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**Trying to restore trust, reassure each other**

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**MINISTER PURI HOPES GLOBAL OIL PRICES WILL COOL DOWN**

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**Shraddha Kapoor to add glamour to Pushpa 2 with special SONG**

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**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

*We bore all insults mentally all these days and now they are killing us by attacking physically. Why should we bear all these things? I will serve the people by setting up a voluntary organization. Tell me, why I should continue in the party. The Congress party gave a good gift for striving for four decades. Murder took place due to the Congress party's encouragement of defections*



**- Jeevan Reddy, TG MLC**

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## DON'T MISS...

### SDRF capabilities being...

Home and Disaster Management Minister Vangalapudi Anitha announced that the State government is taking steps to enhance the capabilities of the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Response Force (APSDRF). During a review meeting held at the Disaster Management office on Tuesday evening, the minister emphasised the government's goal of transforming the state's disaster management system into a national role model. Minister Anitha underscored the need to reinforce the SDRF teams, which play a crucial role in ...

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### BRICS emerged as important...

India values close cooperation within BRICS which has emerged as an important platform for dialogue and discussion on a range of key issues concerning global developmental agenda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday. Modi made comments in a statement before embarking on a two-day visit to the Russian city of Kazan to attend the 16th summit of the BRICS grouping. "The expansion of BRICS with the addition of new members last year has added to its inclusivity and agenda for the global ...

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### Consumers worried about data...

Consumers are worried about data breaches, and a large number of them are not aware of their rights related to personal data, according to a PwC India survey. The PwC Survey on Data Privacy offers vital insights from 3,233 consumers and 186 organisations across India, exploring the awareness and implementation gaps concerning the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA), the consultancy firm said. As per the survey report titled "How aware and prepared are Indian consumers and businesses ...

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### MI, KKR among five IPL...

Mumbai Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Lucknow Super Giants are among the IPL franchises who have submitted bids to acquire teams in the English Cricket Board-run The Hundred, according to a report. The GMR Group, recently named the new owner of Hampshire, and Avram Glazer, co-owner of Manchester United Football Club, also submitted bids before the ECB's October 18 deadline for potential investors, reported ESPNCricinfo. The ECB ...

-SPORTS

## CM NAIDU'S VISION FOR AMARAVATI

# Drone Capital of India

### Allocation of 300 acres in Kurnool district announced for a drone hub

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has announced the allocation of 300 acres of land in Orvakallu, Kurnool district, to develop a drone hub, positioning Amaravati as the drone capital of India. Speaking at the inaugural session of the two-day Amaravati Drone Summit 2024 on Tuesday, the CM declared that Andhra Pradesh will lead the nation in drone technology.

During his address, Chandrababu Naidu outlined an ambitious plan to train 35,000 drone pilots in the state, transforming Andhra Pradesh into a human resource hub for drone technology.

Reflecting on his leadership during India's IT revolution in the 1990s, Naidu recalled launching the country's first IT project, HiTech City, in Hyderabad through a public-private partnership in 1995. He spoke about attracting global tech giants like Microsoft and highlighted how his proposal to deregulate the telecom sector, supported by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, helped bring mobile technology to India.

The CM also praised the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, noting, "We are fortunate to have a dynamic Prime Minister in Narendra Modi, who has promoted Brand India globally." He expressed confidence that with collective efforts, India could become the world's leading economy. He lauded initiatives like



- AP to train 35,000 drone pilots to create a skilled workforce for drone technology.

- Naidu reflects on his role in launching HiTech City and attracting global tech giants during India's IT revolution in the 1990s.

- He praises PM Modi's leadership, highlighting initiatives like JAM and Ayushman Bharat for strengthening India's digital infrastructure.
- Mentioning that drones were used during the Vijayawada floods, Naidu highlights their potential to solve urban and agricultural issues.

- A comprehensive drone policy to be released within 15 days to encourage drone manufacturing and innovation.

- Naidu stresses the importance of data and AI in driving future innovations and the knowledge economy.

## India banned drone imports to encourage local startups: Union Minister

**VIJAYAWADA:** Union Minister of Civil Aviation K Ram Mohan Naidu on Tuesday said India has banned the import of drones to encourage local talent to manufacture them. Addressing the two-day national drone summit at Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, the Civil Aviation Minister noted that the

government banned drone imports as it does not want some other country or company to benefit at the cost of India. "We have banned the total import of drones, why did we do it? We want to encourage more startups to come in this drone sector.

Continued on Page 2

JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile) and Ayushman Bharat for strengthening the country's digital infrastructure.

Naidu emphasised Andhra Pradesh's adaptability to emerging technologies, citing the recent use of drones during the Vijayawada floods to deliver food and water. "Drones can solve traffic problems, enhance agriculture, and revolutionise healthcare," he said.

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## Sand totally free of cost: I&PR Min

### Asks public not to believe YSRCP propaganda

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing, Kolu Parthasarathy, stated that the Andhra Pradesh government, led by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, has made sand entirely free for public use. He urged citizens not to believe the false propaganda of YSRC leaders regarding sand availability. Refuting the allegations made by YSRC leaders about sand-related issues, Minister Parthasarathy emphasised that Chief Minister Naidu has clearly stated that sand is available at no cost. He advised the public not to fall for the misleading accusations from the opposition party, asserting that trusting such claims could lead to potential deception.

Continued on Page 2

## Completely projects in State soon: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directed officials on Tuesday to expedite the completion of all ongoing railway projects in the State. Highlighting the assurance given by the Railway Minister that the Ministry is ready to undertake railway project works worth Rs 72,000 crore, the CM instructed officials to initiate these projects and ensure their rapid completion.

Chairing a review meeting at the State Secretariat with Railway and state officials regarding land acquisition, ongoing railway line works, and economic needs, Chandrababu focused on the progress of all current works.

Inquiring about the reasons for delays in certain projects, the CM provided various suggestions for their early completion. He expressed concern that many projects have stalled due to policies adopted by the previous government and urged officials to take immediate steps to complete all such projects on time, assuring that all necessary measures

would be implemented to address land acquisition issues.

The Chief Minister decided to form a task force comprising officials from the Railways, Revenue, and Roads and Buildings (R&B) departments to facilitate the early completion of projects and resolve land acquisition challenges. He stressed the importance of completing the Kotipalli-Narsapur railway line within four months.

Chandrababu approved the immediate release of Rs 20 crore for acquiring 11 acres along the Nadikudi-Srikalahasti railway line and instructed officials to commence work on the Sattupalli-Kovvur line once the land acquisition is complete.

Chandrababu also indicated that a decision on the Kadapa-Bengaluru railway line should be made after a detailed discussion, given the changes made to its alignment. He set a target for all ongoing railway project works to be completed within three years while doubling works should be finished within four years.

## CID raids distilleries in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) conducted raids at multiple distilleries across Andhra Pradesh following allegations of irregularities in alcohol production and distribution.

One of the primary sites inspected was SVR Distilleries, located near Karakambadi in the Renigunta mandal of Tirupati district. Simultaneously, CID teams conducted thorough inspections at Visakhapatnam and GSP distilleries in Kakinada mandal, Anakapalli district. Similar operations were carried out at Pearl Distillery in Old

Singarayakonda mandal, Prakasam district, and at the Centani Biotech liquor bottling unit in Kanchikacherla mandal, NTR district.

An extensive search was led by CID Additional SP Hussain Peera at SPY Agro Industries in Nandyal. Over 30 CID officials participated in the inspection, scrutinising production records and verifying compliance with regulatory norms in response to allegations of malpractice.

In Kadapa, CID officials from

Tirupati raided Eagle Distillery, focusing on alcohol production records from the past year. Meanwhile, a similar operation is underway at a distillery in Kuppam, located in Chittoor district.

These inspections aim to uncover any potential violations in alcohol production and distribution regulations, as the CID intensifies its efforts to ensure compliance across the state. The outcome of these raids is expected to be disclosed once the investigations are concluded.



## AP signs MoU with Meta India



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

IT and Education Minister Nara Lokesh has signed a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Meta India to accelerate the state's digital transformation and foster innovation across various sectors. This strategic partnership aims to enhance digital literacy, support startups, and promote entrepreneurship in Andhra Pradesh.

The MoU was signed during Minister Lokesh's visit to Delhi, where he engaged with top executives from Meta India. The collaboration is expected to bring cutting-edge digital solutions to the state, leveraging Meta's expertise in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR).

Minister Lokesh emphasized the importance of this partnership in boosting Andhra Pradesh's digital ecosystem. "This MoU with Meta India represents a major leap forward in our mission to build a digi-

ally empowered Andhra Pradesh. Through this collaboration, we aim to equip our youth with the skills they need to succeed in the digital economy and foster a culture of innovation across the state," he stated.

Sandhya Devanathan, Vice President of Meta India, expressed her happiness at signing the agreement with the AP government to provide civic services to the people of Andhra Pradesh through WhatsApp, utilizing Meta's artificial intelligence services. She expressed hope that citizens would be able to access the services they need through artificial intelligence and the WhatsApp application programming interface, enabling the AP government to deliver better services using digital technology.

Meta India Director Ravi Garg, Director of Public Policy Natasha, IAS officers Yuvraj, and RTGS CEO Dinesh also participated in the program held at 1 Janpath in Delhi.

## 'Ready to provide all possible cooperation'

PNS ■ KAZAN

The Russia-Ukraine conflict should be resolved in a peaceful manner and India is ready to provide all possible cooperation towards it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday during his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Modi held bilateral talks with Putin hours after arriving in this central Russian city to attend the 16th BRICS summit.

In his televised opening remarks, the prime minister conveyed to the Russian leader that New Delhi "fully supports" the early return of peace and stability in the region.

Modi also said that his second visit to Russia in the last three months reflected "close" coordination and deep trust between the two countries.

## PM Modi holds talks with Russian Prez Putin



"We are in constant touch on the issue of ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. As I said earlier, we believe that problems should be resolved in a peaceful manner," the prime minister said.

"We fully support the early return of peace and stability. All our efforts give priority to humanity. India is ready to provide all possible cooperation in times to come," he said.

"We have the opportunity to discuss all these issues," he added.

The prime minister also referred to his summit talks with Putin in Moscow in July.

"Our annual summit resulted in strengthening cooperation in every field, he said.

The prime minister congratulated Putin on Russia's successful presidency of BRICS and said many countries want to join the grouping now.

# Ruling parties in AP and TG least bothered about Opposition's voice

In a democratic system, it is essential for the ruling party to heed the voice of the Opposition playing a responsible role. That is, the Opposition cannot afford to be lethargic in highlighting public issues and voicing public opinion. Presently, the ruling dispensations in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh appear to be unmoved by the efforts of the Opposition to throw spotlight on public issues and air public opinion.



and former TG chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) is not always in the picture. BRS working president and former minister KT Rama Rao is now practically the face of the party that ruled India's youngest state for a decade. Even when KCR was in power, KTR had been projected as the former chief minister's political heir, notwithstanding the presence of those much senior to him like T. Harish Rao. Had BRS registered a hat-trick win in the 2023 Assembly elections, KTR would perhaps have been made the Chief Minister. But, apparently due to the anti-incumbency factor, BRS

**Presently, the ruling dispensations in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh appear to be unmoved by the efforts of the Opposition to throw spotlight on public issues and air public opinion.**

lost, and the Congress, which had granted statehood for Telangana, came to power as per the wishes of people. Since then, due to various factors such as desertions of BRS legislators and restricted mobility after a fall and hip surgery, KCR has kept himself

largely away from the public. The Congress unit in TG is now giving KCR a tough time by poaching BRS legislators. KCR, who had marginalized the Congress during his rule, is today conspicuous by his absence. This has also created the impression in



M D RATNA KUMAR  
Senior Journalist

certain circles that BRS lacks effective leadership. The field performance of the political heir does not present the party as an alternative to the

Congress regime, with the Bharatiya Janata Party eager to grab the position of principal opposition at least in the future. So, the Congress government in TG headed by A. Revant Reddy does not feel the presence of an 'effective' and principal opposition party.

In Andhra Pradesh, the position of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), which got only 11 seats in the recent Assembly elections, is not satisfactory as an opposition party. It could not get the much-needed status of principal opposition for want of numbers in the House. At least 10% of seats (17 are required (out of 175 in the House) for being accorded

the status of principal opposition party.

The ruling NDA combine, consisting of Telugu Desam Party, Jana Sena Party & BJP, seems to be leaving no stone unturned in preventing YSRCP from going strategically against the government in AP. The YSRCP is now in disarray. YSRCP president YS Jaganmohan Reddy is struggling to keep and galvanize his flock. Facing desertions of his party leaders, he is facing backlash from a section of the cadre whom those leaders had previously motivated to remain in YSRCP. Party leaders who were in the limelight during the YSRCP regime are now home-bound, making videos

on day-to-day affairs of the state.

Significantly, YSRCP could not utilise the recent flood situation in Vijayawada to win the hearts of people say by involving its cadre in relief operations. Whatever the reasons may be, Jagan skipped the first Assembly session held recently. In a way, YSRCP is restricting itself from going to people.

Things may change, if the AP High Court's decision goes in favour of granting YSRCP the principal opposition party status. Till then, the Chandrababu Naidu government can afford to give less importance to the efforts of YSRCP to highlight or mirror public opinion.

## MINISTER NARAYANA TO CENTRE

# Speed up decision-making process over AP Metro projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Municipal and Urban Development Minister, Ponguru Narayana, has urged Union Urban Development Minister Manohar Lal Khattar to expedite the decision-making process on the proposed metro rail projects for Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam. This request was made during a meeting on the second day of Narayana's visit to Delhi on Tuesday, where he was accompanied by Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Chief Secretary for Municipal and Urban Development.



**Minister Narayana presented the revised proposals to Union Minister Khattar, urging swift action on the initiatives originally introduced by the TDP administration. In addition to discussing the metro rail for Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, Narayana highlighted the proposal to extend the Vijayawada Metro to connect with the capital city, Amaravati.**

The metro rail proposals were initially drafted during the tenure of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government from 2014 to 2019 and had previously attracted attention at the central level. Detailed project reports (DPRs) were prepared in 2015, and consultations with the central government took place at that time. However, after the YSR Congress

Party (YSRCP) came to power, progress on the projects stalled. Minister Narayana presented the revised proposals to Union Minister Khattar, urging swift action on the initiatives originally introduced by the TDP administration. In addition to discussing the metro rail for Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, Narayana highlighted the pro-

posal to extend the Vijayawada Metro to connect with the capital city, Amaravati.

A significant portion of the meeting also focused on the implementation of the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2 scheme in Andhra Pradesh. The previous TDP government initiated several devel-

opment works under the AMRUT scheme, but the current YSRCP administration has not continued many of these projects. According to Narayana, the state's failure to release its share of the funds has led to a halt in the scheme's implementation for the past five years.

Minister Narayana appealed for the revival of the AMRUT scheme, emphasizing the need for ongoing development in the state's municipalities. In response, Union Minister Khattar expressed a positive outlook on the proposals and assured that the matter would be addressed.

The renewed momentum in the state's metro rail and urban development projects marks a crucial step for Andhra Pradesh's infrastructure growth, with potential benefits for both Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam. MPs Balashowry and Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu were also present during the two-day visit to Delhi.



# Guv Nazeer interacts with J&K students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh, S. Abdul Nazeer, participated in an interaction programme with students from Jammu and Kashmir at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday. The students are visiting Andhra Pradesh from October 20 to 25 as part of the Kashmiri Youth Exchange programme, organised by Nehru Yuva Kendra under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and

Sports, Government of India.

During the event, Governor Abdul Nazeer addressed the students, emphasising the crucial role youth play in achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat@2047. He highlighted that they are not only the leaders of tomorrow but also the change-makers of today. Their energy, innovation, and dedication are vital to realising the Prime Minister's vision of a developed India by 2047. The

Governor noted that India has the world's largest youth population, which is essential for the nation's progress, development, and success. This demographic embodies the aspirations, dreams, and transformative potential necessary to propel the country toward extraordinary growth and expansion. He encouraged the students to make the best use of the opportunities available in the higher education system,

one of the largest in the world. Earlier, students from Jammu and Kashmir shared their experiences of their visit to the state. The programme was also attended by Dr M Hari Jawaharlal, Secretary to the Governor, Ansuman Prasad Das, State Director of Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Kiranmai Devireddy, District Youth Officer of Guntur, and officers from Raj Bhavan.

# Hoaxes keep air passengers, security staff on tenterhooks

Rs 600 cr loss likely for airlines in 9 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Nearly 80 domestic and international flights received bomb threats in less than 24 hours that later turned out to be hoaxes, keeping thousands of passengers and security agencies on tenterhooks.



got bomb threats on Monday night, they added.

The estimated losses incurred by airlines due to the disruptions would be around Rs 600 crore, according to two former airline officials.

On Tuesday alone, around 50 flights, including 13 each of IndiGo and Air India received bomb threats. Akasa Air got the threats for over 12 flights and as many as 11 flights of Vistara also received the threats, the sources in the know said.

Around 30 flights of IndiGo, Air India and Vistara

In nine days, more than 170 flights operated by Indian carriers have received bomb threats, mostly through social media, that also forced the diversion of some of the international flights.

On average, disruption to a domestic flight would cost around Rs 1.5 crore while the expenses would be around Rs 5-5.5 crore for an international flight, an official, who has worked in the finance department of a domestic airline, said.

# Ex-AAG expresses concern over probe into high-profile cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ponnaveolu Sudhakar Reddy, former Additional Advocate General, has written a detailed letter to the Director General of Police (DGP), expressing concerns regarding the investigation of several high-profile cases. These include the Siemens Skill Development Project scam, the AP Fiber Net case, illegal mining activities, issues related to assigned lands, the Inner Ring Road project, and liquor-related offences.

In his letter, Ponnaveolu highlighted the potential for interference by prominent individuals linked to the current government who have been accused in these crimes. He urged the police to exercise caution and ensure that no sensitive investigation details, such as case

diaries, are accessible to these individuals, warning that such access could undermine the integrity of the probe.

His letter stressed the need for a free and fair investigation, emphasising the importance of impartial handling of these cases. He called on the authorities to refile charge sheets that had previously been returned for revisions, ensuring they meet the necessary legal standards. Additionally, he urged close collaboration with the Directorate of Enforcement to facilitate further action, ensuring that justice is served in these significant cases. This development has drawn attention to the ongoing investigations and raised questions about political influence and the handling of key legal matters in the state.

# Jagan files plea ....

Continued from Page 1

However, he alleges that Sharmila's recent political opposition has led him to withdraw this offer, reflecting a troubling shift in their familial bond. He referred to the situation using the term 'cheater' without naming Sharmila directly, suggesting deep feelings of betrayal and hurt.

As the NCLT hearing approaches, Jagan is requesting the tribunal to declare that he owns 51% of the shares in the company and to nullify the transfer of shares that were intended for his mother and sister. He has made it clear in his petition that he does not wish to give any shares to either Vijayamma or Sharmila, despite previous commitments.

This legal battle poses critical questions: How will the people of Andhra Pradesh respond to Jagan's legal disputes with his family? Will

they continue to view him as the revered 'sher' of the State, or will this conflict tarnish his legacy? The public is left to ponder the sincerity of Jagan's familial relationships against the backdrop of his political career, especially as Sharmila also enters the political arena.

The situation not only signifies a rift within the family but also threatens to undermine the foundation of YS Rajasekhara Reddy's legacy. As the NCLT hearing on November 8 approaches, all eyes will be on Jagan and his ability to navigate these family tensions while maintaining the support of a populace that once idolised his father.

# Drone Capital ...

Continued from Page 1

The CM made several key announcements, including his vision to make Andhra Pradesh a global hub for drone technology. He reiterated that Amaravati will become the drone capital of India, with the 300-acre drone hub in Orvakallu boosting drone manufacturing, innovation, and research. He also unveiled plans to train 35,000 drone pilots, creating a skilled workforce to meet the rising demand for drones across various industries. He assured that a comprehensive drone policy, fostering a business-friendly environment for manufacturers and innovators, would be released within 15 days.

The Chief Minister invited stakeholders to use Andhra Pradesh as a

testing ground for drone projects, which would later be scaled up and implemented across the country. He also underscored the significance of data, calling it "the new wealth," and noted the potential for AI-driven innovation, with 400 million terabytes of data being generated daily.

Looking ahead, Naidu highlighted the rise of the knowledge economy, driven by AI, machine learning, and cloud technologies, and urged Andhra Pradesh to build a strong ecosystem for knowledge-based industries. In conclusion, Naidu said, "With the precision of data and flexibility of operations, drones, AI, and other emerging technologies will enable Andhra Pradesh and India to lead the world in the knowledge economy."

# Olectra records net profit of Rs 47.65 cr

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leading electric vehicle manufacturer Olectra Greentech Limited (OGL) announced its Q2 and half-year consolidated financial results for the period ending September 30, 2024. The Board of Directors, in its meeting held on Tuesday, officially approved these remarkable achievements.



Commenting on the results, Olectra Greentech Limited CMD K.V. Pradeep said, "We are pleased to report strong growth in our consolidated revenue and profitability for Q2 and H1 FY 24-25. Our focus continues to be on increasing our manufacturing capabilities and enhancing our technology. Our order book remains strong."

During the quarter under review, Olectra delivered 315 electric vehicles, compared to 154 delivered in FY 23-24, marking an increase of 105 percent. The revenue for Q2 FY 24-25 was Rs 523.67 crores, up by 70%. This significant revenue growth was attributed to high deliveries during the quarter. The company has now delivered 2,217 electric vehicles to date. Congratulations to the team for achieving these impressive

results. Strong demand continues, with the total number of bus orders on hand at 10,503 units.

The company's EBITDA in Q2 FY 24-25 reached an impressive Rs 85.69 crores, marking a substantial 90% increase compared to the previous fiscal year. The PBT surged to Rs 64.83 crores, a remarkable 144% increase from the previous fiscal year's Rs 26.57 crores. The PAT stands at Rs 47.65 crores, compared to Rs 18.58 crores in the previous fiscal year, representing an increase of 156%. The company reported Earnings Per Share (EPS) of Rs 8.72 for the half-year ended September 30, 2024, compared to Rs 4.40 for the previous half-year ended September 30, 2023.

# India banned drone imports to ...

Continued from Page 1

We want the people of this country to manufacture drones. We don't want to import drones and let the benefit go to some other country or some other company," said Naidu. According to the union minister, the government wants the young and bright minds of the country to develop new types of drones to cater to solutions which are indigenous to the country, so with that mindset we banned imports.

The aviation minister highlighted that the Centre has liberalised rules for the drone ecosystem and enabled 27 companies to benefit from the Production Linked Incentive

(PLI) scheme. Noting that India has emerged as a drone hub in the past few years, he said the government wants to push the industry further.

"Looking at a drone hub in Andhra Pradesh in the future... want to ensure that Andhra Pradesh grows to the best of its ability," he said, adding that the government wants to ensure that the southern state will emerge as the drone hub of the world. The mega-drone summit on October 22 and 23 will feature drone hackathons, exhibitions and participation from industry experts.

As many as 1,711 delegates and 1,306 visitors are expected to attend the summit, among others.

**TODAY ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha  
Tithi: Saptami : Oct 23 01:29 AM to Oct 24 01:19 AM  
Ashtami : Oct 24 01:19 AM to Oct 25 01:58 AM

**Nakshatram:**  
Punarvasu: Oct 23 05:38 AM to Oct 24 06:15 AM  
Rahukalam: 12:00 PM to 1:26 PM  
Yamagandam: 7:41 AM to 9:07 AM  
Varjyam: 05:57 PM to 07:35 PM  
Gulika: 10:34 AM to 12:00 PM  
Amritakalam: 03:48 AM to 05:26 AM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**  
Forecast: Partly Cloudy  
Temp: 34°C  
Humidity: 63%  
Sunrise: 6:02 AM  
Sunset: 5:41 PM  
Updated: October 22, 2024 5:00 PM

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Election panel invites entries for media awards

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vivek Yadav has announced that 'Best Media Awards 2024' will be presented to recognise and honour media houses that play a key role in raising awareness about the electoral process and the importance of voting. He emphasised that this initiative aims to encourage media outlets to conduct educational campaigns, informing the public about their voting rights and the significance of participating in elections, thereby boosting voter turnout in the State.

In a press release on Tuesday, Vivek Yadav invited entries from various media platforms, including print, electronic media (Television), electronic media (Radio), and online media (Internet and Social Media). He explained that the Election Commission of India (ECI) would present four awards—one for each platform—to recognise the best organisations committed to educating people on voter rights and encouraging participation in the voting process. The tradition of presenting such awards has been in place since 2012.

# SDRF capabilities being enhanced: Home Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home and Disaster Management Minister Vangalapati Anitha announced that the State government is taking steps to enhance the capabilities of the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Response Force (APSDRF). During a review meeting held at the Disaster Management office on Tuesday evening, the minister emphasised the government's goal of transforming the state's disaster management system into a national role model.

Minister Anitha underscored the need to reinforce the SDRF teams, which play a crucial role in emergency relief operations during natural disasters. Given the evolving challenges posed by disasters such as floods, cyclones, chemical incidents, and fires, she directed the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Commandant to organise advanced technical training for SDRF and fire personnel at least five times a year. This training aims to equip the teams with the necessary skills to handle complex and high-risk situations effectively.

The minister also highlighted the importance of training Apadamitra volunteers in every village to support disaster relief efforts. She urged the NDRF



Commandant to provide a list of new technical equipment required for disaster management operations, which will be acquired in phases to enhance rescue efforts. This initiative is

expected to reduce both the loss of life and the time taken for damage control during emergencies.

With heavy rains forecasted in the Uttar Andhra region

from October 24, district collectors have been alerted to be prepared. Minister Anitha revealed that 12 SDRF teams, consisting of 600 members from six battalions, are on standby to respond to emergency situations. Furthermore, the Disaster Management department will provide timely updates to rain-affected areas, and fishermen have been advised to refrain from going to sea until Friday.

The review meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretary RP Sisodia, APSDMA MD Ronamki Kurmanath, SDRF DIG Raja Kumari, NDRF Commandant VVN Prasanna, AP Fire Services Director D Murali Krishna, and other officials.

## No wrongdoer during YSRC rule will be spared: Anitha

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has issued a strong warning to ensure that no one who committed wrongdoings during the previous YSRC government goes unpunished. She stated that the systems under the YSRC government have failed, and efforts are being made to correct them. In a press conference here on Tuesday, she questioned what response Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan

Mohan Reddy would provide regarding the attacks, rapes, and murders that occurred during his party's rule over the past five years.

According to Anitha, the Crime Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) statistics indicate that Andhra Pradesh was number one in data uploading from 2014 to 2019. However, she claimed that the system was severely compromised in 2019 under Jagan's

rule, leading to the breakdown of the fingerprint identification network as well. The Home Minister emphasized that no accused will escape justice in the coalition government, asserting that during its four months in power, the culprits of various atrocities were apprehended within one or two days. She announced plans to strengthen the surveillance system by installing CCTV cameras across the state.

# Demand to release amounts due to VSP employees and retirees

Pension payments overdue since March; workers facing financial uncertainty

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam Steel Executive Association (VSEA) is urgently demanding the immediate release of pending higher pension amounts for all 1,800 eligible employees and retirees of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd, the corporate entity of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP). With these pension payments overdue since March, many workers and their families are facing financial uncertainty.

The pension holders had deposited their contributions with the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner in Visakhapatnam, amounting to around Rs 400 crore, between October 2023 and March 2024. This move followed a Supreme Court ruling in November 2022, which instructed the authorities to allow eligible public sector undertaking (PSU) employees, including RINL-VSP staff, to opt for a higher pension scheme. This significant decision came after a lengthy seven-year struggle involving various unions, including the VSEA.

Speaking to The Pioneer, KVD Prasad, secretary of the VSEA, highlighted the significance of the Supreme Court's decision. "The Supreme Court's order is a major relief for all PSU employees. Previously, after 30 years of service, pensioners would only



Frustration is growing among VSEA members due to the ongoing delay in pension disbursements. "As of now, the pension payments have not been delivered in return for our contributions."

Despite these advancements, frustration is growing among VSEA members due to the ongoing delay in pension disbursements. "As of now, the pension payments have not been delivered in return for our contributions. If the authorities do not address our demand promptly, the association may stage protests and escalate the situation further," Prasad said.

The situation is becoming increasingly critical as the VSEA fights for the rightful pensions of its members. "We urge the government to take immediate action to ensure that our contributions are honored and that employees receive the pensions they deserve. The future of many employees and retirees hangs in the balance, and they cannot afford further delays," Prasad added.

receive amounts in the hundreds. However, with the higher pension scheme, there is now potential for pensions in the thousands of rupees. Many current and retired employees of RINL have already applied for higher pensions through the RINL PF Trust," he said on Tuesday.



# Nara Lokesh calls on ex-MLA Vangaveeti

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Human Resources and IT Nara Lokesh visited former Vijayawada East MLA and TDP leader Vangaveeti Radha Krishna on Tuesday. Vangaveeti Radha, who has been undergoing treatment for heart-related issues, is recovering steadily.

In light of this, the IT Minister went to Radha's residence in Tadepalli to inquire about his health. It is noteworthy that Nara Lokesh had been in Delhi for a couple of days addressing state-related matters and arrived at Vijayawada airport on Tuesday. From there, he went directly to Radha's house to wish him a speedy recovery.

# Applications of 2,478 flood victims under scrutiny

Rs.235.72 crore credited to 1.44 lakh victims' bank accounts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR district In-charge Collector Dr Nidhi Meena stated that the State government has credited compensation to the tune of Rs.235.72 crore to the bank accounts of 1.44 lakh flood victims. However, as many as 2,478 applications are under scrutiny. After completing the verification process, the compensation will be credited to their bank accounts by October 24. Flood victims need not worry as the district administration is taking all the necessary steps to pay the compensation, she added. Nidhi Meena, along with District Revenue Officer (DRO) V Srinivasa Rao, addressed the media at the Pingali Venkaiah



meeting hall on the premises of the collectorate on Tuesday. She said that the State government has paid Rs.235.72 crore to 1,44,672 people who suffered losses as a result of heavy rains and Budameru flood.

Special teams uploaded the applications and the enumer-

ation data of the victims in the PGRS Flood module under all 179 ward secretariats. Also, the victims' list was published in these ward secretariats, she said. The compensation was credited to the bank accounts that were linked with Aadhaar.

# Andhra Loyola College hosts health camp

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



A comprehensive medical camp was organised at the Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, for both staff and students as part of the institution's commitment to promoting health and well-being. The camp featured specialised dental and eye check-ups, with around 250 students taking advantage of the services offered. Additionally, approximately 50 teaching and non-teaching staff members were screened for blood pressure and diabetes.



# 10.56 kg ganja seized at Visakhapatnam Railway Station

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The city police seized 10.56 kg of ganja at the Visakhapatnam railway station on Monday, thanks to the assistance of a trained narcotic sniffer dog. The operation was part of an ongoing initiative led by City Police Commissioner Dr Shankhabrata Bagchi, aimed at curbing the smuggling and distribution of narcotics in the city. Under the Commissioner's orders, dog squad teams have been conducting regular checks at high-risk areas, including the RTC complex, railway station, beach road, and other strategic locations.

"The detection of such a large quantity of ganja highlights the effectiveness of our narcotic detection efforts," said Dr Bagchi. "We are committed to eradicating the smuggling of illegal substances in Visakhapatnam, and our specially trained teams, including the dog squad, are a critical part of this mission."

During one of these routine inspections at the railway station, a sniffer dog from the

city's dog squad identified the presence of ganja, leading to the seizure of over 10 kg of the illegal substance. The cannabis was immediately handed over to the railway police for further investigation and legal action. "We congratulate the dog squad and the police team involved in the operation for their exemplary work," added Dr Bagchi. "Their dedication and precision have once again proven instrumental in our anti-narcotics drive."

In a bid to further bolster the fight against narcotics, the Police Department, in cooperation with the District Collector and the GVMC Commissioner, has taken steps to enhance the capabilities of its canine unit. Eight sniffer dogs have been sent to the canine training centre for specialised narcotic detection training. "The collaboration between law enforcement agencies and the training of additional sniffer dogs will ensure that we remain a step ahead of those attempting to traffic illegal substances in the city," stated Dr. Bagchi.

# 'Develop new entrepreneurs with Central funds'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



MP Kesineni Sivanath and MLA Sriram Rajagopal show the APSSDC Job Calendar after unveiling it Vijayawada on Tuesday

MP Kesineni Sivanath, alias Chinni, has emphasised the need to promote entrepreneurship through the initiative 'One Family - One Industrialist' with Central funding, particularly focusing on the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. He stressed the importance of raising awareness about various government schemes that are designed to assist and develop new entrepreneurs. The MP, along with Jaggaiahpet MLA Sriram Rajagopal (Tataiah), held a

meeting with MSME officials from NTR district at NTR Bhavan in Gurunanak Colony on Tuesday. During this meeting, they unveiled the Job Calendar of the AP State Skill Development Corporation for 2024-25.

Following the unveiling of the job calendar, Chinni led a review meeting focusing on the implementation of Central MSME schemes in the Jaggaiahpet, Tiruvuru, Mylavaram, Nandigama, and Vijayawada Assembly constituencies. During his address, Chinni urged the MSME Department to conduct aware-

ness campaigns and programmes across all constituencies. He suggested that successful entrepreneurs who have benefited from MSME schemes be invited to these events to share their experiences, which can serve as practical examples for new entrepreneurs. He also encouraged the officials to guide aspiring entrepreneurs on how to start their own businesses, manage product marketing, secure bank loans, and understand other relevant details. Chinni instructed the MSME officials to organise an awareness campaign in Vijayawada next month.

# 'Swachh Sundara Parvathipuram': Transforming town with art

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

In a bid to revitalise and beautify the town, the district administration has launched a comprehensive project titled 'Swachh Sundara Parvathipuram'. The initiative focuses on enhancing the beauty of the town while addressing key areas with poor sanitation.

The project involves identifying specific locations where sanitation is substandard and beautifying them with art installations and paintings. The walls across town will feature art that conveys meaningful messages to the public on various social issues. To achieve this, the administration plans to collaborate with local drawing and craft teachers who will contribute to creating artwork



Project involves identifying locations where sanitation is substandard and beautifying them with art installations and paintings

at designated locations. The beautification process has already begun at the Collectorate, where artistic installations are being set up on the walls. Additionally, the project extends to anganwadi centres, with plans to enhance their appeal, making them more attractive to chil-

dren. District Collector A. Shyam Prasad emphasised that increasing footfall at these centres would encourage better access to nutritious food, learning opportunities, and interest in education.

Speaking at a meeting with key officials, including District Educational Officer Gara

Pagadamma and District Women and Child Welfare Officer MN Rani, Shyam Prasad elaborated on the vision for Swachh Sundara Parvathipuram. He called upon the officials to support the beautification efforts and use locally available materials like waste plastic, tyres, and bamboo sticks.

# Builders concerned over cancellation of TDR bonds

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Builders in Visakhapatnam have voiced serious concerns following the recent cancellation of 29 Tanuku Transferable Development Rights (TDR) bonds by the newly-formed government. During a press conference here on Tuesday, the builders expressed their distress over the implications of this decision for their ongoing projects and the broader construction industry.

The bonds, initially issued by the Tanuku Municipal Commissioner in 2021-2022, were purchased by builders through the official government portal and were intended for use in various development projects. However, complications arose when the previous government blocked the bonds, alleging violations and

Bonds were initially issued by the Tanuku Municipal Commissioner in 2021-2022



potential fraud in their issuance. Consequently, the Commissioner responsible for the bonds was suspended. "Builders have found themselves in an unforeseen financial predicament due to this sit-

uation," said P Rajasekhar, president of NAREDCO Visakhapatnam. "We had to seek legal recourse and approached the High Court of Andhra Pradesh." After a protracted 21-month

legal battle, the High Court ordered a comprehensive inquiry into the matter. However, delays caused by the recent general elections have hindered progress, leaving builders in limbo. On October 14, the new government issued an order cancelling all 29 Tanuku TDR bonds, much to the dismay of the construction sector.

"This decision will lead to devastating financial losses, affecting approximately 800 real estate projects across the State," N Sridhar, chairman, Madhurawada Apartment Builders Association (MABA) warned. "The construction industry is already facing numerous challenges, and this unexpected turn of events has plunged us into a severe financial crisis."

## Step up vigilance against cybercrime: DIG

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Visakhapatnam Range DIG Gopinath Jatti addressed residents at Srikakulam town centre, emphasising the pressing need for vigilance against cyber crimes. During his speech, he urged the public to adopt preventive measures to protect themselves from the increasing threat posed by cybercriminals.



safe, DIG Jatti outlined 10 common tricks employed by cyber scammers. He cautioned against the TRAI Phone Scam, where fraudsters impersonate TRAI officials, falsely claiming that a person's mobile number is involved in illegal activities. "Remember, TRAI does not suspend services; that responsibility lies with telecom companies," he clarified.

"Cyber crime is a growing concern that affects individuals across all age groups, but we must pay special attention to the vulnerabilities of our middle-aged and elderly population," stated DIG Jatti. He stressed the importance of awareness regarding common scams and the tactics used by cyber fraudsters to exploit unsuspecting victims.

Another tactic discussed was the Parcel Stuck in Customs scam, where cyber fraudsters assert that a parcel contains illegal materials and demand payment. "Do not engage with such calls; report them to the authorities," Jatti advised. He also highlighted the Digital Arrest scam, where impersonators threaten victims with digital arrest or online interrogation.

To aid the public in staying



## Heavy rains wreak havoc in Anantapur, Sri Satya Sai dists

### Residential colonies, fields inundated

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Heavy rainfall has caused widespread flooding in Anantapur and Sri Satya Sai districts, leaving several residential colonies and agricultural fields submerged.

The downpour, which began on Monday night, triggered heavy floods in local rivulets and streams. Anantapur, often known for its droughts, saw several residential areas inundated as breaches developed in irrigation tanks.

In Raptadu constituency, the Kanaganapalli irrigation tank breached, flooding hundreds of acres of farmland. The Pandameru rivulet also swelled, flooding multiple colonies in Anantapur city, including Ambedkar Colony, Kalakalalu Colony, Indiramma Colony, and Jagananna Colony,

District Collector Vinod Kumar, Joint Collector Shiva Narayana Sharma, and Dharmavaram TDP in-charge Paritala Sriram visited affected areas, arranging food and drinking water for the flood victims.

with water levels rising to over five feet in some areas.

District Collector Vinod Kumar, Joint Collector Shiva Narayana Sharma, and Dharmavaram TDP in-charge Paritala Sriram visited affected areas, arranging food and drinking water for the flood victims. In Kanekal mandal, the Hanakanhal stream overflowed, cutting off road connectivity to Sollapuram and Beluguppa due to flooding.

Kalyandurg town was battered by five hours of heavy rain, accompanied by thunder

and lightning, recording 89.4 mm of rainfall. Low-lying areas were heavily affected, with roads, including the one leading to the Saibaba temple, severely damaged. Normal life was thrown out of gear in Ramagiri, Chenna Kottapalli, and Kanaganapalli mandals, as heavy rain continued to pound the region. A house collapsed in Pala Venkatapuram village of Brahmasamudram mandal, though no casualties were reported. Housing department officials inspected the site, while MLA Paritala Sunita vis-

ited flood-affected areas and supervised relief efforts.

Several roads, including Ramagiri-NS Gate, Muttava kuntla-Kanaganapalli, and Tagarakunta-Kanaganapalli, were submerged under three to five feet of water, cutting off access to villages. In Sri Satya Sai district, the Chitravati River swelled, with floodwaters overflowing bridges and severing road connectivity between Rayala Vari Palli and Kovala Guttapalli villages.

Horticulture crops, including maize, groundnut, tomato, betel leaf, onion, papaya, and chilli, were submerged in floodwaters across the two districts. Farmers expressed concern that their crops could be damaged beyond recovery if the water does not recede within a day, urging the government for assistance.

## Development, welfare prioritised: Ministers

PNS ■ ONGOLE



Ministers Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy and Gottipari Ravi Kumar reiterated that the government is giving priority to carrying out development works, and at the same time, prioritised the implementation of welfare schemes. The general body meeting of Prakasam district Zilla Parishad was held here on Tuesday and presided over by ZP chairperson Buchepalli Venkayamma.

Addressing the meeting, Social Welfare Department Dr Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy said that the implementation of the programmes by the District Water Management Corporation, District Rural Development Corporation, Agriculture and Horticulture Department, Medical Health Department, Housing Construction Department and Electricity Department were discussed in the ZP meeting.

The Minister said that the medical and health department officials were ordered to take necessary precautions to prevent the outbreak of contagious diseases in the district. Also regarding the agriculture department, instructions were given to the officials of the agriculture department to prepare the details of the crops lost due to heavy rains at the field level and to give advice and suggestions to the farmers on

saving their crops and using of the required fertilizers, the minister stated.

Minister Bala Veeranjanya Swamy revealed that after reviewing the medical and health departments, the officials were directed to take measures to increase the delivery rate in government hospitals and provide better medical services.

The Minister directed the health officials to take steps to ensure that blood is supplied by the private blood banks to the government hospitals to save the patients. He instructed the authorities to undertake the necessary work through the employment guarantee scheme with the aim of developing the villages.

"During the last four months, Rs 200 crore worth of CC roads, drainage canals and cattle sheds have been constructed in the district," the Minister disclosed. Minister for Energy Gottipari Ravi Kumar said ZP members including MLAs, MLCs and ZPTCs had raised many issues in the ZP meeting and steps would be taken to address the issues.

District Collector A Thameem Ansariya, MLAs D Janardhan Rao, Dr Mukku Narasimha Reddy, Kandula Narayana Reddy, E Nageswara Rao, B Shiva Prasad Reddy also raised various issues including agriculture and urged to take steps to provide fertilizers to the farmers.

## Steps taken to purchase paddy from farmers: Nadendla

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar has clarified that all necessary steps have been taken to purchase paddy produce from farmers for the kharif season and to disburse their payments promptly.



that steps are in place to purchase paddy from farmers and that the payment will be credited to their bank accounts within 48 hours. The government will also cover the costs of gunny bags and transport charges for purchasing the paddy produce from farmers, the Minister confirmed. He alleged that the Rythu Bharosa Kendras, established at a cost of 3,300 crore by the previous YSRCP government, have not proven beneficial to the farmers.

The Civil Supplies Minister inaugurated the paddy purchase centre at Chebrolu in Unguturu mandal on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, Manohar noted that the previous YSRCP government had failed to pay ₹1,674 crore to farmers for the paddy purchased by the government, a matter that has now been addressed by the incumbent government. He assured

## Implement NREGA efficiently: DC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has instructed officials to implement the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) effectively in the district to curb the exodus of workers.

The Collector convened a meeting on NREGA with the District Water Management Agency (DWMA) and Mandal Panchayat Development Officers (MPDOs) on Tuesday to review the progress of the programme. During the meeting, Collector Nagarani emphasized the target of creating 42 lakh working days for the financial year 2024-25, noting that 30,48,005 working days have already been provided.



"West Godavari district currently ranks eighth in the state, achieving 72.57 per cent in the implementation of NREGA programmes," she highlighted. She also pointed out that Palakollu Mandal has provided the highest number of working days at 91.94 per cent, while Veeravasaram Mandal has the

lowest at 64.76 per cent. "More attention is needed in the backward zones to increase the number of working days," she added.

The Collector suggested that trenching work around coconut and mango trees should be undertaken by NREGA workers, allowing farmers to benefit from this opportunity.

## Breakthrough: 4 held in major robbery case

PNS ■ BAPATLA

The police have made a breakthrough in the sensational robbery of a gold jewellery shop owner by arresting four individuals and recovering Rs 39 lakh.

At a press conference held here on Tuesday, Superintendent of Police Tushar Dudi announced that the police had successfully unravelled the robbery, arresting the four culprits and seizing the stolen money as well as a vehicle.

The victim, Tallam Swaroam Kumar, owns a jewellery shop in Guntur city. On October 18, he was travelling to Chennai along with his friend and driver, Srinivasa Rao, with Rs 39,50,000 to purchase gold.



While on the Guntur-Ongole NH 16 on October 19, around 1 PM, four individuals waylaid their vehicle at the Korisapadu

Flyover Bridge. The robbers forcibly pulled him out of the vehicle and snatched the bag containing Rs

39,50,000, making off with the money. They also threatened to kill the gold trader if he reported the incident to anyone. Following this, the victim complained to the Medarametla police station, leading to the registration of case Cr. No.87/2024 under sections 126(2), 309(4) read with 3(5) of the BNS.

SP Tushar Dudi took the robbery as a challenge and formed four special teams led by DSP P Jagadish and CIs D Mallikharjun Rao and P Pramaiah. Using advanced technology, collecting clues from the toll gate, and examining CCTV footage, the police were able to identify the robbers. The arrests were made on

October 21 at Medarametla Y Junction, resulting in the recovery of Rs 39 lakh and the vehicle. SP Dudi identified the robbers as Dhanikonda Venkanna Swamy, Pagadala Mahesh, Tantu Karthik, and Puri Shiva Srinivasa Rao. One of the suspects, D. Venkanna Swamy, has been involved in multiple criminal cases in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, while T. Karthik has a record of an offence in the Chillakallu police station limits in Andhra Pradesh.

The SP commended the police team for apprehending the robbers within hours and recovering the stolen money, announcing rewards for their swift action.

## Demand to establish university in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The All-India Student Federation (AISF), Vijayawada city committee, held a meeting at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday, where they raised several demands for the TDP-led NDA government. The AISF urged the government to prioritise strengthening the education sector and to address the vari-

ous challenges faced by students. A key demand from the meeting was raised on the establishment of a university in Vijayawada, which the AISF leaders believed would significantly benefit the local student community and enhance educational opportunities in the region. The Krishna University was set up in Machilipatnam in the erstwhile Krishna district before

the bifurcation of districts, and currently, the NTR district has no university, the meeting opined.

AISF former State president G Koteswara Rao was chief guest and gave appropriate suggestions to the leaders to hold struggles on students and educational institutions issues. He said that the AISF leaders should visit every school and college in Vijayawada and

inquire students about their issues and hold agitations until those are resolved. Further, he suggested the leaders focus on the establishment of a new university in Vijayawada.

AISF state treasurer M Sai Kumar, Vijayawada city president Ranjith, secretary Jagadish, leaders Abhishek, Suresh, Kartik, Karimullah and others were present.



Public cautioned about cybercrimes

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police A.R. Damodhar has urged the residents of the district to remain vigilant against cybercrimes that are being conducted under the guise of 'Human Rights'. In a statement issued here on Tuesday, the SP advised the public to be alert for calls from individuals posing as officials from the National or State Human Rights Commissions and their affiliates.

"Some fraudsters create fake websites, counterfeit ID cards, and social media groups in the name of human rights to collect personal information and bank account details from individuals. They call and demand money to resolve cases," the SP explained. These fraudsters often threaten people by claiming they have committed an offence and that a case has been registered against them, demanding money to ensure they can escape legal repercussions, the SP added, urging the public to be highly cautious of such scammers.

## Agrigold customers, agents to stage protest on Oct 28

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Agrigold Customers and Agents Welfare Association is planning to organise a large-scale protest, termed 'Maha Vignapana Deeksha', at Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on October 28. The protest aims to urge the State government to address the long-standing grievances of Agrigold victims. Muppalla Nageswara Rao, the honorary president, and BV Chandrasekhar, deputy general secretary of the association, announced this during a press conference at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Monday.

They highlighted that Agrigold customers and agents have been seeking justice for over a decade, with thousands of families suffering due to the company's fraudulent activities. The previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government made a payment of Rs. 906 crore to some victims, but ultimately failed to provide comprehensive relief, which they believe contributed to their loss in the elections.

Nageswara Rao and Chandrasekhar also recalled that YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had promised compensation of Rs. 10 lakh to the families of deceased victims and Rs. 20,000 to depositors within six months of taking



Agrigold Customers and Agents Welfare Association honorary president Muppalla Nageswara Rao addressing the press conference at the Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Monday

office. However, they lamented that these promises were not fulfilled, leaving the victims' grievances unaddressed. The association reminded that the coalition government had pledged in its election manifesto to resolve the issue by selling Agrigold's assets.

Recently, the association submitted a petition to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, stressing the need for a resolution to the Agrigold issue. Acknowledging the current financial challenges faced by the State, they refrained from demanding immediate funds. Instead, they emphasised the importance of safeguarding Agrigold's assets, expediting the court case, and offering support to the most vulnerable victims. Additionally, they requested the recovery of Rs. 500 crore that was allegedly col-

lected under the name of 'Agriparivar' and urged for a quick resolution of the ongoing case in the Eluru court.

The association leaders criticised the ongoing sale of Agrigold's assets, including benami properties, and urged the government to secure these assets through legal attachment and maintain them under the State's control. They suggested that converting the vast real estate land into smaller plots for auction could potentially generate double the funds, benefiting both the government and the affected victims.

They also requested the formation of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) with competent officials to travel across the State, collecting grievances from victims directly, to ensure a more effective resolution.

## Cong MLC Jeevan's aide murdered

### Killer makes reel in PS before surrendering

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Congress leader and MLC T Jeevan Reddy's aide Maru Ganga Reddy (58) was murdered on Tuesday morning, with the killer, Santhosh, first hitting his two-wheeler and later stabbing him 20 times along with others. Ganga Reddy died while being taken him to the hospital by local people.



Jeevan Reddy rushed to the spot on coming to know of the incident and later saw the body of Ganga Reddy in the government hospital. He immediately sat on dharna on the road demanding the government to "catch the killer and punish him severely".

Speaking to media persons later, Jeevan Reddy observed: "Murder of Ganga Reddy is equal to killing me". The police diverted traffic via the by-pass road to prevent a flare-up of the incident in view of the MLC's dharna.

When government whip Adhuri Laxman came to the dharna place, Jeevan Reddy, expressing his anger at the Congress party, remarked: "Salute to you and your Congress party. Leave us at least now. We bore all insults mentally all these days and

now they are killing us by attacking physically. Why should we bear all these things? I will serve the people by setting up a voluntary organization".

When TPCC chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud reached him over phone, Jeevan Reddy snapped: "Tell me, why I should continue in the party. Kindly forgive me. I will not continue in the party". He then lamented, saying the Congress party had given him "a good gift" for having striven for four decades in the organization. Jeevan Reddy then disconnected the phone call of TPCC president abruptly.

ACROSS THE STATES



**Delhi LG flags toxic froth in Yamuna, asks for accountability**

Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on Tuesday shared pictures of toxic froth in Yamuna, saying instead of making excuses and accusations on media, authorities should focus on providing relief to the city's residents. Saxena, in a post on X, also asked for accountability, saying truth cannot be suppressed, as he apparently hit out at the AAP-led Delhi government "Who is responsible? The truth has a very bad habit; it cannot be suppressed," the LG said. Sharing images of froth and garbage in the river, he said, "Instead of making accusations, allegations, and excuses on media or social platforms, it would be better to provide relief to the people of Delhi, especially Chhath worshippers and fasting people from this worsening situation." "I expect concrete steps for redressal," he added.



**SC permits Teesta to travel to Amsterdam**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday permitted activist Teesta Setalvad to travel between November 14 and November 24 to attend the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam. Setalvad had received an invitation from the organisers to attend the festival in her capacity as producer of the documentary film Cycle Mahesh. A bench of Justices B R Gavi and K V Viswanathan allowed the plea filed by Setalvad and directed her to file an undertaking before it that she would return to India as scheduled and face trial. "The applicant is, therefore, permitted to travel to Amsterdam, Netherlands, for a period of 11 days from November 14, 2024 to November 24, 2024. The applicant's passport be returned to her so that she can travel abroad," the bench held. The top court ordered Setalvad to furnish a solvent surety or a cash surety or a surety in the nature of fixed deposit receipt in the sum of Rs 10 lakh to the satisfaction of the sessions court, Bhadra, Ahmedabad.



**Police bust fake court in Gujarat; conman arrested**

Police have uncovered a nefarious scheme orchestrated by a man masquerading as a judge in his own fake tribunal and passing 'judgements' since 2019 especially in land deals in Gandhinagar area. Morris Samuel Christian, since arrested, is accused of orchestrating a deception that fooled many into believing they were in a legitimate court. Police said Christian, the mastermind behind this elaborate ruse, wielded his gavel to pass judgments in favour of his clients, all within the fabricated walls of his office. The bogus tribunal, reminiscent of a real courtroom, worked undetected for years, with its roots tracing back to as early as 2019. Initial probe suggested that Christian preyed on unsuspecting individuals entangled in land disputes, promising swift resolutions in exchange for hefty fees.

**Need for optimal use of AI to enhance efficiency: Jitendra**



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh on Tuesday emphasised on the need for the optimal use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in government working to enhance efficiency and productivity. Speaking at a special session on AI organised for the staff of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) at South Block here, he highlighted the critical role AI can play in revolutionising governance, streamlining operations and improving decision-making processes across various government departments.

The session, which saw participation from officers across all levels — from Section Officers to the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Union Minister — was a unique demonstration of breaking hierarchical barriers within the PMO, with officials learning the same advanced concepts alongside each other, according to an official statement.



**BRICS emerged as important platform for dialogue: PM**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India values close cooperation within BRICS which has emerged as an important platform for dialogue and discussion on a range of key issues concerning global developmental agenda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday. Modi made comments in a statement before embarking on a two-day visit to the Russian city of Kazan to attend the 16th summit of the BRICS grouping. "The expansion of BRICS with the addition of new members last year has added to its inclusivity and agenda for the global good," he said. Being hosted by Russia, the summit is being seen as an attempt by non-Western powers to project their clout amid the conflict in Ukraine and the escalating situation in West Asia. Modi is set hold a series of bilateral meetings including with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the margins of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa). It will be the first summit of the grouping

after it was expanded at its summit in Johannesburg last year. "India values the close cooperation within BRICS which has emerged as an important platform for dialogue and discussion on issues concerning the global developmental agenda, reformed multilateralism, climate change, economic cooperation, building resilient supply chains, promoting cultural and people to people connect, among others," Modi said in his departure statement.

**Russian Krishna devotees welcome PM with bhajan in Kazan**

PNS ■ KAZAN (RUSSIA)

A Sanskrit welcome song, a Russian dance and Krishna Bhajan by devotees of ISKCON welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he reached here for the BRICS Summit on Tuesday. At the Hotel Korston, Modi was greeted by the Indian diaspora, holding the Indian tricolour and chanting slogans. Many were seen clicking selfies with their mobile phones. As the prime minister shook hands with some of them, they sang a cheerful welcome song in Sanskrit. A team of Russian artists, dressed in traditional Indian attire, presented a Russian dance as Modi watched it with keen interest.



Legislative Drafting Training Workshop' organised for the officials of the assembly secretariat.

**Lack of clarity in laws will lead to judicial intervention: Shah**

PNS ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday stressed the need for clarity in laws, stating that judiciary can intervene only when people responsible for drafting legislations leave "grey areas". He was addressing the Gujarat legislative assembly here as part of a day-long



Speakers were present. Citing the Modi government's move of abrogating Article 370, he said, "When the Article was drafted, it was clearly written that it is a temporary provision of the Constitution which can be removed through an amendment that can be passed through a simple majority in Parliament."

**Trying to restore trust, reassure each other**

**Army Chief on patrolling pact with China**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will look at disengagement and de-escalation of the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh after restoration of the status quo of April 2020, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi said on Tuesday, a day after New Delhi announced striking an agreement with Beijing to end the over four-year border row in the region.



The announcement came ahead of a likely meeting between Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Russian city of Kazan on Wednesday on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

"As far as we are concerned, we want to go back to the status quo of April 2020. Thereafter, we will be looking at disengagement, de-escalation and normal management of the LAC," he said at an interactive session.

In his first comment on the pact on patrolling along the contested frontier, Gen Dwivedi said the Indian military is trying to restore "trust" and both sides will have to "reassure each other" to achieve this objective.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Monday announced India and China reached an agreement on patrolling along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, in a major breakthrough in ending the over four-year military standoff.

**China confirms agreement**

PNS ■ BEIJING

China on Tuesday confirmed that it has reached an agreement with India to end the standoff between the two armies in eastern Ladakh. "Over a recent period of time, China and India have kept close communication through diplomatic and military channels on issues related to the China-India border," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here. Lin was asked for a response to Monday's Indian announcement about reaching an agreement to end the over four-year long military standoff. Now, the two sides have reached a resolution on the "relevant matters," he said.

**People can't be made to consume expired food products: HC**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday expressed concerns over the sale of expired food products that are reintroduced in the markets after repackaging and re-branding with new expiry dates, and said that people cannot be made to consume "adulterated" food items. The high court said no one



can be allowed to sell expired items and this cannot be a business. "People cannot be having adulterated food in Delhi. Give us suggestions on how this can be tackled," a bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said.

The bench was hearing a public interest litigation which was initiated on its own after several such instances of expired products being repackaged with new expiry dates came to light.



**Need for closer collaboration between India, Singapore: Murmu**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said there is a need for closer collaboration between research and development teams of India and Singapore to benefit from the latest expertise and technological advancements.

the South East Asian country and the conclusion of the 2nd round of India-Singapore ministerial roundtable meeting.

Murmu was happy to note that the bilateral relationship has been elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership, according to a statement by the President's office.

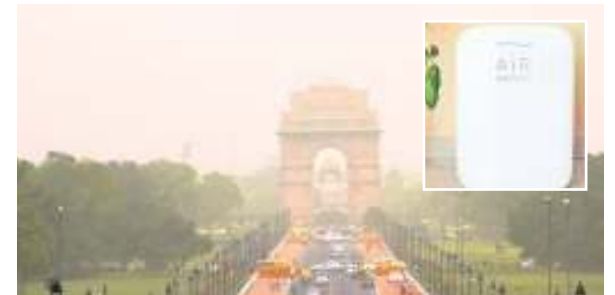
Welcoming Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen, who had called on the President at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, she said the two countries have a rich history of bilateral cooperation, which has been further boosted by the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to

She also noted the need for closer collaboration between defence research and development teams of both countries, to benefit from the latest expertise and technological advancements in the defence domain, the statement said.

**Delhi sees surge in sale of air purifiers as pollution levels worsen**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With rising air pollution in Delhi, the city is seeing a surge in the sale of air purifiers and masks, according to several traders and pharmacists.



A thick layer of smog covered Delhi on Tuesday morning, as the city's air quality category, with 27 monitoring stations reporting alarming levels, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

In response to the worsening air quality, the Centre has implemented stage two of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), introducing several restrictions.

As levels of PM10 -- small particles that can enter the lungs and affect heart and lung health -- rise, many residents are expressing concern for their health and that of family members with respiratory issues.

traders report a considerable increase in the sale of air purifiers, as people seek to support a healthier lifestyle.

"Many customers are now actively inquiring about the quality and prices of air purifiers at our store, especially after Dussehra," said Anju, a salesperson at Chroma. "In previous months, customers would ask about a variety of products, but now most are focused on air purifiers."

People are buying air purifiers not only for their homes but also for their offices. According to Vijendre

Mohan, owner of the Air India Expert, demand for air purifiers has surged this year compared to the previous year.

"We've seen over a 70 per cent increase in sales for home air purifiers, while sales in workplaces have surged by 200 percent," Mohan told PTI. "People are increasingly worried about the health effects of polluted air, which is driving this sudden spike in purchases," he explained.

This surge in sales is largely due to growing concerns about air quality amid rising pollution levels, he added.

**Army man held for 'Drishyam' style murder**

PNS ■ NAGPUR

An Army jawan has been arrested by Nagpur Police for allegedly killing his girlfriend and covering her body with cement after burying her, a chilling crime that mirrors a plot from the film Drishyam, an official said on Tuesday.



The 32-year-old victim's disappearance on August 28 marked the beginning of the investigation that unearthed betrayal, deceit, and a horrifying crime. "The case bears a resemblance to the movie Drishyam where the accused meticulously planned and executed the murder," the police official added.

The prima facie motive behind the crime is the romantic relationship turning sour due to opposition by the accused's family to their marriage, police said.

The accused individual, identified as Ajay Wankhede (33), is a resident of Kailash Nagar area in Nagpur who is stationed in Nagaland.

According to investigators, Wankhede had met Jyotsna Aakre, a divorcee, through a marriage portal and their friendship soon blossomed

into a romantic relationship. However, things took a turn for worse after Wankhede's family opposed their union and married him off with another woman, the official said.

Wankhede subsequently started ignoring Aakre. He might have planned the murder to get rid of her, the official added.

**"The case bears a resemblance to the movie Drishyam where the accused meticulously planned and executed the murder," the police official added**

with cement to conceal the crime, the official informed.

After Wankhede stopped answering Aakre's phone calls, she began searching for him and managed to contact a close friend of his, who disclosed his (Wankhede's) whereabouts. The friend also conveyed to Wankhede that Aakre was looking for him, police said.

"Alarmed by the situation, Wankhede called Aakre using his mother's mobile phone and invited her to meet on Wardha Road on August 28," the official said.

Aakre informed her family that she was staying with a friend that day and would return home after finishing her duties the next day. She was employed with an automobile shop.

"Wankhede and Aakre met in the Wardha Road area and checked into a hotel. Later, they

left the hotel and drove to a nearby toll plaza, where he offered her a drink laced with a sedative," the official said.

After Aakre fell unconscious, Wankhede strangled her to death and drove to a secluded area, where he dug a pit at night, dumped her body, and covered it with cement. Later, he threw the mobile phone of Aakre in a truck passing through Wardha road, according to police.

When Aakre didn't return home, her family reported her missing to the Beltarodi police on August 29. An investigation was launched, and a case of kidnapping was registered on September 17.

During the investigation, police checked the call detail records and found regular phone calls between Wankhede and Aakre.



**POLICE ENCOUNTERS IN ASSAM**

**SC terms issue 'very serious', seeks details**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday termed "very serious" the issue pertaining to 171 police encounters in Assam from May 2021 to August 2022 and sought details, including about the probe conducted in these matters.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing a plea challenging a January 2023 order of the Gauhati High Court which had dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) raising the issue concerning these encounters by Assam Police.

In its order, the high court had referred to an affidavit filed before it by the Assam government which said 171 incidents had taken place from May 2021 till August 2022 in which 56 people died, including four in custody, and 145 were injured.

During the hearing on Tuesday, the apex court observed, It is a very, very serious issue.



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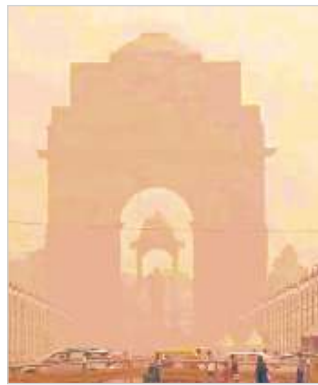
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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Breathless in Delhi

Delhi's air quality has once again plunged into the 'Very Poor' category, marking the beginning of the dreaded annual pollution season

As the Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 312 on October 21, 2024, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) announced the activation of Stage 2 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR, which came into effect from October 22. The city is bracing for several days of toxic air, with forecasts indicating that the AQI will remain in the 'Very Poor' range due to unfavourable climatic and meteorological conditions, such as calm winds and stagnant air. Over the years, Delhi has consistently struggled with air quality issues, particularly during the winter months when pollution levels spike to alarming levels. The problem intensifies due to a combination of factors including the burning of crop stubble in neighbouring states, construction dust, vehicular emissions and industrial activities. In previous years, the city witnessed severe smog days that not only disrupted daily life but also had long-lasting effects on public health. Efforts to curb pollution have included initiatives such as the implementation of the GRAP, which consists of a set of emergency measures that are triggered based on the severity of air quality. These measures have previously helped prevent air quality from worsening further, but the results have been mixed. While temporary improvements have been achieved, long-term solutions remain elusive. The annual nature of the problem indicates that past measures, though helpful, have not addressed the root causes effectively.



A significant contributor to Delhi's poor air quality is the burning of crop residue in neighbouring states like Punjab and Haryana. Despite bans and incentives for alternative disposal methods, stubble burning remains a widespread practice due to economic and logistical challenges faced by farmers. Besides this vehicular emission and construction activities adds to the pollution. With the invocation of GRAP Stage 2, a range of measures will be implemented to tackle the escalating pollution levels: To reduce dust on roads, mechanical sweeping and water sprinkling will be conducted daily on identified roads. Besides, strict enforcement of dust control measures at construction and demolition sites will be carried out. The use of diesel generator sets will be discouraged, except for essential services. These actions will supplement the Stage 1 measures that have been in place since October 15, which include banning garbage burning, banning coal and firewood usage in hotels and restaurants, and imposing restrictions on brick kilns. Indeed, the 'Very Poor' air quality has serious implications for the health and wellbeing of Delhi's residents. While GRAP provides a framework for emergency measures, long-term strategies are needed to bring about lasting improvements in air quality. Without a comprehensive approach that combines policy interventions, technological innovations, and behavioural changes, the cycle of pollution will continue to haunt the city each year. Till that happens, Delhiites will have yet another season to breathe the polluted air.

For all his matching vitriol, boorishness (remember, 'childless cat ladies') and Oorah-style brouhaha as a former Marine, JD Vance was once stoutly anti-Trump. Vance had once declared himself as a 'never-Trump guy' and called Trump 'reprehensible' and an 'idiot'. Vance then had the clarity to articulate the reason for his non-support of Trump by insisting, "The reason, ultimately, that I am not... is because I think that (Trump) is the most raw expression of a massive finger pointed at other people." In the 2016 US Presidential elections, Vance had rationalised Trump's authoritarian, illiberal and intolerant ways by slamming, "back and forth between thinking Trump is a cynical a-hole like Nixon who wouldn't be that bad (and might even prove useful) or that he's America's Hitler!". For all his matching vitriol, boorishness (remember, 'childless cat ladies') and Oorah-style brouhaha as a former Marine, JD Vance was once stoutly anti-Trump. Vance had once declared himself as a 'never-Trump guy' and called Trump 'reprehensible' and an 'idiot'. He was quick to 'take down' uncomfortable views that he had expressed about Trump like the one he had put about the 'Access Hollywood' tape where

# Trump tries hard to win the second term

The traits Trump exhibits on the golf course serve as a metaphor for his approach to life and politics: a willingness to bend the rules and win at any cost



BHOPIINDER SINGH

American sportswriter Rick Reilly wrote a book called Commander in Cheat: How Golf Explains Trump, to explain Donald Trump's incorrigible ways. He alludes to Trump's self-claimed prowess in Golf and his purported handicap of 2.8 by a fawning Golf Digest by saying, "If Trump is a 2.8, Queen Elizabeth is a pole vaulter."

However, perhaps the most damning reality check for Trump is the fact that both his 'wingman' (former and current) i.e., Vice President Mike Pence and his current running mate, JD Vance, would have the maximum access to Trump and know him as a person, have been critical - even if expediency forces Vance to conveniently renege from his earlier views and for Pence says a lot with his deafening silence and refusal to endorse his former boss's candidature.

For all his matching vitriol, boorishness (remember, 'childless cat ladies') and Oorah-style brouhaha as a former Marine, JD Vance was once stoutly anti-Trump. Vance had once declared himself as a 'never-Trump guy' and called Trump 'reprehensible' and an 'idiot'. Vance then had the clarity to articulate the reason for his non-support of Trump by insisting, "The reason, ultimately, that I am not... is because I think that (Trump) is the most raw expression of a massive finger pointed at other people."

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Trump had shockingly claimed that fame had enabled him to grope women! Then Vance had heeded to his moral conscience as a practising Christian and lamented, "Fellow Christians, everyone is watching us when we apologize for this man. Lord help us". But all his conscience came to nought at the altar of political ambition as Vance meekly retracted later, "I've been very open that I did say those critical things and I regret them, and I regret being wrong about the guy". With that, everything was supposedly forgotten, and Vance now 'presumably' sees Trump as a paragon of Christian values, morality, and dignity that America needs for the future! Meanwhile, the elephant in the room who says a lot by not speaking at all is former Vice President Mike Pence - once the most devout and virtuous of Christians who was earlier the most loyal confidante of Trump. Presumably, the die-hard Republican had put up with all of Trump's crassness in the silent hope that the Republican Presidency would set things right with conservative and far-right policies, as any committed Republican would have hoped. Much as he remained loyal to the bitter end, Pence did finally

TODAY, THE FORGOTTEN IMAGE OF PENCE IS REFLECTIVE OF THE CONUNDRUM THAT MANY COMMITTED REPUBLICANS FACE IN TRUMP'S CANDIDATURE - HE REFUSES TO SUPPORT TRUMP AFTER "ALL THAT HE HAS DONE" AND CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO ENDORSE A PARTISAN RIVAL, KAMALA HARRIS, EITHER

ly put fealty to the Constitution above the unreasonable demands of a man he had once slavishly addressed as 'my President', on the fateful 6th January 2021. That Trump had showed his true character by shrugging his shoulders with a 'so what' refrain when told that Pence was at physical risk with rioters chanting 'hang Mike Pence', is a footnote in the long history of Trump's unheeded, amoral and reckless politics. Importantly, Pence had held his head, heart, and soul intact, when he played a pivotal role in saving America's democracy by confirming the electoral process and result, to the utter dismay of Trump. Pence was to later reflect philosophically, "like the Bible says, at some point, you've just got to wipe the dust off your feet and go your separate ways". In Trump's golfing world, the term 'Mulligan' (an extra stroke allowed after a poor shot) is best applicable to Pence's tumultuous tenure, unceremonious parting, and subsequent redemption with the Trump era. Today, the forgotten image of Pence is reflective of the conundrum that many committed Republicans face in Trump's candidature - he refuses to support Trump after "all that he has done" and

cannot bring himself to endorse a partisan rival, Kamala Harris, either. This lurking ambiguity in Republican ranks (or amongst the 'undecided') could tilt things decisively in the forthcoming cliffhanger of a Presidential contest. Meanwhile Trump's view of his former 'wingman' Pence is as expected of a cribbing, complaining and bitter man who vaingloriously claims that Pence lacked the 'courage' and 'stamina' in the ultimate bidding. Even Vance's own mealy-mouthed and almost forced views on Trump's "stolen mandate" in the 2020 Presidential elections are also, hardly convincing. This is situationally reflective of the 'cultlike campaign' of Donald Trump that is hoping to cross the bridge even if it tramples on imperatives that are constitutional, moral or ideological/partisan, as in Donald Trump's world, if you can cheat in Golf. You can surely cheat in life - winning at any cost is only an extension of the selfish and deceitful spirit that represents Donald Trump. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry; the views expressed are personal)

### PICTALK



People buy lanterns ahead of the Diwali festival, in Solapur

PTI

## Seeking validation: A necessity more than an add-on to our vanity

Though contentment offers a deep sense of inner peace, validation serves as a crucial motivator

Much to the contrary of the popular belief about happiness being commensurate with the degree of material success, my late father asserted that the key to happiness lies in contentment. Both views have their share of advocates, the former often relying on validation from outside, and the latter, a more philosophical contention anchored in an irrevocable sense of self-assurance. The philosophy of contentment is a long shot for many of us embroiled in making it materially big, and we tend to seek a lot of external validation to determine our core worth. Maybe, the philosophies are based on two entirely different life principles and the value of neither can be dismissed. Success has its sweet trimmings and contentment has its merit, and both may be equally coveted. What distinguishes one from the other is the element of endorsement we crave for our endeavours. Even the most self-assured person looks for acceptance and recognition, and there is no shame in it. Validation from



others is indeed required for us to stay on course, not simply for the ego boost it brings but also for the motivation it gives us to strive and march forward in making a mark in the world. The more sagacious ones among us may, however, hold a different view. I have heard several suggestions that we should not seek approval from others and instead rely solely on our inner convictions. While this notion seems noble, it underestimates a fundamental human need—to feel seen, heard, and acknowledged by those around us. To deny the significance of external validation is to ignore an essential part of the human experience. Whether we realise it or not, the approval we seek from others has a

profound impact on our self-perception and our efforts to succeed. When someone validates our work, it serves as a confirmation that we are on the right track. It is a form of recognition that can affirm our abilities, encourage us to push further, and give us the confidence to take risks that we might otherwise avoid. Take, for instance, the world of creative endeavours. Writers, artists, musicians—those of us in professions where the outcomes are subjective—often look to their audiences for validation. It's not just about ego or pride. When someone appreciates a piece of art or writing, it signals to the creator that their expression has resonated with others, creating a connection. It is this recognition that gives an artist the courage to continue crafting, to improve, and to share their innermost thoughts with the world. Without that validation, their passion might wither in isolation. In professional contexts, validation can often come in the form of promotions, awards, or even just a simple "well

done." These acknowledgements are crucial motivators. They tell us that our efforts matter, that our contributions are recognised, and that we are moving in the right direction. While self-belief is vital, external acknowledgement adds weight to that belief, making it more tangible. It confirms that our skills and efforts are seen as valuable by others, which can propel us toward even greater heights. Furthermore, seeking validation is not just about personal gain—it also creates a cycle of mutual encouragement. When we validate others, we lift them, creating a supportive environment where everyone's contributions are acknowledged. It doesn't just boost their morale; it strengthens their commitment to the work they're doing. Of course, we must also be wary of relying solely on external validation. The danger lies in over-dependence, where we begin to measure our worth only by what others say. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai; Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### MAHAYUTI GAINS EDGE

Madam — This refers to the news report, 'BJP releases 99-strong candidate list' (October 21). On one hand, alliance partners of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) are still struggling to finalise the seat-sharing formula for Maharashtra Assembly polls, the BJP has announced candidates for the majority of seats in its share. The MVA dealt a deadly blow to the Mahayuti by winning 29 out of 48 Lok Sabha polls. But, in the last 4 months, political equations have drastically changed in the state, which may help the ruling dispensation, i.e. the BJP-led Mahayuti, which was just 1.52 per cent behind the MVA in terms of Lok Sabha vote share. The Shinde government's Ladki Bahini Yojana scheme has been very popular among women voters. The Congress which won 13 seats and secured lead in 63 assembly segments in Lok Sabha polls, appeared to lose momentum after its poor performance in recent Assembly polls in Haryana and J and K. In addition, the Mahayuti has less discord over the chief ministerial face in the Assembly polls though it is going in the polls without any CM face. But the MVA is a divided house on CM face. The Shiv Sena (UBT) wants projection of former CM and party chief Uddhav Thackeray while Sharad Pawar is repeatedly hinting to support Jayant Patil as CM face. Unexpected success in Lok Sabha has also driven ambitions of the Congress high for the CM post in case of the victory of the MVA. The Manoj Jarange factor is also unlikely to be as effective as in Lok Sabha polls. Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

#### NAIDU'S BOLD MOVE

Madam — Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu is a part of the far-right government at the centre, which has been demanding for more than 10 years that 'population control policies should be implemented as soon as possible to control India's population growth. But Chandrababu Naidu is going exactly the

## Yamuna pollution on the rise



The current condition of the Yamuna River has been raising concerns for the past few days as the festive season arrives. The river is covered with a very thick layer of froth. The froth can cause major health problems, which can affect both human

health and wildlife in the areas surrounding the river Yamuna. Now, as we see, pollution levels have reached an alarming stage. Instantaneous steps should be taken in order to address the issue as soon as possible.

According to experts, the froth contains high levels of ammonia and phosphates, which can lead to respiratory and skin disorders. Recently, the Environment Minister, Gopal Rai, mentioned that a few days ago, the officials were instructed to recognise the regional sources of pollution. 13 hotspots have been chosen for this purpose, where the main local source of pollution will be identified, which was causing the area's pollution levels to rise significantly above Delhi's AQI.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

opposite and talking about bringing the opposite policy to his state. He wants to encourage those who have more children and is planning to punish those who have fewer. He said that the increasing average age of people in the state is becoming a matter of concern. Families should have at least two or more children. In the coming times, only those who have two or more children will be able to contest local body elections. The state government will soon make a law for this. Naidu further said that there are many districts in Andhra Pradesh where only elderly people are left in the villages. The fertility rate is continuously falling in the southern states. While the average fertility rate in the country is 2.1, this figure has fallen to 1.6 in the southern states. Is India really getting old? The young population is decreasing. According to the Centre's Youth in India-2022 report, by 2036, only 34.55 crore of the population of the country will be young, which is more than 47 per cent right now. Currently, 25 crore youth in the country are between 15 and 25 years of age. In the

next 15 years, it will fall even faster. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

#### IMMIGRANTS FACE UNCERTAINTY

Madam — The escalating diplomatic row between India and Canada will have the more than 4 lakh Indian students studying in Canada worried and concerned about their future. Many have sold everything they owned in India to study in Canada, which is seen as a gateway to a better future. The 20 lakh Indians will wonder what their future is going to be. The first thing the government needs to do is reassure the immigrants that their interests will be protected by the government of India. The Indian media too should stop bashing Justin Trudeau the way they have been doing. India needs also to be worried that other nations like America, the UK, Australia and New Zealand have come out in support of Canada over the plot to assassinate Canadian citizens on its soil. Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

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## FIRST COLUMN THE PATH TO TRUE GROWTH

Constant comparison overshadows cooperation, empathy and joy of life



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

All of us, whether we like it or not, have to compete from the time we are born until the time we die. Though most of us indulge in healthy competition all the time, nevertheless, one thing common to all kinds of competitions is the underlying desire to win a victory for the self or to defeat others. While competing, a person brings out their skill, ability, art, acumen, or talent to show that they are superior, stronger, better, more powerful, more skilful, more learned, or more competent than others. It is this habit of making comparisons with others that creates the competition background.

That is why we always see this subtle desire in people who are winners, to hear some words of praise about themselves or their performance. To fulfil this ultimate objective of massaging their egos, one does not care if the other person feels disappointed, depressed, defeated and even humiliated, ridiculed, or booed. This drive to be recognised as "better" than others sometimes overshadows the simple joy of participating or improving oneself. To understand this kind of behaviour, one needs to understand human psychology because the roots of comparison and competition have been sown into our minds since our childhood days. From school grades to sibling rivalries, we are conditioned early to pit our success against others' failures. Hence, they become more rigid with time. We need to understand that the core objective behind the competition is not simply the desire to win, but it is intertwined with the motive of laying aside the softer and nobler sentiments of cooperation, kindness, and gentleness, even if only for a while. In competition, one puts all energies and talents into bogging down or defeating another person, leaving them behind in the race while making a forward thrust to reach



the goal before anyone else. As the famous philosopher Schopenhauer said, "The world is a battle of will and intellect." But in this battle, one often loses sight of empathy and connectedness, which are essential for human growth.

It may also put a limit on one's spirit of giving, helping, cooperating and sacrificing. Remember! Anything small and insignificant in the beginning has the potential to grow and become big. Hence, we must not forget that even though a spark or flame of fire may be small to start with, it can reduce a big apartment with valuables to ashes if it grows into a big fire. Thus, we should be careful and vigilant, because if the whole society catches this contagion or infection of selfishness or rivalry, it may spoil the charm of life and the atmosphere in society. Some people link competition to motivation and developing an attitude toward high performance. But they fail to understand that this evil trait to defeat others, which may look like a harmless thing initially, may eventually develop into a spirit of revenge, feelings of hatred or enmity, bitter jealousy, confrontation, hostile attitudes and ugly outbursts. These effects are not limited to the individuals involved but spill over into communities, organisations and even nations. Look at global politics or corporate boardrooms, and you will see this principle at play on a massive scale. Hence, it all depends upon the emotional maturity of a person whether or not he or she is affected. Because this seed of evil, as it grows, takes the form of a big tree with many branches; so, too, does selfishness or the spirit to downgrade others to gain ascendancy for the self. It may proliferate into many evils or obnoxious habits. Hence, one must try to curtail selfishness and give up the ambition of winning by vengeance for the applause and praise of the self. Remember! The only competition that should matter to us is the one that takes place within ourselves. Hence, it is better to defeat one's inner demons first and become victorious from within to be an example for others to follow.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

# NEP 2020: A blueprint for transformative education



GURMEET SINGH

While NEP promises radical changes through holistic learning and flexible assessments, implementation challenges continue to hamper its progress

NEP 2020 was founded on the guiding principles of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. This was primarily to prepare the young ones to face the diverse national & global challenges for the present & future. The Policy aims to lead to a multi-disciplinary, holistic under-graduation syllabus, create wider choices of combinations of Subjects, Integration of Vocational Education with regular Subjects and multi-entry and multi-exit points with regular appropriate certification at various stages. The aim is to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth, economy and/or background. This should eventually lead to transformative changes which shall change the lifeline of education in our country. The emphasis is going to be on holistic education, early childhood care, flexible assessments, skill development, integration of technology, teacher training and higher education reforms. These are aimed at designing a learner-centric and inclusive education for a future-ready system.

By embracing these India is poised to provide quality education to everyone with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the 21st century. The motto has been to provide "Equitable and Inclusive Education" to ensure that no child should be denied quality education because of their socio-cultural background and 100 per cent GER is reached by 2030. Looking at all the facts presented alone, one gets a feeling that this is going to be a real game changer in the education system of our country but the reality remains that it has not taken off even after three years of its approval. The major reason is that a majority do not understand the spirit of this very meaningful policy. If implemented in letter and spirit then our country shall be comparable to the best in the world in the field of education. An in-depth analysis and exploring what lies ahead; One can divide this whole NEP-2020 into four main capsules which this Policy envisages:

**Teaching in the mother tongue or spoken language, Learn to leave, Teach to Transform and Educate to Empower.** These highlighted Capsules shall completely sum up the entire NEP-2020, which none has so far put appropriately and completely. Elaborating each one of these shall drive home all the points: **Teaching in spoken language:** The importance of this cannot be undermined. Original thinking comes only in the mother tongue (spoken languages) and this advantage has never been given to our students in any of our earlier policies. English has always been overemphasised and a wrong notion has been created that English is knowledge whereas the fact remains that it is just a language and not knowledge. Knowledge can always be acquired by knowing a language. Our beginners have always been worried about learning English rather than developing an understanding of a concept in their way, therefore majority of the students are lost in this learning of the English language rather than focussing on the original thinking. This has been given an appropriate weightage under NEP. A student shall learn to



INDIA IS POISED TO PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION TO EVERYONE WITH THE NECESSARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO THRIVE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE MOTTO HAS BEEN TO PROVIDE "EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION" TO ENSURE THAT NO CHILD SHOULD BE DENIED QUALITY EDUCATION BECAUSE OF THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

develop an understanding of what subjects to learn and what to pick up eventually in higher classes which has not been the case so far. A course used to be thrust upon them. This very important facet has been very appropriately addressed in this.

**Learn to Leave:** Having decided what course to take up for secondary and higher education, a student used to be trapped forever whether one liked the subject/course or not. (In the older education system for example if one had opted for Physics or Sanskrit: one was stuck with that forever whether one liked these subjects or not)

There was no way to move out unless one gave up higher education or started afresh. The other difficulty was that due to some odd circumstances if one had to discontinue the education there was no way to restart unless you lose years/ time, but in this, one could leave anytime or rejoin anytime (Comes under Multi entry/ Multi exit system). In the present system if one stayed away for a few years one could not come back to education in desired subjects but under NEP-2020 one can restart anytime one's education by including the credits earned before leaving. Therefore, under the present NEP, no one shall stay away or be denied education because of circumstances. This was not the case in the older system.

**Education to empower:** Under this education is to give due benefits to society by developing the right kind of skill. For Example, an electronic engineer is not able to do even basic electrical repairs or a mechanical engineer is not in a position to rectify even a basic fault. Integration of vocational courses with regular ones to provide practical skills for employment, benefiting students with diverse academic interests or lim-

ited access to traditional pathways or linking them with one another are some of the hallmarks of the present system.

This is to develop the right syllabus to reduce disparities. Emphasis in this is on equitable access to quality education. Essentially NEP 2020 shall be attempting to reduce unwanted syllabus for comprehensive understanding towards skill-based education.

**Teach to transform:** the teaching in the older system was not of any speciality. One acquires the right skills through one's efforts to be useful to society. Under this, it shall be essential to train teachers and educational staff to deliver child-centred education for job placement, which shall be an important feature so far lacking to a large extent.

**Challenges:** One of the biggest features of this has been the wide choice of subjects that one could take. Now this wide spectrum of subjects will be possible to be taken by students if there is a way to keep a record of a student's movement and subjects taken. In a Country like ours which has more than 39K colleges, about 1000 Universities and 4.33 crores students (Nearly 80 per cent are in graduation and the remaining 20 per cent are from post-graduation classes), it shall be impossible to maintain a record of this kind unless there is a mechanism similar to computerised banking arrangement which maintains all types of record impeccably. For this an Academic Bank of Credit has been proposed where every institution shall be registered to enable a record of these movements of students, subjects taken and credits earned can be maintained like what is done in banking.

**Biggest flaw so far:** Unfortunately, to date, not even 50 per cent of Institutions have reg-

istered themselves in this (in ABC) which is the real key to the success of this policy. This is a way to keep records of students' subjects, their movements and credits earned.

**Sharing of resources:** Under NEP a wide umbrella of choice of subject, record of early education, movement from one institution to another and credits cleared/ earned by a student shall be possible only if the resources are shared by various institutions.

It will be impossible for any particular college to offer all subjects and to offer teaching in a variety of courses unless there is a huge staff to do this. It will be humanly impossible to achieve all this unless sharing is done particularly when online teaching has now come in a big way in our university system.

Similarly, the resources for science laboratories, libraries research facilities as well as Entrepreneurship schemes can be very effectively shared to make the education truly inclusive as per the aims of NEP 2020. Therefore, in conclusion, this policy shall succeed if: Every institution registers with ABC (Academic Bank of Credit) Sharing of resources starts in a big way in earnest in all areas like teaching, especially in online modes, libraries, laboratories and instrumental facilities; Open schooling system for all without any conditions and Establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India immediately to monitor the registration of ABC etc. It shall not become a roaring success unless all agencies like MOE, UGC etc take concerted efforts to bring about a radical change.

(The writer is a Former Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University and Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul; views are personal)

## Revolutionising India's food security: Route optimisation cuts costs, carbon emissions

With over 81 crore beneficiaries, the Govt is now leveraging advanced data-driven route optimisation tools as part of the PM GatiShakti master plan

The Government of India provides free food grains to more than 81 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) making it the largest food security programme in the world. This vast operation—from sourcing food grains from farmers to delivering them to ration cardholders—relies on a complex, decades-old supply chain. The Food Corporation of India (FCI), state procurement agencies, millers, transporters, warehouses, and Fair Price Shops (FPS) all play a critical role in this network. However, its design has historically been shaped by administrative convenience more than scientific optimisation. Supply routes were planned manually by



SANJEEV CHOPRA

state officials, a process prone to sub-optimality, bias and human error. In October 2021, the Prime Minister launched the PM GatiShakti Master Plan aiming to enhance multimodal connectivity and optimise logistics across the country. One of its key pillars, "Optimisation," envisions selecting the most efficient routes for transporting goods,

thereby saving time and reducing costs. In line with this vision, the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) launched a national route optimisation exercise in March 2023, in partnership with the World Food Programme (UNWFP) and the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT) from IIT Delhi. This exercise, targeting the annual transportation of 6.8 crore metric tons of food grains through the PDS, marks a transformative step towards building a more efficient and cost-effective food supply chain. The process was comprehensive: geo-locations of warehouses and FPS, along with their capacities and road distances, were collected from each state. Using this data, cus-

tom algorithms were developed for each state to determine the most optimal supply chain routes. More than 50 physical workshops were held by DFPD and FITT officials to guide states in data collection and demonstrate the benefits of route optimisation. These optimised routes were then validated on the ground to ensure they accounted for local conditions, and a state-specific intra-state optimisation tool was developed to allow for adjustments in the supply chain—such as adding or modifying entities like warehouses or FPSs. For instance, Bihar developed an annual movement plan based on its PDS requirements, food grain volume, and monthly transport routes. The customised algorithm factored in different



possibilities of local procurement within the state and the grain required to be sourced from the FCI. This gave the state a clear view of its yearly logistics, allowing for cost-saving adjustments. By choosing the optimal option, Bihar reduced transport distances by 19 per cent, saving over Rs 3.09 crore per month. Similarly, Mizoram optimised its routes by eliminating unnecessary transfers of food grains

between warehouses, achieving a 50 per cent reduction in distance and saving an estimated Rs 1.27 crore monthly. A significant milestone in this effort was the integration of the route optimisation tool with the GatiShakti platform, which now houses geo-locations of FPSs and warehouses across all states.

This integration enables the platform to generate the shortest possible motorable routes from FCI godowns to state godowns, and further from state godowns to FPSs. The platform also allows real-time route re-optimisation based on updated infrastructure data (such as new roads) from other ministries. Since March 2023, route optimisation assessments have been completed for 30 out of 31 states, with intra-

state route optimisation tools developed for 15 states so far. Early results from 12 states show tremendous promise, with transportation costs reduced by an estimated Rs 112 crore annually. Once fully implemented across all states, savings could exceed 250 crore per year. This initiative is not only an economic win but also an environmental one. Global food miles—representing the distance food travels from production to consumption—account for nearly one-fifth of total food system emissions. Optimising India's food distribution routes can contribute significantly to reducing CO2 emissions, aligning with the country's climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement and its Conference of Parties (COP) targets. The

reduction in fuel consumption will also help conserve foreign exchange reserves. Looking ahead, DFPD is exploring the possibility of earning carbon credits under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), offering states an added incentive to complete the route optimisation process and earn tradable carbon credit certificates. This step would not only strengthen India's commitment to a climate-smart supply chain but also potentially generate financial benefits. In conclusion, the integration of advanced technologies and data-driven tools is setting the stage for a smarter future in public distribution, one that safeguards both our resources and the planet. (The writer is Secretary, Food & Public Distribution, Govt of India; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Adani Group to buy Orient Cement for Rs 8,100 crore

Adani Group on Tuesday said it has agreed to acquire CK Birla group firm Orient Cement Ltd in a deal valued at Rs 8,100 crore, as billionaire Gautam Adani-run conglomerate snaps up smaller rivals to challenge India's top cement maker UltraTech. Ambuja Cement, India's No.2 cement maker, will buy 46.8 per cent of its founders including chairman CK Birla, and certain public shareholders for Rs 3,791 crore. This would trigger an open offer for an additional 26 per cent stake in Orient, according to a company statement. Orient, which has two cement plants in the south and one in western India, will be Ambuja's second acquisition this year. It will add 8.5 million tonnes to take Ambuja's operational capacity to 97.4 million tonnes. The Adani group has plans to raise this to 140 million tonnes a year by 2028, just a shade below market leader UltraTech's current capacity of 149.5 million tonnes.



ED attaches Rs 335-cr worth assets in Unitech Group

Fresh assets worth Rs 335 crore of the Unitech Group and a linked company have been attached under the anti-money laundering law, the Enforcement Directorate said Tuesday. A provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to attach movable properties valued at Rs 319 crore and Rs 16 crore belonging to Unitech International Realty Fund (UIRF) and Sahana Builders Private Limited, the federal probe agency said in a statement. The investigation stems from the FIRs registered by the Delhi Police and the CBI against Unitech Limited and others, apart from a Supreme Court order issued on December 18, 2019 warranting a "proper investigation by the law enforcement machinery, both from the angle of money laundering and other related factors." The ED said that Chandras of the Unitech Group (promoter brothers Sanjay Chandra and Ajay Chandra) in collusion with their associates played a key role in "illegally diverting" funds received from homebuyers, investors and banks to generate proceeds of crime to the tune of Rs 7,612 crore. The UIRF was a fund created by the Chandra family through its companies Auram Asset Management Private Limited and Uniwell Limited (Cayman Islands) to "divert" funds (homebuyers' money) from Unitech Limited, it alleged.



'FMCG sector facing sluggish demand'

The FMCG sector is facing sluggish demand with the growth in F&B declining to 1.5-2 per cent as against double digit some quarters ago, said Nestle India Chairman & Managing Director Suresh Narayanan on Tuesday. This decline is due to a combination of factors, including food inflation, the outgoing Nestle CMD said at a media roundtable here. "The market is facing a muted demand. It is extremely clear that the growth in the F&B sector, which used to be in double-digit a couple of quarters ago, is now down to 1.5 to 2 per cent," Narayanan said. Referring to a sharp uptick in fruits and vegetables, and oil prices, Narayanan said this is a cause for concern "because this clearly will lead to an increase of prices if they become unmanageable for organisations." He said Nestle too is facing difficult situation on account of higher prices of for cocoa and coffee, which are key ingredients for the company's products. Besides, some "pressure points are coming from mega cities and metros" though tier one and below towns seem to be reasonably stable. Even rural is reasonably stable, he added.

Minister Puri hopes global oil prices will cool down

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said the world has enough crude oil and more supplies are coming into the market, which he hoped will cool down oil prices.

"There is no shortage of oil," he told reporters on the sidelines of an event here.

But geopolitical tensions cause prices to rise owing to higher freight and insurance charges incurred in avoiding conflict zones.

He hoped better sense will prevail and diplomacy will take precedence.

Despite geopolitical tensions, there is no shortage of oil in the world and more supplies from countries such as Brazil and Guyana are coming into the market, he said. There is no anxiety over availability, he said, adding "We are confident of navigating, as we had in the

past... any situation arising." India imports more than 85 per cent of its oil needs and any rise in global rates not just impacts import bills but also fuels inflation.

"My hope is that oil prices remain stable and come down... that's my personal opinion," he said.

Earlier this month, international oil prices flared to over USD 78 per barrel from about USD 70 per barrel, as the market waited to see if Israel would retaliate against Iran for a missile attack last week. Rates have since dropped to USD 73-74 per barrel levels. After the Iranian missile attack, it is being speculated that Israel may target oil or nuclear facilities in Iran. And Tehran can choose to respond with either direct attack on Israel or shutting the Strait of Hormuz - the world's most important oil transit point, further flaring oil prices.



India's GDP growth to moderate to 7 pc: IMF

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

India's GDP growth is likely to moderate from 8.2 per cent in 2023 to 7 per cent in 2024 and 6.5 per cent in 2025 because the pent-up demand accumulated during Covid has exhausted, as the economy reconnects with its potential, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday.

About the global economy, the IMF said the battle against inflation has largely been won, even though price pressures persist in some countries.

After peaking at 9.4 per cent year over year in the third quarter of 2022, headline inflation rates are now projected to reach 3.5 per cent by the end of 2025, below the average level of 3.6 per cent between 2000 and 2019, it said.

The annual World Economic Outlook released here projected global economic growth to stay steady at 3.2 per cent in 2024 and 2025, even though a few countries, especially low-income developing countries, have seen sizable downside growth revisions.



"In India, the outlook is for GDP growth to moderate from 8.2 per cent in 2023 to 7 per cent in 2024 and 6.5 per cent in 2025, because pent-up demand accumulated during the pandemic has been exhausted, as the economy reconnects with its potential," the IMF said in the World Economic Outlook.

According to the latest Economic Survey, the GDP growth in 2024-25 is expected

to moderate to 6.5 to 7 per cent from 8.2 per cent in 2023-24.

According to Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, a French economist and IMF Chief Economist, the global economy remained unusually resilient throughout the disinflationary process.

"Growth is projected to hold steady at 3.2 per cent in 2024 and 2025, but some low-income and developing economies have seen sizable downside growth revisions, often tied to intensify-

ing conflicts," he said. In advanced economies, growth in the United States is strong, at 2.8 per cent this year, but will revert toward its potential in 2025.

For advanced European economies, a modest growth rebound is expected next year, with output approaching potential. The growth outlook is very stable in emerging markets and developing economies, around 4.2 per cent this year and next, with continued robust performance from emerging Asia, he said.

"Despite the good news on inflation, downside risks are increasing and now dominate the outlook. An escalation in regional conflicts, especially in the Middle East, could pose serious risks for commodity markets.

"Shifts toward undesirable trade and industrial policies can significantly lower output relative to our baseline forecast. Monetary policy could remain too tight for too long, and global financial conditions could tighten abruptly," he said.

DGTR for anti-dumping duty on China to protect MSMEs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR has recommended an anti-dumping duty of USD 422 per tonne on Chinese drawer sliders with a view to guard MSME units.

In its findings, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has concluded that "Telescopic Channel Drawer Slider" has been exported to India at a price below the normal value, resulting in dumping.

The imports are also undercutting the prices of the domestic industry, the DGTR has said in a notification.

"The authority recommends imposition of anti-dumping duty on the imports," it said.

The directorate had "suo-motu" initiated the probe against the alleged dumping of this product to guard micro, small & medium enterprise (MSME) units against cheap imports.

Usually, anti-dumping investigations are initiated based on an application filed by domestic producers.

Investors poorer by Rs 9.19 lakh cr in single day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by a massive Rs 9.19 lakh crore on Tuesday as markets came under heavy sell-off with the BSE benchmark index Sensex falling 930.55 points.

Extending its previous day's decline, the BSE Sensex plummeted 930.55 points or 1.15 per cent to settle at 80,220.72. During the day, it tanked 1,001.74 points or 1.23 per cent to 80,149.53.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs

Markets crash



9,19,374.52 crore to Rs 4,44,45,649.22 crore (USD 5.29 trillion). "There has been no respite from FII selling in local

equities in the current month so far, which has been creating uncertainty among domestic investors. Also, foreign investors are fleeing Indian equities to invest in relatively cheaper locations such as China, especially after the stimulus announcement by its government to boost its slowing economy.

"Along with sectoral stocks, mid and smallcap stocks too bore the brunt as persistent buying had led to valuations in several stocks getting expensive and hence the breather," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP

(Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said. From the 30 Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, Power Grid, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, NTPC, Bajaj Finance and Reliance were among the biggest laggards.

In contrast, ICICI Bank, Nestle and Infosys were the gainers from the pack.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,261.83 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

Silver zooms past Rs 1 lakh-mark

Gold jumps Rs 350 to record high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rose by Rs 350 to hit a fresh all-time high of Rs 81,000 per 10 grams while silver soared Rs 1,500 to record the Rs 1 lakh mark in the national capital on Tuesday amid a surge in demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Continuing its upward movement for the fifth straight day, silver bounced Rs 1,500 to hit a fresh high of Rs 1.01 lakh per kg against the previous close of Rs 99,500 per kg on Monday.

"The current momentum in silver prices is driven by industrial demand,

such as in expanding photovoltaic applications, followed by the jewellery and silverware segments," Arun Misra, CEO and Whole-time Director at Hindustan Zinc Ltd, said.

According to Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, silver prices have continued their rapid upward momentum, surging past Rs 1 lakh in the physical Indian markets, with the fast-paced rally suggesting that prices could reach Rs 1.1 lakh before Diwali.

Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 350 to hit a fresh high of Rs 80,600 per 10 grams.



Meanwhile, the metal of 99.5 per cent purity had finished at Rs 80,250 per 10 grams while gold of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 80,650 per 10 grams on Monday.

Bullion traders attributed the jump in precious metal rates to the rising consumption in industrial and wearable segments in the domestic market.



Retail inflation for farm, rural workers rises

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers increased to 6.36 per cent and 6.39 per cent, respectively, in September from 5.96 per cent and 6.08 per cent in August this year.

The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) registered an increase of 7 points each in September 2024, reaching levels of 1,304 and 1,316 points, respectively, a labour ministry statement said on Tuesday.

The CPI-AL and CPI-RL were 1,297 points and 1,309 points in August 2023.

"The year-on-year inflation rates based on CPI-AL and CPI-RL for the month of September 2024 were recorded at 6.36 per cent and 6.39 per cent, compared to 6.70 per cent and 6.55 per cent in September 2023.

Land records should be evolved to meet urbanisation needs: MoS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Urban land records should be evolved to meet the demands of rapid urbanisation of cities and land administration must keep pace to ensure equitable development, Minister of State for Rural Development Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani said on Tuesday.

Addressing the concluding session of a two-day workshop here, the minister emphasized that more than administrative tools, accurate land records are the backbone of socio-economic planning, public service delivery and conflict resolution. "Just as rural land records



evolved, urban land management must also rise to meet the demand of rapid urbanisation of cities and land administration must keep pace to ensure equitable development," Pemmasani said. "We now

stand at a pivotal moment in urban governance where technology meets opportunity. More than tools like Drones, aircraft-based surveys and satellite imagery offer unparalleled precision.

By deploying these tools we reduce human errors, increase efficiency and collect consistent up-to-date data in the most challenging urban environment," he said.

He also said India has made significant strides with initiatives such as the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), and has digitized Records of Rights (RoR) across over 6.25 lakh vil-

lages, launched the Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), also known as Bhu-Aadhaar, and created a seamless integration between revenue and registration systems. "As rural land records evolve, urban land management must also rise to meet the demands of rapid urbanization," he said.

The Department of Land Resources has sanctioned a pilot programme called the "National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations (NAKSHA)" with a view to creating Land Records in about 130 cities.

Jewellers' body pushes for uniform gold rates across India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) announced Tuesday it is working to implement 'One Nation One Gold Rate', aiming to standardize domestic gold prices that currently vary across different regions of the country.

"We import gold at the same rate, but the domestic retail prices differ from one city to another. We want a single rate to prevail across the country," GJC Secretary Mitesh Dhorda said at the launch of 'Lucky Lakshmi', a revamped annual gold festival running from October 22 to December 9.

The council, which has already conducted over 50 meetings with its members, has managed to bring up to 8,000 jewellers on board for this initiative. While a representation has been made to the government, the GJC is currently

focused on convincing the industry stakeholders.

"We are already providing a recommended rate through WhatsApp broadcast groups to our members. Our target is to reach at least 4-5 lakh jewellers step by step," Dhorda said, adding that implementation in Gujarat has been particularly challenging.

The GJC, established in 2005 with 3,500 members including retailers and manufacturers, hopes to streamline the process within six months. The council is engaging with both chain stores and individual jewellers, along with its 4,200 affiliated associations.

Meanwhile, the Lucky Lakshmi festival will see participation from 1,500 retailers and 8-9 chain stores, offering prizes worth Rs 10 crore. Customers spending over Rs 25,000 on gold will receive assured prizes during the festival period.



Consumers worried about data breaches: Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consumers are worried about data breaches, and a large number of them are not aware of their rights related to personal data, according to a PwC India survey.

The PwC Survey on Data Privacy offers vital insights from 3,233 consumers and 186 organisations across India, exploring the awareness and implementation gaps concerning the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA), the consultancy firm said.

As per the survey report titled 'How aware and prepared are Indian consumers and businesses to navigate the new era of digital privacy?' A survey of India's data privacy landscape', 42



per cent of consumers are not sure if they will continue using the services of a company post a data breach. "This rate is higher in Tier-1 cities

at 46 per cent. Although 52 per cent of organisations are planning additional security controls around personal data, technology alone won't

solve the compliance issue," PwC India said.

The survey also showed that only 16 per cent of consumers are aware of the DPDPA Act across diverse geographies, age groups, occupational backgrounds and urban-rural divides.

Sivarama Krishnan, Partner & Leader - Risk Consulting, PwC India and Leader of APAC Cyber Security and Privacy, PwC opined that the DPDPA Act 2023 will play a critical role as India transitions to a high-growth digital economy.

"Our engagement with over 3,000 consumers across the country and with around 200 corporates reveals a significant gap in the understanding of the basic tenets of privacy among

all," Krishnan said.

The survey also found that 56 per cent of consumers are not aware of their rights related to personal data and 69 per cent are not aware of their rights to take back their consent.

Anirban Sengupta, Leader and Partner, Business and Technology Risk, PwC India said that in India, sectors that are regulated and direct-to-consumer show maturity in privacy mechanisms yet, express concerns about data privacy laws and enforcement. "The need of the hour is a cultural shift towards prioritising data privacy, necessitating active participation from both businesses and consumers to foster a privacy-conscious environment," Sengupta added.



# what's brewing?

## VIJAY VARMA OPENS UP ON THE INTRIGUING INSIGHTS TO *Matka King*



Vijay Varma is known to play strong and significant characters on screen delivering some remarkable performances. Demonstrating a wide range of talent and versatility, he has firmly established himself as one of the most versatile actors of his generation. From embodying intense, multifaceted characters to exploring the nuances of romance, Vijay showcases an exceptional ability to bring depth to his roles.

In a recent interview, Vijay Varma opened up about the intricacies of shooting for *Matka King* and also offered intriguing insights into the series, he said, "It's the rise of a very interesting business and at the same time, an individual who found a certain kind of loophole in a system and tried to make a lot of money through it. We are 30%, 40% in right now, and we will be shooting till the end of December."

Vijay Varma is currently busy shooting for his upcoming project, *Matka King*, an original series for Prime Video. Set against the vibrant backdrop of 1960s and 1970s Mumbai, *Matka King* highlights the fictional story of an ambitious cotton trader who yearns for legitimacy and respectability. In his pursuit, he creates a revolutionary gambling game known as 'Matka,' which rapidly captures the city's imagination, transforming a space once dominated by the affluent elite into a realm accessible to all.

Directed by Nagraj Manjule, *Matka King* is produced by Siddharth Roy Kapur under the banner of Roy Kapur Films.



## Britney Spears says 'I do' to herself

Almost a year after parting ways with Sam Asghari, Britney Spears surprised fans by revealing she "tied the knot" with herself in a wedding dress and veil. She took to Instagram and shared a video without her groom present. In the video, the 42-year-old pop legend is shown fixing her veil with *Sting's Fields of Gold* playing in the background. "The day I married myself... Bringing it back because it might seem embarrassing or stupid, but I think it's the most brilliant thing I've ever done!!!" she captioned the video.

Prior to revealing the news, the *Circus* hitmaker posted a photo of a vacant church without providing any context. After that, she proceeded to share a video of herself relaxing in a yellow bikini next to the pool.

Spears sported blond hair cascading in curls and paired her outfit with black heels featuring pointed toes. The mother of two sported her usual black eyeliner and paired it with a dainty gold necklace.

She then shared a different video of herself standing in front of a private plane wearing black boots and a white slip dress. It appeared that she was traveling solo by plane for her honeymoon.

She wrote in the video's caption, "Turks and Caicos, here I come."



## Spider-Man meets Nolan

Tom Holland is currently in discussions for the possibility of appearing in Christopher Nolan's newest movie, alongside Matt Damon. Nolan is currently writing and directing the film, which is scheduled to hit theaters on July 17, 2026, produced by Universal Pictures.

The upcoming film with no title is set to start filming in early 2025, but Holland's participation may affect the production schedule, according to reports. Tom Holland, famous for playing Peter Parker in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, will be busy with *Spider-Man 4* and potentially the upcoming *Avengers* sequel in the coming year.

Information about the plot of the upcoming movie is being kept secret; however, reports suggest that the story is not set in the current time period (although it is uncertain whether it is set in the past or the future).

Although Matt Damon has worked with Nolan before on *Oppenheimer* and *Interstellar*, this will be Tom Holland's first time collaborating with the renowned director.

## SALMAN KHAN BACK TO WORK ON SIKANDAR

Salman Khan has officially started filming again for his highly-anticipated movie, *Sikandar*. Following a short break, the actor's fans are excitedly anticipating his return to the screen.

Salman had started filming for the movie earlier this year, as a photo of him on set was shared in June. The actor has increased his security measures recently due to new death threats following the assassination of political leader Baba Siddique, who was also his good friend. According to a source close to the production, "As per the planned schedule, Salman Khan has resumed shooting for *Sikandar*."

Salman is currently occupied with hosting the newest season of *Bigg Boss*. Amid tight security measures, he came back to film for *Bigg Boss 18* last week. He hadn't come back to work since Baba Siddique's murder until now. Salman films *Weekend Ka Vaar* episodes as the special host for the weekend. The Lawrence Bishnoi gang has claimed responsibility for the murder of Baba Siddique. On Friday, the Mumbai Police's WhatsApp hotline got a threat aimed at Salman Khan, demanding the actor to pay 5 crore. Meanwhile, Salman Khan will make a special appearance in the highly anticipated film *Singham Again*.



## Aamir Khan set to croon as Kishore Kumar in upcoming biopic

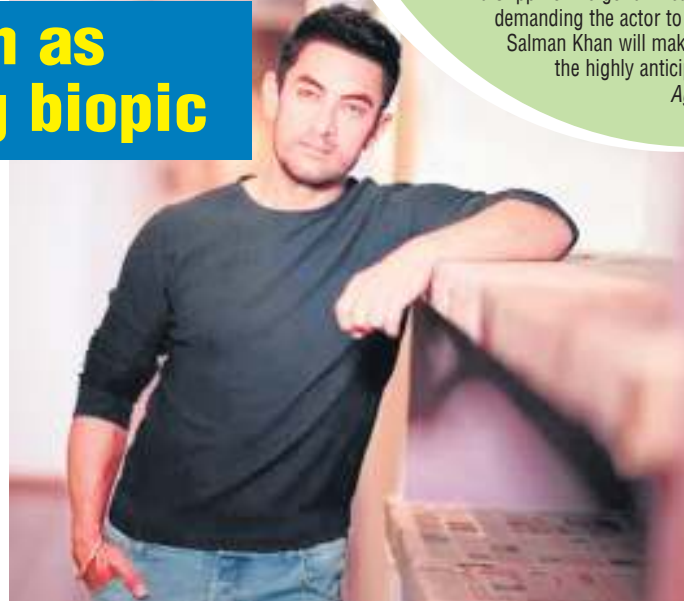
Bollywood actor Aamir Khan is contemplating taking on the lead role in director Anurag Basu's much-anticipated Kishore Kumar biopic. Previously, there were rumours indicating that Ranbir Kapoor was set to portray the legendary singer-actor in the movie. Nevertheless, there have been no confirmations so far.

According to a source, "The Kishore Kumar biopic is a subject close to the heart of Anurag Basu and producer Bhushan Kumar and they are looking to bring it in the best possible way. Aamir Khan is also a big admirer of Kishore Kumar and loved the vision that Basu has. The filmmaker has treated it very differently, and that's what has fascinated Aamir the most." The actor and director have met several times and every-

thing could come together soon.

Aamir has taken as many as six films into consideration and every film is in different stages of development. While the script of the Kishore Kumar biopic, the Ujjwal Nikam biopic and Rajkumar Santoshi's comedy is locked, *Ghajini 2*, Lokesh Kanagaraj's next and Zoya Akhtar's next are in the development stage. Aamir has liked all the films and will take a call on his immediate next by the end of this year. Of the 6 films, he will do three for sure in different timelines and might let go of the other three," the source stated.

At the moment, Anurag Basu is shooting a romantic film featuring Kartik Aaryan and Triptii Dimri, set to wrap up by April 2025.



## FUN

### ARCHIE

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

### GARFIELD

### NANCY

### GINGER MEGGS

### REALITY CHECK

### SPEED BUMP

### CROSSWORD

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

### SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

### ACROSS

- Without any bends
- Travel by horse
- Bigger
- From Turkey
- Tell a fib
- A large store of water for supplying a town
- The movement of cars and people in the street
- Flying creatures
- Sweeten food with this
- Liquid in a pen
- Sit on this
- Be unlike
- Too
- Writer of music

### DOWN

- Startled
- Listen to music on this
- A precious metal

## CHHOTE PANDIT IS BACK! NEW AVATAR, MORE HUMOUR

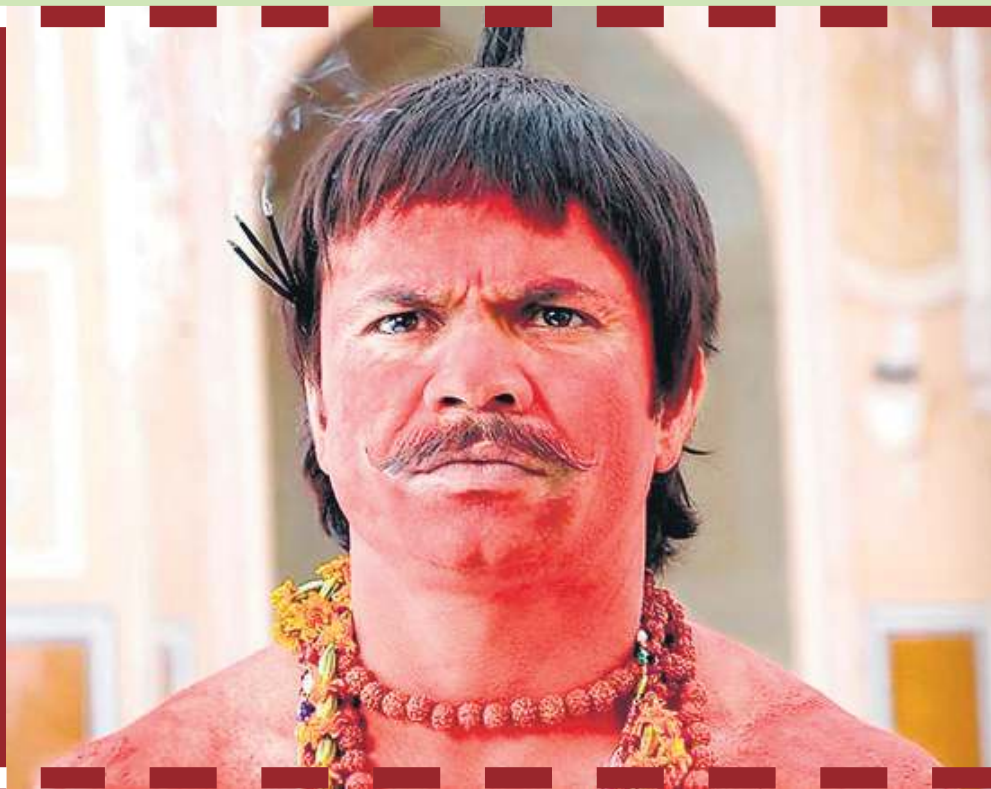
TEJAL SINHA  
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Laughter alert! Rajpal Yadav is back to cast his comedic spell as the irrepressible Chhote Pandit in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*! With a career spanning decades of rib-tickling roles, Rajpal is poised to unleash a fresh wave of hilarity, blending his trademark wit, impeccable timing and sidesplitting antics.

From revisiting the franchise's cult classic moments to revealing the newest twists in the storyline, let's get ready to dive into the world of *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3* through Rajpal Yadav's eyes as he takes us on a journey of laughter, excitement and pure entertainment.

"*Bhool Bhulaiyaa* has now become a trio for us," begins the gagster in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, who never fails to enrapture hearts with his on- and off-screen persona. His character in the *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* franchise has a unique sixth sense, enabling him to see ghosts that others can't. "While in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, we see him in order to get rid of water and negativity; he puts up a red colour (kumkum); in the second one, we see him putting up white, which is ultimately the symbol of water. Now in the third one, he puts up *Chandan*. With the trap of Manjulika, he signifies that *apna tann—mann thana rakho*. I feel that the director liked the concept of using *Chandan* this time, which portrays that *Chandan ke upar kitni bhi musibatein rahe, andar toh woh sheelta pradhan karta hai* (Despite facing numerous challenges, sandalwood retains its soothing properties). These colours are very close to nature and it's often believed too that one who is closest to nature is away from any sort of difficulties. This caricatured feature of Chhote Pandit is that of a 'vidhushak', who makes fun of himself and entertains the people around. Chhote Pandit is that comedic element in a hor-

**GET READY FOR A DOSE OF LAUGHTER AND ENTERTAINMENT AS RAJPAL YADAV, BOLLYWOOD'S BELOVED COMEDIC GENIUS, JOINS THE PIONEER FOR AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION. AS HE GEARS UP FOR THE RELEASE OF BHOOL BHULAIYAA 3, YADAV SHARES HIS INSIGHTS ON PLAYING THE ICONIC 'CHHOTE PANDIT', HIS APPROACH TO COMEDY AND HIS EXCITING LINEUP OF UPCOMING PROJECTS**



ror comedy who entertains the audience with his humour."

Well, as he speaks of his character, it was beyond a doubt that this character is something he is blessed to play on-screen, and he agrees it too. Now, with the third film of the franchise, not an approach, but Yadav believes taking his character in the most simplest and natural way to the audience. While the plot keeps you hooked, his character doesn't miss out on tickling your funny bones, of course! "This is a character you can just not ignore. An effort has been to keep the character along and a part of the story or make him fit in

the director's interpretation."

The *Chup Chup Ke* fame further tells us that he doesn't feel any pressure to portray Chhote Pandit for the third time but rather has performed it with all the freedom within the boundary line. "This is a character that doesn't pressurise in any way. He is here only to bring comedy—not a character that's real but an illusion of reality. *Isko pressure nahi, pyaar se leno ki zaroorat hai joh ki mai le raha hoon* (we chuckle)."

Phir Hera Pheri, Partner, Bhootnath, Krazzy 4, Dhol, Bhagam Bhag, De Dana Dan, Khatta Meetha and to the endless list of films where his comedic perfor-

mance has been a highlight. But how does he even manage to bring so many variations of comedy every time on-screen? "It's by doing the homework and getting inspired by people around," affirms the Dhol fame. But again, he continues to highlight, "We can try to change the mentality, but not a person. Similarly, as an actor, all that we can do is change the mentality and present ourselves the best way possible."

"Comedy is a word and cinema is entertainment. So, the stories that are made have a priority—entertainment," enthuses *Malamal Weekly* actor, who is now, in fact, celebrating his 25 years in

the industry. "In these years that I've been in the industry, *comedy films ka bolbala raha hai*. We've seen both the protagonist and the antagonist doing comedy. I feel so blessed that I'm among the few of those who have been doing comedy and getting the respect."

Ever since he began acting, which was at the tender age of about 13 years, he has had the opportunity to play approximately 500 characters on different platforms. However, he has always believed that every new character brings a new life for him to live. As we talk of comedy, "Comedy has many sub-genres within: realistic comedy, romantic comedy, black

comedy, horror comedy, and so many more. And so the approach of my character in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* is different from, let's say, *Chup Chup Ke*, *Dhol* or *Waqt*. So I always try either by being a small kid or a big one; I always make sure to learn the best that I can from all of these."

Talking of any improvisations that we would get to see in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, the *Partner* fame enunciates, "Every actor does improvise. But a good actor always works according to the director's interpretation and being around that discipline, if they are able to work a little more on it, so why not? The communication between a director and actor is done on the basis of interpretation. And this is something I believe much in."

Let's not forget the fact that horror-comedy has been one of those genres that has a great fan following. "I would say, since childhood, there are only two things that we are taught: either excitement and bravery or fear. It's been a ritual in our country that this 'natya-roopantaran' is portrayed in the form of fear and romance. So here in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, the Manjulika's character is that form of fear, where you do get scared and have fun laughing too."

Rajpal Yadav has been a synonym of 'scene-stealer' and why not? No matter what character he plays on-screen, a lead or a supporting actor, he's one of those adroit actors who knows how to pull over the eyes of the audience so well. "*Main bachpan se jis galli, jis ghar mai baithta tha, maine humaesha dil churaye hai* (we laugh out loud). So with that, if I steal the show or scene and I also get the credit for it, then it's a matter of great fortune for me. I'm so glad and blessed that over the years, I've got to play and live over 500 characters."

The actor's pipeline is overflowing with laughter, drama and suspense, with *Baby John* releasing during Christmas, *Vanvaas*, Tigmanshu Dhulia's *Ghamasaan* and *Welcome to the Jungle*, which are just the beginning.

## ROCKING THROUGH TIME: BIG 30-YEAR BASH

India's most iconic music festival, *Independence Rock (I-Rock)*, is back with a bang, celebrating its 30th edition in style. *The Pioneer* catches up with VG Jairam, the driving force behind *I-Rock's* revival, in an exclusive conversation

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The revival of India's most iconic rock festival, *Independence Rock (I-Rock)*, has marked a new era in the country's music scene, thanks to the efforts of VG Jairam and Farhad Wadia, the creators of the festival. As India celebrated the 30th edition of this event, Jairam shared the journey behind the resurrection and the vision for its future.

His partnership with Wadia took shape in early 2022 when he noticed a significant void in the live music landscape—rock music had nearly vanished from mainstream events. "Farhad has always been a dear friend. I approached him about reviving it, as the genre was missing from the live scene. Our goal was to bring back rock music and make it bigger than before," he recalls.

Bringing *I-Rock* back wasn't without its challenges. The festival had always been a platform for India's rock music community and staying true to its roots while making it relevant for today's audience required careful balance. "It's more than just a festival. It's a space for performers and fans to connect over their shared passion for rock music. The key is to

support emerging talent, even as we celebrate 30 years of rock history."

He remained tight-lipped about the specifics of this year's innovations, teasing that fans would have to wait to experience the full spectacle. However, he emphasised that enhancing the consumer experience is at the heart of everything he does. "We believe in creating memorable experiences. If you show people a good time, they'll keep coming back."

Reflecting on the changes in India's rock scene, Jairam sees the evolution of the genre as both a challenge and an opportunity. "Rock isn't just classic rock or metal anymore. It's hybrid, it's experimental—fusion rock, rap rock, glam rock—all of these subgenres keep it alive and thriving." It has embraced this diversity, offering a stage to new-age artists while honoring its legacy as the birthplace of India's rock revolution.

For him, some of his most memorable moments with *I-Rock* aren't just about standout performances. It's the personal connection to the festival that stands out. Balancing the festival's legacy with the need to innovate has been a critical focus. According to him, it's about finding the sweet spot between retaining what makes it iconic and welcoming the next generation of rock fans. "Legacy is what people hold you in high regard for and relevance is about ensuring that both

long-time fans and newcomers are engaged. You can't choose one over the other—you have to innovate while respecting history."

This year's festival promises surprises, but as he playfully suggests, "If I tell you now, it won't be a surprise."

Inclusivity and diversity remain central to his approach. "We keep our ears to the ground, listening to what the people want. Whether it's local talent or emerging genres, we're always adapting," he explains. This philosophy ensures that the festival remains a dynamic platform for artists from all backgrounds to share their music. Its impact on the local music community has been profound. He notes that the festival has become a launchpad for emerging rock bands and a space for cultural exchange within the genre. "By bringing people together, we foster opportunities for networking, collaboration, and creative innovation."

When it comes to measuring success, for him, it's more than just ticket sales. "It's the energy, the passion, and the connections made. Long-time attendees return each year, while younger fans discover rock for the first time. These moments, these interactions, are what make the festival a success." Looking ahead, he envisions continuing to uncover hidden talent and providing a global stage for India's rock music scene. "There's so much untapped talent in India and I want it to be the platform that helps these artists reach their potential."

When asked about the future of rock festivals in India, he is optimistic. He points out that India is becoming a hotspot for live music experiences, with festivals bringing international acts and creating immersive environments for fans. "The future looks promising. We've seen a resurgence in rock music since the revival of *I-Rock* and initiatives like *BandLand* and multi-genre festivals are fueling this momentum. It will continue to play a key role in fostering this growth."



## SLAUGHTERING ANIMALS FOR RESOLVING FOOD CRISIS

### Constitutional mandate that has taken us back to the dark ages

Beyond the slightest doubt, we live in an era of blooming and lurking challenges across all fronts and all forms all around us - including abject poverty, glaring wealth disparity, widespread unemployment, fractured outcomes of flawed health and education policies, and alarming environmental hazards prone to epidemics and pandemics.

But just when we thought we had seen the worst of all forms, here comes a shocker.

The Southwest African country of Namibia plans to slay 700 wild animals including 83 elephants, 300 zebras, 30 hippos, 50 impalas, 60 buffaloes, 100 blue wildebeest and 100 elands to mitigate the pangs of an acute hunger crisis in the wake of a severe drought that has affected more than half of its population, an alarming fallout of an El Niño pattern.

This barbaric move has been sheltered by the nation's constitutional mandate shows the abject failure of global diplomatic organisations like the United Nations, to make needful interventions to ensure that such regressive moves bordering on cannibalism are vehemently opposed and banned with unanimous approval of member nations.

As it is, seal hunt, a cruel annual event in Namibia slaughters thousands of cape fur seal puppies every year to sell their skins in international fur markets at premium rates.

Having said that, we can't put all the blame on Namibia; that would be a deplorable and desperate attempt to escape the guilt of a collective crime committed by the world at large. The sorry state of affairs we see is indicative of what price we as humans of the planet have had to pay in the name of progress and advancement. There is simply no amount to human greed for more of anything and everything.

Our predatory instincts drive all notions of progress and development; which is why we see

the maximum land mass being used for real estate development at the cost of shunning agricultural activity. Our sea shores and river banks are being eroded and water bodies are being depleted to fill the insatiable bellies of housing and construction, mountains and valleys are being destroyed and trees are being felled in the name of road and infrastructure connectivity and worst of all, the great divide between the haves and the have nots is growing by the day, which has created the disparity that is at the heart of Namibia's food crisis, ahead of the El Niño pattern.

Can the world not unite to help Namibia with enough food for its people to safeguard the life and freedom of these precious wild animals, which is their birthright denied by humans? Why can't the UN call for an emergency meeting of member nations? Why can't the World Wildlife Fund swing into protest action? Why can't nations of the world seed and nurture a relief fund for poverty-stricken countries like Namibia? Why can't the wealthiest individuals like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Mukesh Ambani et al fund a rescue mission for the animals under threat and set up a haven for them?

Why can't grains and pulses be dispatched in large numbers to the aggrieved citizens, especially when stored food grains often goes waste in many canaries and godowns of the globe, as well as homes and office establishments? Indian households alone waste an estimated 78.2 million tonnes of food annually. We can surely arrive at a win-win solution, if we unite as global citizens rather than look the other way, leaving Namibia to fend for itself in regressive ways that have been legitimised in the name of tradition.

It is high time, as world citizens, wake up from our feigned slumber and cherish with fresh resolve those virtues that make us human. It is high time we arrest the demonic disparity of wealth, income and resources which is at the root of inhuman traditions, wilful or otherwise.

Otherwise, the dark ages will come back to haunt us with a vengeance, ironically in this post-modern age marked by Artificial intelligence. What a tragedy would that be?

(Written by Dr. B. S. Ajaikumar)



# NO POINT SUGARCOATING, THERE'S FIGHT FOR A SPOT BETWEEN RAHUL AND SARFARAZ: TEN DOESCHATE

PTI ■ PUNE

India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said on Tuesday that middle-order batters KL Rahul and Sarfaraz Khan are locked in a selection battle for the second Test against New Zealand here even though head coach Gautam Gambhir is keen to give the former, a long rope.

With India looking to bounce back from the eight-wicket thrashing at Bengaluru in the opening Test, focus will be on the team combination with Washington Sundar being added to the squad. Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant are both aiming to shake off injury concerns for the match starting Thursday.

"Yeah, there's no point in sugarcoating it, there's a fight for a spot," ten Doeschate told the media when asked if Rahul and Sarfaraz were battling for a place in the team, here at the MCA Stadium ahead of India's training session.

"Sarfaraz was obviously brilliant in the last Test. I went to KL after the last Test (and) said how many balls do you play at (and) miss at? He didn't play at (and) miss at one ball and that's what tends to happen when you're not getting runs.

"There's certainly no concerns about KL, he's batting nicely, he's in a good mental space. But we are certainly



going to have to fit seven pieces into six spots for this Test and look at the pitch now and decide what's going to be best for the team," he said.

Sarfaraz scored a second-innings 150 in the Bengaluru game, while Rahul remained off-colour in both innings.

While admitting that it is difficult to keep Rahul out of the equation in the Test format, ten Doeschate said head coach Gautam Gambhir is "keen to" give him a long rope.

"It's not like we're worried about his

form. If you go on just the past three months since Gauri has been in here, he's keen to give him (Rahul) as much rope as we can. We have a lot of faith in him," he said.

"But at the same time, it's a very competitive environment, with Sarfaraz getting 150 plus runs (222 not out) in the Irani Trophy final. The decision will be what's best for the team, but we'll certainly back all the guys in," he added.

Pant, who did not keep wickets for a significant part of the opening Test,

and Shubman Gill, who missed the match due to stiffness in his neck, are close to attaining their full fitness.

"Rishabh is pretty good. I think Rohit (Sharmna) touched on it the other day. He was having a little bit of discomfort at the end range of his movement with the knee. But fingers crossed, he'll be good to keep in the Test as well," he said.

"He (Gill) looks so (available for this Test). He has batted last week in Bangalore, he had a few nets, he's got

a little bit of discomfort, but I think he'll be good to go for the Test," he added.

Ten Doeschate said the addition of Washington Sundar is "no desperate measure" but to add a bowling option who would take the ball away from the Kiwis left-handers.

"Definitely not. They (New Zealand) are filled with four left-handers in the XI. We've had Washy around the white-ball squad for a while and we like the way he operates. It's also nice to see that guys are getting rewarded for Ranji Trophy performance as well."

"We just want to make sure we're absolutely prepared for conditions here and if that does mean taking the ball away from the left-hander, we want that option," he added.

Ten Doeschate said Mohammed Siraj could be going through a "wicket-drought" but there was nothing to suggest that he was struggling for rhythm.

"Siraj bowled beautifully in the second innings. That hour of Test match cricket on the last morning was really high quality," he said.

"It maybe wasn't a nicking wicket, which is obviously his big strength, particularly to left-handers when he moves the ball across. There's nothing there to say like he's not bowling well or his rhythm is not good."



## Cook backs Root to surpass Sachin Tendulkar as leading run-getter in Test cricket

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former England captain Alastair Cook feels Joe Root has the potential to surpass the legendary Sachin Tendulkar as the leading run-getter in Test cricket thanks to his insatiable hunger and incredible talent.

The 33-year-old Root currently has 12,716 Test runs and is 3,205 short of the Indian icon (15,921).

Root occupies the fifth spot in the leading run-getter's chart at the moment with Rahul Dravid (13,288), Jacques Kallis (13,289) and Ricky Ponting (13,378) and Tendulkar ahead of him.

"I think Joe Root could set a mark, certainly on an English side, that'll be very hard to beat. But, you just never know," Cook was quoted as saying by the ICC.

"I hope he can get very close, if not be the first person who scores 16,000 Test runs. It'd be a great achievement."

Root overtook Cook as England's leading run-scorer in the longest format during the Multan Test against Pakistan earlier this month.

Having watched his compatriot go past him to become England's most decorated batter, the 39-year-old Cook struggled to express his feelings and called up Root to congratulate him for his massive feat.

"I watched the moment, then I rang him after the end of the play. I couldn't think of the right words to write in a text message," Coon said.

"So, I thought I'd just ring him, see what he was up to, and make sure he had a beer in his hand, which I think he did."

"I think the game has certainly made a big jump forward in what is now deemed possible in Test cricket."

"I think the jump happened in one day cricket first, probably. The fundamental change, certainly from the English point of view, is when Owen Morgan took the side forward in 2015. And obviously the Ben Stokes era has changed the mentality of what was possible."

## We're here to make amends: Cummins

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Australian skipper Pat Cummins is determined to "make amends" against India in the upcoming five-match Test series, as he aims to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in over a decade.

The two teams will face off in a five-match series starting November 22 in Perth. India will come into the contest with the Border-Gavaskar Trophy firmly in their grasp, having held it for nearly a decade and winning two consecutive series in Australia.

"We've had a bit of a break, so I'm excited for the five match Test series. Excited to get into it," the 31-year-old said in Star Sports' Press Room.

"We haven't had a lot of luck against India over the last few Test series, but we always pride ourselves on playing well here in Australia."

## Inglis earns maiden call-up as NZ name squad for Women's ODI series against India

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Wicketkeeper-batter Polly Inglis earned her maiden call-up as recently-crowned Women's T20 World champions New Zealand announced their 15-member squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against India, beginning in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Inglis, 28, was rewarded for consistent performances with both bat and gloves for Otago Sparks in the women's Super Smash and New Zealand A, leading to her first New Zealand Cricket central contract in June.

"We're really excited to introduce Polly for her first tour," Head coach Ben Sawyer said in a statement.

"She put her hand up in last season's Hallyburton Johnstone Shield one-day



competition and throughout the New Zealand A series against England, so it's a great next step for her."

Lauren Down also returns to the squad after resuming international cricket in July following a maternity break.

Rosemary Mair, who sustained a serious back injury earlier this year, has been rested as part of her long-term rehabilitation.

Mair and off-spinner Leigh Kasparek are the only two players missing from the

squad that won the T20 World Cup in the UAE.

"Touring India is one of the great experiences in world cricket," Sawyer said.

"It's been an amazing 24 hours for this group becoming T20 World Cup champions," said Sawyer.

"We're relishing the win but when we get to India we'll need to refocus and set our sights on the next challenge."

New Zealand Women's ODI squad: Sophie Devine (C), Suzie Bates, Eden Carson, Lauren Down, Izzy Gaze, Maddy Green, Brooke Halliday, Polly Inglis (WK), Fran Jonas, Jess Kerr, Melie Kerr, Molly Penfold, Georgia Plimmer, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuhu.

## Williamson ruled out of 2nd Test against India

PTI ■ PUNE

Senior New Zealand batter Kane Williamson will not be available for the second Test against India here as his rehabilitation from a groin strain is still not complete, the country's cricket board announced on Tuesday.

New Zealand lead the three-match series 1-0 after winning the first game by eight wickets in Bengaluru.

The second match will start here on Thursday.

Williamson, who is yet to join the squad here, suffered the injury during the recent Test series against Sri Lanka.

Blackcaps head coach Gary Stead said Williamson was not yet ready even though he



has made significant progress. "We're monitoring Kane and he's tracking in the right direction, but isn't yet 100 per cent fit," said Stead in a statement issued by New Zealand Cricket (NZC).

"We're hopeful to see further improvement over the

coming days and have him available for the third Test.

"We'll give him as much time as possible to get himself ready, but certainly continue to take a cautious approach," he added.

The third Test is scheduled in Mumbai from November 1.

## Shaw left out of Mumbai squad for next Ranji Trophy clash due to fitness and disciplinary issues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Top order batter Prithvi Shaw has been left out of the Mumbai squad for their next Ranji Trophy match against Tripura owing to fitness and disciplinary issues.

The match is scheduled to be played in Agartala from October 26 to 29. The right-handed opening batter, who has played five Tests, six ODIs and one T20I for India, seems to have run into trouble.

It is reliably learnt that the 24-year-old does not regularly attend the team's training sessions and has also appeared a "little overweight".

"You have to look at his fitness and his running when he is on the field. The MCA has a rich history and there cannot be exceptions for a certain



player," an official from Mumbai Cricket Association told PTI.

Shaw's form has been a concern given that he has scores of 7, 12, 1 and 39 not out in the two rounds of Ranji Trophy.

The decision to drop him has been taken by the Mumbai senior men's selection panel owing to his fitness and "general conduct".

The Mumbai selectors have named 29-year-old left-handed opening batter Akhil Herwadkar as

replacement. Herwadkar has played 41 first-class matches and averages 36.51 with seven centuries and 10 fifties.

Also, middle-order mainstay and India's T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav has been rested from the Mumbai squad. Suryakumar scored seven in his only outing for Mumbai in their nine-wicket win over Maharashtra.

Mumbai squad: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Akhil Herwadkar, Shreyas Iyer, Siddhesh Lad, Suryansh Shedje, Hardik Tamore (wk), Sidhaant Adhatrao (wk), Shams Mulani, Karsh Kothari, Himanshu Singh, Shardul Thakur, Mohit Avasthi, Juned Khan, Royston Dias.

## MI, KKR among five IPL franchises bidding for teams in The Hundred: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Lucknow Super Giants are among the IPL franchises who have submitted bids to acquire teams in the English Cricket Board-run The Hundred, according to a report.

The GMR Group, recently named the new owner of Hampshire, and Avram Glazer, co-owner of Manchester United Football Club, also submitted bids before the ECB's October 18 deadline for potential investors, reported ESPNcricinfo.

The ECB has invited bids for a 49 per cent stake in each of the eight franchises, with the board retaining majority control.

"Expressions of interest could be for all eight teams, which would be culled to four in the next step which will start in November when the investors get to meet the host counties of each Hundred franchise," stated the report.

"Following that, investors would need to prune their wishlist to four teams, as part of the second stage, which will then come down to two teams of which they would need to make their final choice."

The ECB is aiming to finalise investors by early 2025 but is committed to a deliberate approach to avoid "underselling what it believes is a valuable product".

ECB chairman Richard Thompson has also mentioned the possibility of a "hybrid" ownership model, where some teams remain under ECB control

while others are sold to private investors.

The report further says while several IPL franchises showed early interest, not all followed through with bids.

"Punjab Kings opted out, while there has been no confirmation on whether five-times IPL champions Chennai Super Kings and equity major CVC Capital Partners, which owns Gujarat Titans, have submitted bids," it added.

"Global sports investors INEOS, owned by Jim Ratcliffe, which owns a 27% stake in Manchester United and run the football club's operations wing, have also opted out of bidding."

One of the main concerns for IPL franchises was whether they would be "happy being passive investors".



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"Punjab Kings opted out, while there has been no confirmation on whether five-times IPL champions Chennai Super Kings and equity major CVC Capital Partners, which owns Gujarat Titans, have submitted bids," it added.

"Global sports investors INEOS, owned by Jim Ratcliffe, which owns a 27% stake in Manchester United and run the football club's operations wing, have also opted out of bidding."

One of the main concerns for IPL franchises was whether they would be "happy being passive investors".

# 'MY MASK DESIGN WAS INSPIRED BY BATMAN'

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**K**annada actor Sri Murali is venturing into the Telugu film industry with his new movie *Bagheera*, set to release on October 31. This film was conceptualised by top director Prashanth Neel and directed by Dr Suri. Sri Murali expressed his admiration for Prashanth Neel and revealed that the story was handed to him by the director. Hombale Films then took over the project with director D. R. Suri, ensuring everything was planned for the film. For the unaware, Sri Murali is the brother-in-law of director Prashanth Neel. "My wife and mother-in-law are from Nellore; they speak Telugu. And now, I have learned a little bit of Telugu," said Murali. Though Prashanth Neel is providing the story, Sri Murali gives all the credits to director Suri. "I agree that Prashanth Neel provided a good story, but it is the director Suri who has worked hundred percent and analysed the story and script," he said. He added that execution is very important. "With whatever the script has demanded, Suri as a director has executed it well. It is a larger than life story and goes well for any language." In the film, he revealed playing a vigilante and further shared, "We have all certain visions of life and want to do something good for society. If something wrong happens in society,

you want to act and it is something for the betterment of society. So we narrate this story in our own way through Prashanth Neel's story and Suri's vision. He enhances the acting from me and all of them in this film."

For this character, Sri Murali has been on a strict diet for almost three years. Yes, you read that right! "I am a foodie and I like Biryani a lot. Oh and also sweets! However, for my character, I was mostly taking up fluids." Seems like his better half had given the best of her support because she didn't let him have his favourite food, hahaha. "I had to take this character as a challenge. The director also wants me to look like it, so I did it," he added.

Sri Murali entered the Kannada film industry nearly 21 years ago and has done 21 films. However, this is for the first time that his film is going to release in Telugu. "It is the production call. I have done a good movie and now I am a bit nervous. I just want good things to happen. I can't do some rubbish projects and scripts just to make money, I can't do that. I have good love and respect in Karnataka and I always surrender to my state. But now it's a different attempt and I am coming to other states. I don't know how people will look at me, but we have done a good project. My request is to come with a blank mind and don't expect anything. I am a new born actor entered into the industry," said the actor about his film releasing across the states.

Talking about his association with Prashanth Neel professionally, Prashanth's debut film *Ugram*, where Sri Murali played the lead actor, was a hit in Kannada. "I always trusted Prashanth very much and he was also closely connected to me. Compared to *Ugram* and *Bagheera* both are differ-

**Kannada actor Sri Murali is expanding into different languages with his new movie Bagheera, which has his brother-in-law Prashanth Neel providing the story. Ahead of the release, he shares more insights about the film**



ent genres and the characterisation is also totally different," he said. He added that after coming out of the theater watching this film, everyone wanted to be like a *Bagheera*.

The actor got injured while shooting for this film. "I don't want to talk about my injuries, because every actor

faces these kind of injuries, so I want to talk about my film. Because it is over and I don't want to discuss those past things," said Sri Murali.

Sri Murali said that there is no reference for this film, because it's a vigilante film. "The concept is the same for every film which is good over evil,

but the narration is different and how the director executed it. We can't compare films as this is a different format. But about the mask for my role, we took reference from *Batman*," he said.

Prakash Raj is playing an important role in this film and Sri Murali says working with him is a good experience. "I am a fan of Prakash Raj and I have seen all his films. It's wonderful work with him and he is like mercury where he fits into the roles. I want to learn everyday and again with Prakash Raj garu I picked up and learnt a lot," said Murali. Talking about his co-star Rukini Vasanth, he says, "She is a very good and dedicated actress. She is a natural actor."

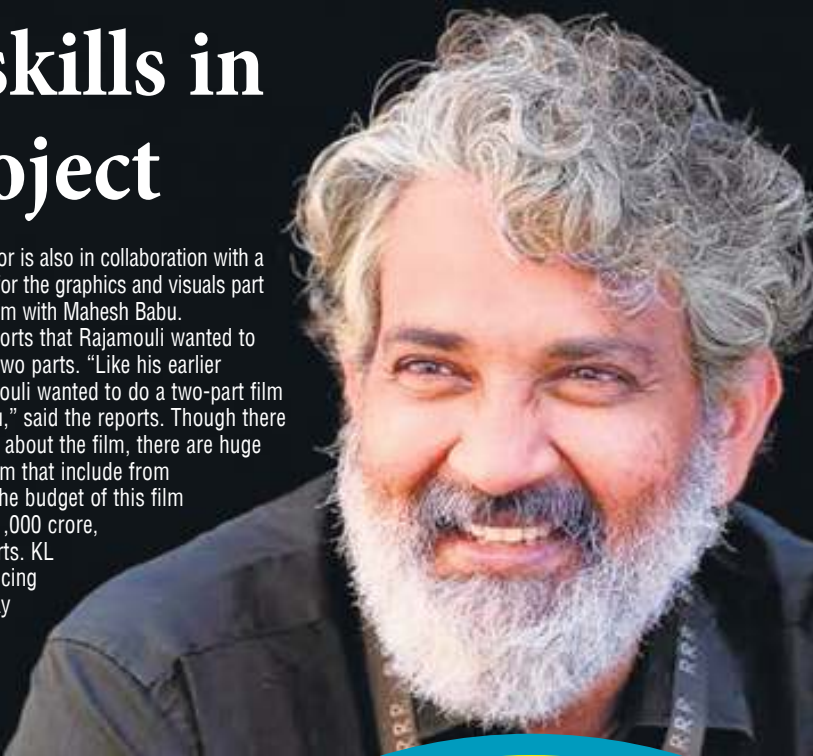
There are some reports that Prashanth Neel just remade *Ugram* as *Salaar* with Prabhas. "Both are different and Prabhas garu has done fabulous work in *Salaar*, which is a much larger than life project. I like *Salaar* in my own way," he said. He talks very highly about Prashanth Neel and said, "He changes the format look-out of the Kannada industry."

Talking about his journey till now, he said he made a few mistakes. "Here and there small mistakes are done and corrected. I want to do better movies and a better actor. My first film ran for two years and the second film won Best Actor for me and I have seen a lot of bad days. At that time, *Ugram* gave me rebirth and I never look back from him as all my films were successful," he said. He added that he is taking a longer time to do a film because only six films have been released in the last ten years. "I don't know why the delay in my films, this *Bagheera*, took nearly three years because of my injury. I have to recover from it and it took a little bit of time," he said.

## SS Rajamouli up-skills in AI for next big project

**T**op director SS Rajamouli is now gearing up for his next project with Superstar Mahesh Babu. The film's pre-production work is still going on and according to the writer Vijayendra Prasad, the shooting starts in January next year. Rajamouli's earlier film *RRR* was a big hit and the director used many animals in that film in a couple of scenes. Talking about the animals at a summit, the director gives a hint about using animals in his upcoming films. "I love animals and I used many in my earlier films and I want to use more animals in my upcoming films also," he said. With this, people assume that he may use animals in his upcoming film with Mahesh Babu also. The film is an adventurous one that travels to Amazon forests, which is like that of an *Indiana Jones* films. According to the reports, Rajamouli wants to use artificial intelligence (AI) in this film. "For that, he along with some of his team members are taking classes on AI," said the

reports. The director is also in collaboration with a Hollywood studio for the graphics and visuals part of his upcoming film with Mahesh Babu. There are also reports that Rajamouli wanted to make this film in two parts. "Like his earlier *Baahubali*, Rajamouli wanted to do a two-part film with Mahesh Babu," said the reports. Though there is no official word about the film, there are huge star cast in this film that include from Hollywood also. The budget of this film is also nearly Rs 1,000 crore, according to reports. KL Narayana is producing this film and it may release in foreign languages apart from Indian languages.



## Shraddha Kapoor to add glamour to Pushpa 2 with special song

**A**llu Arjun and director Sukumar combination, much-awaited film *Pushpa 2* is all set to hit the screens on December 6. The first part *Pushpa* was a blockbuster film and more than that was *Oo antava*, which had Samantha grooving alongside Allu Arjun and music provided by Devi Sri Prasad. Now, everyone is curious who the female actress playing in the special song in this *Pushpa 2*.

According to the source, Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor is confirmed to be a part of this special song. "When the producers met her and asked her for this special song, she was very excited and ready to do the song," said a unit source. The shooting of this song has been planned for the next month, added the source. It is said that,

it was Allu Arjun and Sukumar's idea to rope in Shraddha Kapoor for this song.

Shraddha has been one of the most popular actresses in India. Her latest film *Street 2* was a super hit. The makers have also paid a bomb to Shraddha for doing this special song, added the source. Rashmika Mandanna is playing the female lead and Mythri Movie Makers is producing it.



## RAM CHARAN IS LATEST CELEBRITY AT MADAME TUSSAUDS!

**T**elugu actor Ram Charan is the latest celebrity to join the prestigious line-up of superstars at Madame Tussauds Singapore with a wax figure. Earlier few South Indian actors wax statues at Madame Tussauds Singapore. The first one is Prabhas where his wax statue from *Baahubali* film looks featured at Madame Tussauds, Singapore. The next one is Superstar Mahesh Babu and his wax statue was unveiled in Hyderabad first and later put it in Singapore. Sridevi and Kajal Aggarwal wax statues were also unveiled at Madame Tussauds.

Now, Ram Charan is also joining the list, with his wax-statue coming up in 2025. Ram Charan was presented the 'Madame Tussauds of the Future Award' at the star-studded 2024 International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards at Etihad Arena, Abu Dhabi. "It's great to be a part of Madame Tussauds alongside others who have contributed so much to cinema. As a kid, when I visited Madame Tussauds to see the legends and take pictures with them, I never imagined I would one day be part of it so early in my career. I thank Madame Tussauds for acknowledging my work and motivating me to do better," said Ram Charan.

His pet, Rhyme, will be included as part of his upcoming figure, making him the only celebrity, apart from Queen Elizabeth II, to have a pet featured. "I'm really touched that the Madame Tussauds team included my darling pet Rhyme with my figure. This means a lot to me. This one is special," said Ram Charan.

IIFA and Madame Tussauds Singapore have been collaborating since 2017 when the IIFA Awards Experience was launched exclusively at the Singapore attraction. This collaboration serves to bring together a celebration of Indian cinema on a global stage. Since then, many icons of Indian cinema have launched there, with Ram Charan being next in line in Madame Tussauds Singapore. Another South Indian actor Allu Arjun wax statue was also released, but it was at Madame Tussauds, Dubai.

**P**roducer Seven Hills Satish announced on Tuesday that he is releasing two of his films simultaneously. The first one is *Coffee With A Killer* directed by popular music director RP Patnaik. He directed earlier films and after a long gap, he is directing this film. Satish said that the Telugu audience always encouraged content based films.

"I produced earlier *Battala Ramaswamy Biopic* and *Andari Bandhuvaya* which gave me good success. Even the first one generated good revenue for me at the Covid

time," said Satish.

The second film *Solo Boy* is directed by Naveen Kumar and the lead actor is Gautam Krishna. "Now, the actor is in *Bigg Boss* and once he comes out of it, we will start promotions and announce the release date," said Satish. Swetha Avasti and Ramya Pasupuleti are playing the female leads opposite Gautam Krishna in this *Solo Boy* film.

The producer said that he is introducing Naveen as director with this *Solo Boy* film. Both these films are completed and ready to hit the screens soon. "I am planning to release these two films simultaneously in December," said Satish. The producer celebrated his birthday on Tuesday.

## Producer Satish to release two back-to-back films

