one game in the group stage, but

overall the winners of the 2016 edition have put together robust performances. The West Indies have qualified for their first semifinal since hosting the tournament in their back yard in 2018, while the biggest moment for the

Caribbean side arrived in this edition when they pipped England in their last group stage match. The West Indies had lost 13 matches in a row against England before the two teams met in their last Group B

fixture, but their run-chase of 142 showed no signs of mental fatigue against this opponent. Matthews teamed up with the young Qiana Joseph to shut England out of the tournament with a rapid 102-run stand in which both the batters brought up their respective half-centuries. While Matthews is the only Caribbean batter to have crossed the 100-run mark in the competition, Sarah Taylor and Deandra Dottin remain vital cogs in their batting. Spinners Afy Fletcher (8 wickets) and Karishma Ramharack (5 wickets) have been the most successful bowlers for the Caribbean side. New Zealand hold upperhand against the West Indies when it comes to bilateral record, having won 15 out of 23 matches so far with two tied games and one without a result. The winner of this contest will take on the triumphant team from the first semifinal, to be played in Dubai on Thursday between the six-time winner and defending champions Australia and South Africa.



## Vivaan wins silver medal, Naruka claims bronze in Shooting World Cup Final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vivaan Kapoor claimed silver in men's trap event after compatriot Anant Jeet Singh Naruka's bronze in the men's skeet competition, taking India's tally to four medals at the ISSF World Cup Final here on Thursday. Vivaan shot 44 in the final to finish behind gold medal winner Ying Qi of China. Turkey's Tolga N Tuncer won the bronze medal with a score of 35. Vivaan had come up with a score of 120 out of 125 in the qualification round to enter the six-man final. Earlier, Naruka, the 26-year-old from Rajasthan, shot 43 in

the six-man final, earning third place, while Italy's Tammaro Cassandro and Gabriele Rossetti took home the gold and silver with scores of 57 and 56, respectively. Naruka made it to the finals by scoring 121 out of 125 in the qualification round. Sonam Maskar had won a silver in the women's 10m air rifle on Tuesday and Akhil Sheoran clinched a bronze in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions on Wednesday. Naruka and Maheshwari Chauhan had settled for a fourth-place finish in the skeet mixed team event at the Paris Olympics after losing the bronze medal match to China.



## Ganguly named director of cricket at JSW Sports

ROLE TO COVER IPL, WPL AND SA20

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly was on Thursday appointed Director of Cricket for JSW Sports, his role covering all its cricketing properties including the Delhi team in the IPL and the WPL along with the Pretoria Capitals franchise in SA20. JSW Sports and GMR Group co-own Delhi Capitals in the IPL and WPL (Women's Premier League) while Pretoria Capitals is owned solely by JSW Sports. "In his role, Ganguly will spearhead all cricketing properties owned by JSW Sports, including the Delhi Capitals men's IPL and women's WPL teams, and the Pretoria Capitals that plays in the SA20 League in South

Africa," said JSW Sports in a statement. Ganguly joined Delhi Capitals in 2019 as an advisor, where he worked alongside coach Ricky Ponting, and later returned to the franchise as Director of Cricket after his stint as BCCI president. Ganguly's appointment came soon after it was decided that the management of cricket operations for Delhi Capitals' teams in the IPL and the WPL will be handled in a two-year rotation policy between GMR Group and JSW Group. The GMR Group will handle the operations of the Delhi Capitals in the IPL for the next two years, while JSW Sports will handle the franchise's team in the WPL. Former India batter Hemang Badani is expected to be named head coach ahead of

IPL 2025. Speaking on the appointment, JSW Sports founder Parth Jindal said, "Dada has always had a special place at JSW Sports. For us, he is family first and then the cricketing icon that he is. 'I've said this in the past and it stands true even today - he is one of the sharpest brains in cricket and we will always stand to benefit from his guidance and wisdom of the sport.' Ganguly added, "I've had the pleasure of knowing the JSW Group and the Jindal family personally and professionally which made this an easy decision. 'JSW Sports has been doing visionary work across the board, and I am pleased to be able to lend my experience to all its cricketing projects.'"

## Nadal-Alcaraz and Djokovic-Sinner are the Six Kings Slam exhibition matches in Saudi Arabia

AP ■ RIYADH

Rafael Nadal starts his pre-retirement farewell tour against Carlos Alcaraz on Thursday at the Six Kings Slam, the top-ranked Sinner — who was cleared in a doping case shortly before winning the U.S. Open last month, although the World Anti-Doping Agency has appealed that exoneration — beat Daniil Medvedev 6-0, 6-3, and Alcaraz defeated Holger Rune 6-4, 6-2. Nadal, an ambassador for the Saudi Tennis Federation, and Djokovic were given byes into the semifinals.

there raised by Hall of Famers Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova and others. In Wednesday's matches at the Six Kings Slam, the top-ranked Sinner — who was cleared in a doping case shortly before winning the U.S. Open last month, although the World Anti-Doping Agency has appealed that exoneration — beat Daniil Medvedev 6-0, 6-3, and Alcaraz defeated Holger Rune 6-4, 6-2. Nadal, an ambassador for the Saudi Tennis Federation, and Djokovic were given byes into the semifinals.



The matchup against Alcaraz will be the first contest for Nadal since his exit at the Paris Olympics in July — and his first match since he announced last week that he

would be retiring after playing for Spain in the Davis Cup next month. Nadal and Alcaraz played doubles together at the Paris Games and could team up again for

Davis Cup. Looking ahead to Thursday's exhibition, Alcaraz called Nadal a "legend" and "a really important person for my life, for my career." Djokovic and Sinner met for real on Sunday: Sinner won in straight sets to earn the trophy at the Shanghai Masters. After a day off on Friday, the winners of Thursday's two matches in Riyadh will meet in the event's final on Saturday. Nadal, 38, owns 22 Grand Slam titles; Djokovic, 37, has won 24, a record for the Open era.

## Pogba ready to give up money to play for Juventus again after doping ban

AP ■ MILAN

Paul Pogba says he's ready to give up money to play for Juventus again. The Serie A club may not want him, though, or need him. Pogba recently had his four-year ban for doping reduced to 18 months after appealing to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, meaning the France World Cup winner will be free to resume his career in March 2025. Juventus has not been overly enthusiastic about welcoming him back but Pogba says that is the only club he is thinking about playing for. "I am ready to even give up money so that I can still play for Juve," he said in an interview with Italian sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport. "I want to return." Juventus sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli and new coach Thiago Motta

are dubious about whether Pogba can return to the top level after being out for so long since testing positive for testosterone in August last year. But the 31-year-old Pogba, who said he "felt like a caged lion" for the past year, has been training hard on his own and is ready to prove them wrong. "I am a Juve player now. That is all I have in my mind today," he said. "I don't have to talk. What I do on the pitch will do my talking and then Thiago Motta will judge with his own eyes, based on what he sees. 'Talk is nice, but I want to play and I want to be the best one at Juve and in the France team.' But not only has Juventus changed coach since Pogba was banned, it has also changed strategy. It has brought in fresh new faces, including bright talents who



progressed through its youth team, and got rid of the — costly — old guard with the offseason departures of Federico Chiesa, Wojciech Szczesny, Alex Sandro and Adrien Rabiot. Pogba, who was the most expensive soccer player in history when he joined Manchester United from

Juventus for 105 million euros (\$113 million) in 2016, returned to the Bianconeri as a free agent in 2022. He signed a contract worth eight million euros (\$8.7 million) a year — plus two million (\$2.2 million) in bonuses — but injuries limited him to just eight Serie A appearances in his second spell at the club before his ban. The judges who cut Pogba's ban acknowledged the lack of intent but suggested the 2018 World Cup winner should have taken more care about his treatment in Florida. "What I did wrong was not looking at what a professional gave me. I repeat, a professional," Pogba said. "Like a lot of soccer players, I have a cook, a trainer and a personal physiotherapist. 'It's not a matter of reading the leaflet better, a professional outside the club had given it to me. But I won't do the same thing again, that's certain.'"

## Nationality matters less than it used to in international soccer

AP ■ LONDON

The question was inevitable. At his first news conference as England's newly appointed head coach, Thomas Tuchel — a German — was asked on Wednesday what message he had for fans who would have preferred an Englishman in charge of their beloved national team. "I'm sorry, I just have a German passport," he said, laughing, and went on to profess his love for English football and the country itself. "I will do everything to show respect to this role and to this country." The soccer rivalry between England and Germany runs deep and it's likely Tuchel's passport will be used against him if he doesn't deliver results for a nation that hasn't lifted a men's trophy since 1966. But his appointment as England's third foreign coach shows that, increasingly, even the top countries in the sport are abandoning the long-held belief that the national team must be led by one of their own. Four of the top nine teams in the FIFA world rankings now have foreign coaches. Even in

Germany, a four-time World Cup winner which has never had a foreign coach, candidates such as Dutchman Louis van Gaal and Austrian Oliver Glasner were considered serious contenders for the top job before the country's soccer federation last year settled on Julian Nagelsmann, who is German. "The coaching methods are universal and there for everyone to apply," said German soccer researcher and author Christoph Wagner, whose recent book "Crossing the Line?" historically addresses Anglo-German rivalry. "It's more the personality that counts and not the nationality. You could be a great coach, and work with a group of players who aren't perceptive enough to get your methods." Not everyone agrees. English soccer author and journalist Jonathan Wilson said it was "an admission of failure" for a major soccer nation to have a coach from a different country. "Personally, I think it should be the best of one country versus the best of another country, and that would probably extend to coaches as well as players," said Wilson, whose

books include "Inverting The Pyramid: The History of Football Tactics." "To say we can't find anyone in our country who is good enough to coach our players," he said, "I think there is something slightly embarrassing, slightly distasteful about that." That sentiment was echoed by British tabloid The Daily Mail, which reported on Tuchel's appointment with the provocative headline "A Dark Day for England." While foreign coaches are often found in smaller countries and those further down the world rankings, they are still a rarity among the traditional powers of the game. Italy, another four-time world champion, has only had Italians in charge. All of Spain's coaches in its modern-day history have been Spanish nationals. Five-time World Cup winner Brazil has had only Brazilians in charge since 1965, and two-time world champion France only Frenchmen since 1975. And it remains the case that every World Cup-winning team, since the first tournament in 1930, has been coached by a native of that country. The situation is



similar for the women's World Cup, which has never been won by a team with a foreign coach, though Jill Ellis, who led the U.S. To two trophies, is a naturalized U.S. Citizen born in England.

Some coaches have made a career out of jumping from one national team to the next. Lars Lagerbäck, 76, coached his native Sweden between 2000-09 and went on to lead the national teams of Nigeria,

Iceland and Norway. "I couldn't say I felt any big difference," Lagerbäck told The Associated Press. "I felt they were my teams and the people's teams." For Lagerbäck, the obvious

disadvantages of coaching a foreign country were any language difficulties and having to adapt to a new culture, which he particularly felt during his brief time with Nigeria in 2010 when he led the African country at the World Cup. Otherwise, he said, "it depends on the results" — and Lagerbäck is remembered with fondness in Iceland, especially, after leading the country to Euro 2016 for its first ever international tournament, where it knocked out England in the round of 16. Lagerbäck pointed to the strong education and sheer number of coaches available in soccer powers like Spain and Italy to explain why they haven't needed to turn to an overseas coach. At this year's European Championship, five of the coaches were from Italy and the winning coach was Luis de la Fuente, who was promoted to Spain's senior team after being in charge of the youth teams. Portugal for the first time looked outside its own borders or Brazil, with which it has historical ties, when it appointed Spaniard Roberto Martinez as national team coach last year. Also last year,

Brazil tried — and ultimately failed — to court Real Madrid's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti, with Brazilian soccer federation president Ednaldo Rodrigues saying: "It doesn't matter if it's a foreigner or a Brazilian, there's no prejudice about the nationality." The United States has had a long list of foreign coaches before Mauricio Pochettino, the Argentine former Chelsea manager who took over as the men's head coach this year. The English Football Association certainly had no qualms making Tuchel the national team's third foreign-born coach, after Swede Sven-Goran Eriksson (2001-06) and Italian Fabio Capello (2008-12), simply believing he was the best available coach on the market. Unlike Eriksson and Capello, Tuchel at least had previous experience of working in English soccer — he won the Champions League in an 18-month spell with Chelsea — and he also speaks better English. That won't satisfy all the nay-sayers, though. "Hopefully I can convince them and show them and prove to them that I'm proud to be the English manager," Tuchel said.



# TFI GEARING UP FOR GADDAR FILM AWARDS

The Telugu film industry is welcoming the Gaddar Awards. The State government plans to kickoff these awards this year, recognising films released in the same year

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

The Telangana government is reviving its film awards after a decade-long hiatus and this time, they're naming the awards after the legendary singer Gaddar. In the last 10 years, there have been no awards by the government in the Telugu-speaking states. Not long ago, the Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Bhatti Vikramarka, had a talk with the committee members of the Gaddar Film Awards. The Telangana Chief Minister, Revanth Reddy had announced his intention to initiate the Film Awards in honour of the singer-poet and key figure in the Telangana Statehood movement. The Chief Minister expressed his disappointment over the initial lack of response from the film industry to his announcement, leading to reports that a few of them in the industry might not be enthusiastic about the awards.

"There is no controversy in it; the industry is welcoming it and we are also part of the discussion with the government about the structure of these awards," said Suresh Babu, a member of the Gaddar Film Awards committee. He emphasised that for the Government of Telangana, Gaddar symbolises the state's arts and cultural heritage, making it fitting to present film awards in his name.

"I want to make films for rewards and awards. An award is akin to a box office collection. It also recognises a person's hard work, bringing happiness and honour to the recipient," Suresh Babu added, affirming the industry's support for the awards. "There is no difference of opinions to it, though there are some personal opinions," he noted.

Suresh Babu compared the prestige of the Gaddar Awards to that of the Oscars, noting how such recognition attracts attention to films. "When *The Elephant Whispers* won an Oscar, it drew many viewers, even among hundreds of documentaries. Similarly, an award from the government is a significant recognition," he explained.

Addressing the delay in



response to the Chief Minister's announcement, T Prasanna Kumar, Joint Secretary of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC), clarified, "We responded immediately and welcomed the awards. We sent a letter right after the CM's announcement to the Telangana Film Development Corporation (FDC), but there was some miscommunication between the FDC and the CMO office." He pointed out that the government has yet to appoint a chairman for the FDC, which serves as a crucial link between the TFI and the government. Prasanna added that the industry has suggested several prominent names for the awards committee, many of which were included.

Tammareddy Bharadwaj, also a member of the Awards Committee, dismissed concerns about the naming of the awards. "Some questioned why the film awards are named after Gaddar, but the government clarified that Gaddar represents Telangana's arts and culture, making the name fitting for these awards. Now, we are discussing the awards' structure, dates and other details," he said.

The government aims to host the inaugural awards ceremony on January 31, which is Gaddar's birthday. "We have to explore the possibilities, as the committee needs to review many films in a short time-frame, which poses some challenges," said Tammareddy. Only films released in 2024

will be considered, with a submission deadline of December 31. The Telangana government is planning the Gaddar Awards as a prestigious event.

Suresh Babu remarked on the significance of government-backed awards compared to privately organised ones, especially those held abroad. "When private entities host awards functions outside India, many from the industry attend and speak highly of them. Now that the government is giving awards in Gaddar's name, it is even more prestigious and an honour for the recipient's work. We are all welcoming it and there is nothing wrong with it," he affirmed. The committee is set to reconvene to finalise the awards' structure and schedule.



## Pradeep Machiraju rekindles PSPK's legacy

Pradeep Machiraju, a popular anchor, host and actor, previously starred in the box-office success *30 Rojullo Preminchadam Ela*. Now, he is set to lead in another film, titled *Akkada Ammayi Ikkada Abbayi*, which coincidentally shares the title of Pawan Kalyan's debut film. The film, directed by the Nitin and Bharath duo, is a unique love and family entertainer featuring Deepika Pilli as the female lead.

On Thursday, the makers revealed the film's title along with the first look, highlighting the chemistry between Pradeep and Deepika. The story follows a civil engineer who arrives in a village for work and falls in love with a spirited village girl. What ensues is a charming love story filled with laughter, unexpected twists and a surprising romance. The film also stars Vennela Kishore, Satya and Getup Srinu in key roles, with music composed by Radhan.

## SAMANTHA REVEALS SHE 'BEGGED' CITADEL DIRECTORS TO REPLACE HER

Samantha Ruth Prabhu made a heartfelt revelation about her experience with myositis. Following her diagnosis, she humbly requested directors to consider replacing her in *Citadel: Honey Bunny*, even suggesting alternative actors. However, the director duo showed their support and confidence in her, refusing to recast the role.

Samantha said, "I begged them to move on because I really didn't think I could do it. I was really sure I couldn't. I sent other recommendations: 'Look at this heroine; she is so amazing. She will kill it. I beg you, I can't do this.' I sent like four options to them. I was really not well." However, the director duo refused to take her suggestion and only wanted to go ahead with her for the project. Now, Samantha is grateful that the directors made that decision, as she is happy looking at herself in the show. "Now, watching this show, I am so thankful that they didn't make it without me and that I found the strength to do it. Even before the verdict is out for this show, I am going to give it to myself for pulling through," said Samantha.



## PUSHPA 2'S 50-DAY SPRINT BEGINS

The makers of *Pushpa 2* have re-affirmed that the film will release on December 6, as previously announced, with no further postponements. A new poster featuring Allu Arjun was unveiled, emphasising the film's upcoming release, now just 50 days away. In the poster, Allu Arjun exudes power and authority.

*Pushpa 2: The Rule* is a sequel to *Pushpa: The Rise*, arriving nearly three years after the first installment. The sequel was initially set for an August 15 release but was later postponed to December 6. The new poster aims to assure fans that the release date is final.

In the latest poster, Allu Arjun is seen in a commanding pose. Director Sukumar is focusing on making the sequel even grander than its predecessor. The film is slated to hit theaters on December 6, 2024. Devi Sri Prasad, who composed the hit songs for the first part, promises another memorable soundtrack. The film is produced by Naveen Yerneni and Ravi Shankar Yalamanchili.



## Arjun Sarja's next directorial, titled *Seetha Payanam*

Arjun Sarja, a renowned actor across Telugu, Tamil and Kannada cinema, has appeared in nearly 160 films and directed a dozen more. Despite his acting commitments, Arjun is now returning to direction with his latest project, *Seetha Payanam*. Known for earlier directorial works like *Jai Hind* and its sequel *Abhimanyu*, Arjun's new film is set for a multilingual release in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada.

As the title suggests, the film is expected to be a journey that combines emotional storytelling, a hallmark of Arjun's style. While the cast and crew details are yet to be revealed, sources suggest that the film will be a family-oriented drama. Arjun, often referred to as the Action King, made his Telugu debut with *Maa Pallelo Gopaludu*, which enjoyed a successful 100-day run. Produced by Arjun Sarja himself, more details about *Seetha Payanam* are anticipated soon.



## Anirudh Ravichander: Tollywood's most in-demand music director

Music director Anirudh Ravichander's popularity is soaring, not just in Tamil cinema but also in Telugu. His recent Telugu project *Devara* produced hit songs and was a box office success. Then was *Vettaiyan*, released in both Tamil and Telugu, also achieved commercial success. Last year, Anirudh made headlines with his work on the Hindi film *Jawan*, which became the highest-grossing Indian film featuring Shah Rukh Khan.

Anirudh Ravichander is now in high demand and has signed on for another Telugu film. Nani and director Srikanth Odela, who previously collaborated on *Dasara*, have teamed up again for a project tentatively titled *NaniOdela2*, which was launched during the *Dasara* festival. Produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri, the film has brought Anirudh on board as the music director. This marks the third collaboration between Nani and Anirudh, following their previous films *Jersey* and *Gang Leader*.

Director Srikanth Odela is crafting another grand narrative with a gripping screenplay, presenting Nani in a new mass avatar. The actor, currently filming *Hit 3*, is expected to begin work on this project next.



## STANDALONE



Shankara Eye Hospitals, in collaboration with the Phoenix Foundation, organised a free eye health checkup for all MAA members. The event featured participation from MAA president Vishnu Manchu, vice president Madala Ravi and treasurer Shiva Balaji. During this free eye health camp, all the MAA members had the opportunity to undergo complimentary eye examinations.