

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer
Women Welfare Minister Seethakka should apologise to tribals for saying that the Jainoor survivor was only physically attacked and not raped. Seethakka's comments are outrageous. Bangladeshi Rohingyas are entering tribal agency areas and are attacking Adivasis.
- Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJP P4

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India wants to create 'many Singapores' of its own: PM
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TARGET 500 MILLION TONNES OF STEEL PRODUCTION BY 2047: GOYAL
 8

GOAT: Falls short of EXPECTATIONS
 P12

DON'T MISS...

Declare NTR district disaster-affected...

Continuous heavy rainfall in the NTR district over the past few days has caused widespread flooding, leaving large parts of the district submerged and marooned. Many houses remain in darkness due to the continuous downpour, with low-lying areas preventing the restoration of power supplies. Much of the Budameru catchment area lies in hilly terrain, making it prone to flash floods that have inundated nearby fields and residential areas in Vijayawada. This has resulted in extensive damage to crops and property, with adjacent...

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'Armed forces need to be...

The armed forces need to be prepared for war in order to preserve peace, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday while addressing the top commanders of the Army, Navy and the Air Force. In his remarks at the maiden joint commanders conference here, Singh, touching upon the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza as well as the situation in Bangladesh, exhorted the military to analyse these "episodes" and stay prepared to deal with the "unexpected". India is a peace loving...

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Gig hiring to soar by 20 pc this festival...

As festival season is about to begin, seasonal hiring is projected to surge by 20 per cent over last year, with the e-commerce industry leading the trend amid increased demand, according to the data by job site Indeed. The top gig roles that have been witnessing increased hiring are delivery executives, warehouse workers, logistics coordinators, in-store sales executives, and customer care executives, the data showed. Several industries are reporting a marked increase in demand for seasonal...

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India's focus will be on self ...

Wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant warned against taking Bangladesh lightly in the upcoming two-Test series, and stressed on the need for India to keep improving themselves to stay ahead of the competition. Bangladesh, who recently blanked Pakistan 2-0 at Rawalpindi, will face Rohit Sharma's side in the first Test at Chennai from September 19 before moving to Kanpur. India will play a total of 10 Tests within the next five months as the series against Bangladesh will be followed by three...

-SPORTS

'Centre with AP in crisis time'

Union Min Chouhan lauds CM's efforts in flood management

- Union Agriculture Minister attributes floods to 400 mm rainfall and breaches to Budameru rivulet.
- Union praised highlights the use of drones for delivering relief supplies.
- Authorities undertake cleaning, sanitisation, and infection prevention measures.
- Chouhan says the previous govt's illegal excavations near Budameru as a factor in the flood disaster.



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has attributed the recent flood disaster to the unforeseen 400 mm rainfall in Vijayawada and breaches in the Budameru rivulet.

Speaking at a media conference alongside Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu at the Collector's office on Thursday, the Minister expressed gratitude to the CM for his proactive leadership, including converting the Collector's office into a temporary camp office and leading the relief efforts around the clock. Chouhan praised the administration for its effective response to the complex flood situation and highlighted the Central government's commitment to providing full support and assistance. He noted that in response to the Chief Minister's request, NDRF teams and helicopters were promptly deployed, and both state and central disaster

response forces collaborated in rescuing those affected by the floods. The Union Minister commended the State government's efficient handling of the situation, which helped keep the death toll relatively low. He expressed appreciation for the joint efforts of officials and elected representatives in supporting flood victims. Chouhan also lauded the IAS officers deployed in the affected areas for their dedication to relief activities. Following his visit, he reported that flood victims received timely essentials such as food, milk, and water. He highlighted the innovative use of drones to deliver food packets and drinking water bottles, a first in the country. In addition to flood relief, the Chief Minister has instructed authorities to undertake house and road cleaning, sanitisation, and sanitation on a war footing to prevent the spread of infections.

Continued on Page 2



Lokesh seeks liberal aid from Centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh has detailed to the Union Minister the unprecedented flooding of the Krishna River. Minister Lokesh reported on the extensive damage caused by the flood and urged the Union Minister to provide substantial aid to those affected. He noted that during the crisis, the Chief Minister acted with vigilance, effectively preventing loss of life. Minister Nara Lokesh welcomed Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan upon his arrival at Gannavaram Airport on Thursday afternoon to assess the flood-affected areas. Subsequently, the Union Minister conducted an aerial survey of the Budameru and catchment areas.

Continued on Page 2



CM sharpens focus on Budameru region

Travels on raft to assure flood victims of govt aid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu visited flood-affected areas of the city for the fifth consecutive day on Thursday, focusing particularly on the Budameru region beyond the Eluru canal. The Chief Minister assured all flood victims in Budameru that they would receive government assistance. Notably, Naidu crossed the Eluru Canal on a raft, drawing public attention. In the morning, residents from various parts of Andhra Pradesh gathered at the NTR District Collectorate to contribute to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. After collecting donations, Naidu proceeded to Enikepadu, where he travelled through fields and crossed the Ryves Canal and Eluru Canal on a raft to inspect the flood-affected Budameru area.

Continued on Page 2



Narrow escape for Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu narrowly escaped a train accident on Thursday while walking along the Madhara Nagar railway track in Vijayawada. The CM was inspecting the floodwaters from the breached Budameru rivulet while standing on a railway track bridge when a train approached.

Continued on Page 2

PRAKASAM BARRAGE REPAIRS
Replacement of gate counterweights begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As the flood inflows at the Prakasam Barrage recede, the Water Resources Department on Thursday removed the counterweights of gates 67, 68, and 69, which were recently damaged by a sandboat collision. These gates were removed under the supervision of WRD Mechanical Wing Advisor, K Kannayya Naidu. Additionally, the mechanical department officials are developing new counterweights to replace the damaged ones on these three gates. The flood inflows to the Prakasam Barrage have decreased to 1,35,132



cusecs, of which the Irrigation Circle, Vijayawada officials discharged 1,34,930 cusecs into the sea by raising 55 gates by 3 feet and 10 gates by 2 feet, while the remaining 3 gates were kept closed. Furthermore, they released 202 cusecs into the canals.

Continued on Page 2



Ex-YSRC MP Nandigam Suresh arrested

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leader and former MP from Bapatla, Nandigam Suresh, has been arrested by the police. He was apprehended in Hyderabad and brought to Guntur district in connection with an alleged attack on the TDP office in 2021.

Continued on Page 2

Central team assesses flood damage in city

Report to be submitted soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Central team that visited the flood-affected areas in the city on Thursday has confirmed that they will submit their report to the Centre as soon as possible. Led by Union Home Ministry's Additional Secretary Sanjiv Kumar Jindal, the team assessed the damage in the Budameru flood-affected areas. They used a tractor and a boat to observe the extent of the devastation. The team also visited flood-hit areas in Krishna district and the State Emergency Operation Centre. They inspected the damaged Prakasam barrage crest gates, accompanied by State Revenue and Disaster Management Special Chief Secretary R P Sisodia, who detailed



the scale of the damage. The team held a meeting at the AP Disaster Management office, where State Water Resources Development Principal Secretary Sai Prasad and Engineer-in-Chief Venkateswara Rao explained the flood mitigation measures and relief efforts underway for the victims. Officials informed the team about the actions taken to repair breaches in the Budameru rivulet at Kondapalli Santhi Nagar and Kavulur. The Central team also included Kalnal KP Singh (Advisor, Operations & Communications), Central Water Board (CWC) Director Siddhartha Mitra, CWCSE M Ramesh Kumar, and National Dam Safety Authority Director R Giridhar. NDRF 10th Battalion Commandant R Kurmanath and ED Nagaraju were among those who accompanied the team.

TDP MLA suspended from party after sexual assault charge

YSRCP demands rape and attempt to murder case against Adimulam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A video circulating on social media has sparked a major scandal involving Koneti Adimulam, a Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLA representing the SC-reserved Sathyavedu Assembly constituency in Chittoor district. The video, which shows Adimulam in a compromising position with a woman, has gone viral, though the time and location of the recording have not been confirmed. At a press conference in Hyderabad on Thursday, the woman, accompanied by her husband, publicly accused Adimulam of sexual assault. She detailed that the MLA had invited her to Bheema's hotel, where he allegedly raped her in Room No. 109. According to the woman, Adimulam had assaulted her on two previous occasions, prompting her to set up a hidden camera in an attempt to expose him.



Continued on Page 2



No spy cameras found at engg college: IG

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Eluru Range IG GVG Ashok Kumar has confirmed that no hidden spy cameras were discovered at Gudlavallu Engineering College. At a press conference held on Thursday, the IG stated that for the first time in this case, the police enlisted the services of the Delhi-based agency 'Computer Emergency Response Team' (CERT) for the investigation. "We have addressed the concerns of students, their parents, and student organisations. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu instructed the police to conduct a fair inquiry. The investigation, carried out by three IGs, found nothing suspicious at the college," the IG reported. IG Ashok Kumar explained that police teams, accompanied by students and officials from the Women and Child Welfare Department, inspected the hostel washrooms but found no hidden cameras. "No student has reported seeing a spy or hidden camera on campus or witnessing any footage from such cameras. The washrooms and showers were thoroughly checked, yet no cameras were found. We have interviewed many students, none of whom reported seeing hidden cameras," the IG stated. He added that students had informed the police that they had heard rumours about hidden cameras being installed in the washrooms. The police seized 14 mobile phones and 6 laptops from students implicated in the case and examined them thoroughly. One laptop was forwarded to the CERT team for further analysis. "We have cleared up the concerns of the students' parents. There is no cause for alarm. No cameras were found during our investigation."

70K to 90K power services restored: Vijayanand

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Special Chief Secretary for Energy, K Vijayanand, has deployed 1,800 staff from the Andhra Pradesh (AP) power utilities for power restoration and relief efforts. He further stated that approximately 70,000 to 90,000 electricity services have been rectified and restored to normalcy, while 12 of the 15 affected substations have been repaired. He explained that AP Power Utilities are carrying out restoration and relief activities at full capacity, and power supply has been largely restored in most flood-affected areas across various divisions of NTR and Krishna districts. Vijayanand, who serves as the nodal officer for restoration activities in the 45th Division (Sitara Centre, Kabela, Vidyadharapuram), and who has been personally overseeing relief operations, stated that, under the guidance of Chief Minister

Chandrababu Naidu and Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar, the State Energy Department has mobilised teams from AP power utilities. These teams, consisting of 1,800 staff and the necessary materials, were deployed to the flood-affected areas. The Managing Director of APGENCO, KVN Chakradhar Babu, Joint Managing Director of APTRANSCO, Kirthi Chekuri, and CMDs of DISCOMS Pattanshetti Ravi Subhash, I Prudhvi Tej, and K Santosha Rao are overseeing relief activities at the field level, with engineers and staff from AP power utilities actively participating at various levels. Vijayanand mentioned that transformers located in Ajith Singh Nagar, Raja Rajeswaripet, and Vambay Colony remain submerged in floodwater, and approximately 1.5 lakh electricity service connections in Vijayawada have been affected. He



Special Chief Secretary (Energy) & CMD of APTRANSCO K Vijayanand and MD APTRANSCO Keerthi Chekuri along with senior officials of AP power utilities monitoring the power restoration and relief activities at Sitara Centre in Vijayawada on Thursday.

added, "Thanks to the tireless efforts of the power utilities, about 70,000 to 90,000 services have been rectified and restored to normalcy."

Continued on Page 2

Govt will stand by flood victims: Kollu Ravindra

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kollu Ravindra, Minister for Mines, Geology, and Excise, visited flood-affected areas in Krishna district on Thursday. His tour included Jakkula Nekkalam in Gannavaram Mandal, several villages in Thotlavalluru Mandal, and various divisions within Machilipatnam Municipality. During his visit, he spoke with victims and inquired about the government's provision of food, drinking water, and medicines.

Addressing the situation, Kollu Ravindra assured that the state government would support those affected by the severe floods in Krishna district. He noted that many low-lying areas had been inundated, causing significant hardship for residents who have been forced to stay in submerged areas. He further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu



Naidu, the state government is committed to addressing all issues faced by flood victims. He pledged that the government would aid farmers by providing input subsidies to help offset substantial crop losses.

Additionally, Kollu Ravindra highlighted that, at Chief Minister Naidu's request, a central team had visited the state to assess the crop damage. He also noted that the government is distributing essential supplies to the affected, includ-

ing 25 kg of rice, oil, sugar, onions, and potatoes. During his visits, Kollu Ravindra was accompanied by Gannavaram MLA Yarlalagadda Venkata Rao, Machilipatnam Municipal Commissioner Bapi Raju, and other officials.

Steps for relief disbursal discussed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A group of ministers met to discuss the government's plans for aiding flood victims, particularly focusing on the distribution of essential commodities starting from Friday. The high-level meeting was held at the Vijayawada Collectorate on Thursday and was attended by State Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P. Narayana, Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu, Housing and Information and Public Relations Minister Kollusu Parthasarathy, and Civil Supplies Minister Nadendra Manohar, along with various officials.



The ministers instructed the officials to deploy revenue, municipal, and village secretariat staff to assist in delivering essential supplies to the flood-affected individuals. They emphasised that the number of victims in each ward should be assessed, and that essentials should be distributed directly to their homes.

In addition to the ministers, the meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Special Chief Secretary MAUD Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Chief Secretary Agriculture B.

Rajasekhara, Special Chief Secretary Medical and Health M.T. Krishna Babu, CM Secretary Pradyumna, NTR District Collector G. Srijana, Member of Parliament for Vijayawada Kesinani Sivanath, MLA Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, and others.

Ambati blames CM's negligence for flood crisis

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister Ambati Rambabu has sharply criticised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for negligence and incompetence, stating that he is responsible for the current flood situation.



Speaking to the media at the party's central office here on Thursday, Ambati Rambabu noted that despite receiving warnings about heavy rains from the meteorological department on August 28, the government ignored these alerts and failed to conduct any review meetings with the relevant departments. As a result, the flooding has caused significant damage, with 47 people reported dead so far, and the death toll possibly rising further.

He pointed out that, even though the government was warned about the impending situation, no preventive measures were taken. He stated that the government's failure to manage water levels led to a sudden surge in floodwaters, causing extensive damage. The floods, exacerbated by the overflow of Budameru, could have been mitigated if the government had acted promptly. He also criticised the government for prioritising political vendettas over effective

flood management during the crisis. Ambati further mentioned that during Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's tenure, a plan was devised to divert water and prevent flood damage to Vijayawada, but it was not implemented following his demise. He accused Chandrababu Naidu of revising permissions for power plants instead of addressing flood prevention measures.

'Centre...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister has requested assistance from Central forces to address the breaches in the Budameru rivulet and is awaiting their prompt deployment. Chouhan emphasised the need for both short-term and long-term measures to prevent future calamities. He noted that the 70-year-old Prakasam barrage, which can handle a flow of 11.90 lakh cusecs, requires capacity enhancements, as requested by the Chief Minister. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has dispatched a central team to assess the situation. Chouhan also pointed to illegal excavations by the previous government near Budameru as a contributing factor to the flood disaster.

The Minister reported that two lakh farmers across 1.80 lakh hectares have suffered losses to their agricultural and horticultural crops. The NDRF, Agriculture, and Planning teams have begun assessing these losses. He criticised the previous government for failing to pay crop insurance premiums, which exacerbated farmers' losses. Chouhan assured that the current NDA government will support the farmers and facilitate their access to the central crop insurance scheme.

Narrow...

Continued from Page 1

Officials and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) members noticed the oncoming train and quickly alerted the driver.

As a result, the train slowed down and passed safely over the bridge.

Despite being one of the most heavily protected Chief Ministers in India with Z+ category security provided by the Union government, Naidu came close to a serious incident.

His safety protocols are managed by the National Security Guard (NSG) and other high-level security forces.

APNGO leaders demand OPS instead of UPS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted Officers' Association (APNGO) President KV Siva Reddy and General Secretary Ch Purushotham Naidu have emphasised that restoring the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) is the only viable solution to address the issues faced by employees. They have pointed out that the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) approved by the Union Cabinet will not be beneficial to employees on a larger scale.



Despite their hopes that the Union government's new scheme would be beneficial, they have stated that the UPS will not provide the expected advantages.

In a press release issued to the media in Vijayawada on Thursday, they highlighted that employees have been striving to abolish the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) for the past two decades.

They further mentioned that the state government introduced the Guarantee Pension Scheme (GPS)

in 2023, which they suggested is similar to the Central Government's UPS. However, they noted that the UPS offers minimal benefits for employees, and the majority are demanding the restoration of the OPS.

Additionally, they stated that under the UPS, employees who have completed 25 years of service are assured a 50% pension, but their savings are to be returned to the government. They also expressed concerns that under the UPS, employees would not receive the minimum gratuity that OPS employees do, and that many conditions in the UPS lack clarification. Therefore, the APNGO Association has demanded the restoration of the OPS.

9K cusecs more inflows to Budameru

- Flood situation likely to turn grave in city due to fresh rains.
- Nimmala oversees emergency efforts from the BDC bund.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heavy rains on Wednesday night triggered a flood in the Budameru rivulet, inundating various parts of Vijayawada City. Streams within the Budameru catchment area, including 'Pulivagu' and 'Kothulavagu', overflowed due to heavy rainfall in the surrounding hills. Consequently, the Budameru received an influx of over 9,000 cusecs of floodwater from the upper catchment areas.



Kondapalli. The flood discharge at the Velagaleru Regulator reached 9,000 cusecs and remains steady. WRD officials have warned that the situation could deteriorate further if the rains persist.

Several areas in Vijayawada City, including Ajith Singh Nagar, Payakapuram, Prakash Nagar, New Rajarajeswari Peta, Devi Nagar, Jakkampudi Colony, Rayanapadu, and Pydurapadu, were submerged as the Budameru overflowed

again. Although the floodwaters have begun to recede, many residents are either returning to their homes or relocating to government-supported rehabilitation centres, aided by fire and rescue personnel.

However, news of additional floodwaters heading towards the Budameru due to continued heavy rains has sparked anxiety among residents. Many fear significant damage to their homes and belongings if the flooding persists for another two to three days. Efforts to close breaches along the BDC at Kondapalli have been hampered by ongoing rainfall. While WRD authorities are working diligently to complete these repairs, another breach occurred on Wednesday. One leak has been sealed, and efforts are underway to address a second breach. Heavy rains have delayed the delivery of materials needed to tackle a third breach, though an excavator has been deployed to the site.

Vallabhaneni Venkateswara Rao, the contractor responsible for the works, stated that the BDC breach-arresting efforts have been severely hindered by the persistent rainfall. Minister for Water Resources Nimmala Ramanaidu and Mylavaram MLA Vanantha Krishna Prasad remained on-site throughout the night, personally supervising the repair works.

Ex-MLA TJR Sudhakar condemns arrest of YSRCP MP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu has strongly condemned the TDP coalition government for the late-night arrest of former Bapatla MP Nandigam Suresh in Hyderabad and his subsequent transport to Mangalagiri in an undignified manner. Speaking to the media outside the police station in Mangalagiri, Sudhakar Babu questioned the need to arrest someone unwell and recovering in Hyderabad. He noted that legal action had already been taken by the police regarding the case filed three years ago. He accused the TDP, since coming to power, of fil-

ing false cases and using the police to target their opponents. "I was not even allowed to meet Nandigam Suresh at the police station, which shows discrimination against Dalits," he said, describing the treatment as akin to untouchability. Sudhakar Babu also claimed that the police are threatening to file cases against him. He criticised the TDP government under Chandrababu Naidu for engaging in dirty politics and harassing opposition leaders. He vowed that the YSRCP would not back down and would continue to fight.

He condemned the police for cooperating with the ruling party's actions and pledged to challenge the false cases legally.

Lokesh seeks...

Continued from Page 1

The survey also included affected locations such as Jakkampudi Milk Factory, Kandrika, and Ajit Singh Nagar. Minister Lokesh briefed the Union Minister Chouhan on the damage in these areas.

Following the aerial survey, they landed at the Chief Minister's residence helipad and inspected the flood-damaged Prakasam Barrage gates by road. Lokesh provided details on the repair works required for the gates. They then examined the affected areas of Jakkampudi Milk Factory, Kandrika, Ajit Singh Nagar, Ambapuram, and Vijayawada aboard an NDRF boat. Lokesh highlighted ongoing efforts to address the breach in Budameru.

In response, Union Minister Chouhan assured that aid would be provided to mitigate the damage caused by the flood as swiftly as possible. He pledged support to help the flood-affected residents return to normalcy. Union Minister Chouhan's visit was accompanied by Minister Lokesh, Union Minister Pemmasani Chandrasekhara, MP Purandharswari, and MLA Sujana Choudhary. After touring the affected areas, Union Minister Chouhan visited the command control room at the Vijayawada Collectorate and met with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu.

Replacement of...

Continued from Page 1

A record flood of around 11.43 lakh cusecs had previously reached the Prakasam Barrage, marking the highest flood level in the barrage's history. Due to the heavy inflows, three sand boats were swept into the gates, damaging the counterweights of three gates. Following this, on the instructions of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Advisor Kannayya Naidu inspected the damaged counterweights.

Under the direction of Kannayya Naidu, the removal of the counterweights from all three gates has commenced. As part of this process, Irrigation Circle Vijayawada officials completely closed gates 67, 68, and 69 to facilitate the removal. The fabrication of new counterweights is underway at the workshop and will be installed on the gates. According to officials, the new counterweights will be erected within seven days. Even with these three gates closed, no issues are expected, even if the barrage receives an additional 5 lakh cusecs of floodwater. During the removal of the counterweights, a large number of workers participated. At this time, officials have suspended vehicular movement on the Prakasam Barrage.

70K to 90K power...

Continued from Page 1

At Dr NTPS, out of the six submerged tipplers, dewatering of the third tippler has been completed, and Units 4, 5, and 6 have been restored and synchronised with the grid. All units of the Vijayawada Thermal Power Station (VTPS) are expected to be fully restored by tomorrow.

In light of the ongoing severe flooding in Vijayawada city, its rural outskirts, and neighbouring districts, the Special Chief Secretary noted that 6,260 solar lights have been distributed to flood-affected areas, including Vijayawada Municipal Corporation and Bapatla, among other locations across the state. He further reported that staff from APEPDCL and APSPDCL have been deployed to flood-hit areas within the APCPDCL region, and they are working tirelessly at the ground level to restore power and address any electrical issues faced by the affected communities.

Ex-YSRCP MP...

Continued from Page 1

Guntur district Superintendent of Police S. Satish confirmed that Suresh was arrested on the outskirts of Hyderabad at around 1 am on Thursday. "Suresh was taken into custody at Manchirevula near Narsingi. The arrest is related to the attack on the TDP office in 2021," Satish said. In October 2021, a group of YSRCP supporters reportedly attacked the TDP headquarters in Mangalagiri, vandalising it in response to alleged abusive remarks made by TDP leader K Pattabhiram against then chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The Andhra Pradesh police have transferred Suresh to Mangalagiri police station in Guntur district, where he faces charges under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including attempted murder. The SP added that Suresh will be presented in a local court and that police are still searching for others involved in the attack.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**

NIT No. 3MDR-Deposit works/Anakapali/ENC/MDR/2024-25, Dt. 04.09.2024
Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for MDR-Deposit
3 works in Anakapali District for an amount of Rs.1149.68 Lakhs. Tenderers
can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e.,
www.apeprocurement.gov.in from 10-09-2024, 3.00 PM onwards
R.O.No: 1294/CLAD/DT/11/2021-22, Dt. 05.09.2024 Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief (R&B), MDRs

TODAY
ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Tritiya. Sep 05 12:21 PM to Sep 06 03:01 PM
Chaturthi: Sep 06 03:01 PM to Sep 07 05:37 PM

Nakshatram: Hasta. Sep 05 06:14 AM to Sep 06 09:25 AM
Chitra: Sep 06 09:25 AM to Sep 07 12:34 PM

Rahukalam: 10:42 AM to 12:14 PM
Yamagandam: 3:18 PM to 4:50 PM
Varjyam: 06:28 PM to 08:16 PM
Gulika: 7:38 AM to 9:10 AM
Amritkalam: None
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:49 AM to 12:38 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Thundershowers
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 82%
Sunrise: 5:55 AM
Sunset: 6:16 PM
Updated: September 5, 2024 5:00 PM

Declare NTR district disaster-affected: DC

As per Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines, banks are expected to reschedule crop and personal loans, following the extensive losses reported across the district.



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Continuous heavy rainfall in the NTR district over the past few days has caused widespread flooding, leaving large parts of the district submerged and marooned. Many houses remain in darkness due to the unrelenting downpour, with low-lying areas preventing the restoration of power supplies.

Much of the Budameru catchment area lies in hilly terrain, making it prone to flash floods that have inundated nearby fields and residential areas in Vijayawada. This has resulted in extensive damage to crops and property, with adjacent 'mandals' along Budameru also severely affected.

In response to the disaster, Dr G. Srijana, NTR District Collector and DCC Chairperson convened a meet-

ing with bankers at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Thursday. Several key issues were discussed, and it was noted that educational institutions have been closed for the past five days due to the flood's impact. All regular livelihood activities have also been disrupted.

In light of the above circumstances, and considering the disaster's widespread effects, the meeting proposed that the NTR district be declared a disaster-affected area under the natural calamity framework. The district administration has submitted a formal proposal to the government through the SLBC. If approved, crop loans and personal loans will be rescheduled, and those who suffered damage to their vehicles in the floods will receive insurance claims.

During the meeting, Dr Srijana stated that the state government had issued a G.O. to assess crop damage in the district. Based on this, banks are expected to provide relief measures under the RBI's Master Directions on relief operations in areas impacted by natural calamities.

The floods from the Krishna River and Budameru have led to waterlogging in much of Vijayawada, severely affecting the lives of those in areas like Ajith Singh Nagar, Payakapuram, Prakash Nagar, Pipula Road, Jakkampudi, Rayanapadu, and Pydurapadu. Many affected residents belong to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, and their daily activities remain halted.

Dr Srijana reported that the floods have affected 2.67 lakh people, with 29 human casual-

ties. In addition, 24 large animals, 24 small animals, and 59,700 poultry birds were lost. The Animal Husbandry Department has estimated total losses at Rs. 13.30 lakh.

Additionally, 638 km of Roads and Buildings (R&B) roads were damaged, with 18 breaches and an estimated loss of Rs. 23.13 crore. Panchayat Raj roads were also damaged, with 16.70 km affected and losses estimated at Rs. 2.77 crore. Due to the floods, agricultural crops across 92,670 acres and horticultural crops across 13,068 acres were damaged.

DCC Convenor and Union Bank of India Regional Head M. Sridhar, Deputy Regional Head Krishna, CM Credit (UBI) K. Priyanka, and SBI RM R. Raghava Rao were among the bankers present at the meeting.

14,48,302 MT sand available in 28 storage points

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mukesh Kumar Meena, Principal Secretary, Department of Mines and Excise, has said that due to the heavy rains and floods across the State, the sand reserves have decreased and there will be no shortage of sand after the monsoon season. He said that the supply of sand from various reaches has stopped due to rains, and once the rains recede and transport conditions will improve, sand will be made available without any problem.

He said that 14,48,302 metric tonnes are available in 28 sand storage points as of Friday. About 948 people applied for 11,218 metric tonnes across the State on Thursday, 1,129 metric tonnes were supplied to 82 pending applicants, and a total of 12,345 metric tonnes of sand was supplied to 1,030 applicants.

Mukesh Kumar Meena said that as roads have been damaged in many places, the users should cooperate with the authorities.



Plans to establish 'Australia Corner' on AU campus

Delegation from Australia meets university officials

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to strengthen educational and cultural ties between India and Australia, a delegation from Australia met with Andhra University (AU) officials to discuss the establishment of an "Australia Corner" on the AU campus. The delegation, led by Swati Balasubramanian from the Government of Western Australia's Investment and Trade Department, met with AU Vice-Chancellor Prof G Sasibhushana Rao, Registrar Prof. EN Dhanunjaya Rao, and representatives from the Government of Western Australia.

The 'Australia Corner' aims to promote cooperation in education, trade, and research, while fostering stronger relationships between Indian and Australian academic institutions. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Sasibhushana Rao emphasised the significance of the initiative, stating, "The establishment of the Australia Corner will not only enhance the university's international collaborations, but also create new opportunities for students and faculty to engage in global educational exchange programmes."

Swati Balasubramanian expressed her enthusiasm, saying, "Australia Corner will

serve as a bridge, connecting Indian students to Australian universities and offering Australian students opportunities to study in India. It will play a pivotal role in deepening the friendship between the two nations while expanding business and trade collaborations."

Prof Dhanunjaya Rao highlighted the potential for future academic partnerships, stating that the initiative will pave the way for the signing of MoUs with leading Australian universities, enabling joint research projects, faculty exchange programmes, and improved access to global educational resources.

IAS Officers' Wives Association donates Rs 5 lakh to CMRF



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The IAS Officers' Wives Association (IASOWA) has donated Rs 5 lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. They handed over a cheque of Rs 5 lakh to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the Vijayawada Collectorate for the relief of flood victims in the State.

President of the association Reshma Prasad, along with Padma Valli, Prada Bhaskar and others, handed over the cheque to the CM.

Chandrababu expressed gratitude to the association on behalf of all the people of the State.



Minister consoles family members of victim

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing and Information and Public Relations Kolu Parthasarathy has visited the family of P Chandrasekhar of Bramaramba Puram in Krishna Lanka region, who drowned in the Budameru stream. Chandrasekhar, who studied MBA, saved two people working in his dairy farm from floods before drowning.

Minister Parthasarathy visited his family members and con-

soled them. He assured that the government will provide the necessary assistance and support to the family.

Forty cows and buffaloes of Chandrasekhar's dairy farm were lost in the flood.

Food, drinking water and milk were distributed to the flood victims at Ramadevi Nagar in Krishna Lanka. Parthasarathy was accompanied by former legislators from Chintalapudi, Ganta Murali and others.

TRIBALS IN REMOTE VILLAGE PROTEST

No road connectivity amid hardships

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

The residents of Ajaypuram, a remote village in the Anakapalli district, are pleading with the government to address their long-standing demand for road connectivity. Home to the Konda Dora tribe, Ajaypuram is situated under the Cheemalapadu Panchayat and is inhabited by 29 families with a total population of 160. Despite their persistent efforts over the last decade to construct makeshift roads under the Employment Guarantee Scheme, heavy rains continue to wash away their hard work, leaving the village disconnected.

On Thursday, the women of Ajaypuram staged a symbolic protest, carrying dolis (makeshift stretchers) to draw attention to their plight. They demanded immediate government intervention to address their connectivity issues. "Our main problem is road connectivity. While there is good connectivity to Jogampeta School, the pathway to our village is undeveloped. This hampers access to essential services like ambulances," explained a vil-



lager, highlighting the daily challenges they face.

Despite these obstacles, 13 children from Ajaypuram bravely navigate the treacherous terrain to attend school in Z Jogampeta. However, the situation worsens during the rainy season, making the roads nearly impassable. "In the 2018-19 financial year, local authorities promised to begin road construction from Z Jogampeta to Ajaypuram with a budget of 790 lakh. However, these works were never carried out," lamented another villager.

The villagers expressed their frustration over the lack of progress, despite repeated assurances from the previous government that a proposal for road

construction was under consideration. The absence of proper road facilities has not only impacted Ajaypuram but also the nearby villages of Neredubanda, Peddaguruvu, and Jeelugulova. Additionally, these villages suffer from the lack of basic amenities, such as an Anganwadi centre, further exacerbating the hardships faced by the tribal communities.

"We have been facing many difficulties due to the lack of road facilities," the villagers stated. "Besides our village, the nearby villages also lack proper road connectivity. We appeal to the government to allocate funds for road construction in all these villages, including Ajaypuram, to improve our liv-

ing conditions." The residents voiced their discontent over the significant investments made by the Central and State governments in material grants through the Employment Guarantee Scheme, without allocating any funds for road construction in their tribal villages.

In a show of unity and determination, the villagers have announced plans to organize a protest on September 8 at the district Collector's office if the government fails to take immediate action. This protest will see participation from all PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) villages. K Govinda Rao, Honorary President of the 5th Schedule Sadhana Committee of CPI(M) Adivasi Sangham, stood in solidarity with the villagers during the protest, along with tribal women from the village, including Vantala Chiranjeevi and Vantala Danamma. "We will not rest until our voices are heard and our demands met," vowed Govinda Rao, calling on the authorities to prioritize the basic needs of the tribal communities.

Heavy rains, cyclones drive up vegetable prices

Vegetable crops severely damaged in both Telugu states



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The recent heavy rains and cyclones that have ravaged Andhra Pradesh have taken a toll on the State's agricultural sector, particularly the vegetable crops. As a result, prices of vegetables are expected to rise significantly in the coming weeks. G. Prasad, Estate Manager of MVP Rythu Bazaar, predicts a substantial increase in vegetable prices due to the widespread damage to crops. "We anticipate a major demand and supply gap in the next 20 days," Prasad said. "Private vendors are forecasting a 25 to 30 percent increase in vegetable prices for September compared to August."

Konda Babu, Estate Manager of Seethammadhara Rythu Bazaar, highlighted the immediate impact of the floods. "Vegetable crops have been severely damaged due to the heavy rain and storms in both Telugu States. Consequently, we are already seeing shortages," he said. For instance, the price of green chilies has jumped from Rs 36 per kg to Rs 42 per kg in just a day. The disruption in supply

comes at a time when many people traditionally refrain from eating non-vegetarian food during the month of Shrawana, further driving up demand for vegetables. Currently, the price of tomatoes at Vizag Rythu Bazaars stands at Rs 24 per kg, while in the retail market, they are being sold for over Rs 40 per kg. Onions, which are supplied from Nagpur, Solapur, and Kurnool markets, are priced at Rs 46 per kg and are also expected to rise.

Other vegetable prices have also been impacted. Ridge gourd is priced at Rs 36 per kg, ivy gourd (Dondakaya) at Rs 37, teasel gourd (Akarakaya) at Rs 110, okra at Rs 26, carrots at Rs 30, beetroot at Rs 26, and capsicum at Rs 54. Notably, carrots, beetroot, and capsicum are primarily sourced from Telangana, while greens, bell peppers, okra, and ginger come from Anakapalle and ASR districts. With ongoing rains and continued crop damage in these areas, the trend of rising vegetable prices is likely to persist. Private traders have already adjusted their prices to reflect the increased costs, signalling a challenging period ahead for consumers.

Red Cross holds medical camps in flooded areas



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During a brief relief from the rainfall and a little receding of flood water, the people are more vulnerable to viral fevers and infections. The polluted water worsens the situation. Indian Red Cross Society,

AP State branch, which is helping the people in rescuing and providing needed food and water, now concentrating on the medical camps. Four camps were organised at Sitara Junction, Kabela and Singh Nagar on Thursday.

The Red Cross has roped in

the services of medical and para medical staff of the neighbouring district branches and conducts these camps.

With the support of Coca Cola, 15,000 water bottles were distributed on Thursday along with bread and food packets.

CREDAI Women's Wing distributes clay Ganesh idols

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The CREDAI Women's Wing (CWW) distributed clay Ganesh idols near the Kali Mata temple on RK Beach Road on Thursday evening. The initiative underscores the growing trend of incorporating environmental consciousness into traditional festivities.

Neeraja Jami, the Coordinator of CWW, emphasised the dual focus of the initiative on cultural reverence and environmental responsibility. "Our initiative is about integrating environmental care with our traditional celebrations. By distributing clay Ganesh idols, we aim to set a positive example and inspire others to adopt more eco-friendly practices during Ganesh Chaturthi," Jami said.



Secretary K Kiranmayi added her perspective on the initiative's broader impact. "Clay idols are biodegradable and do not contribute to water pollution, unlike their plastic counterparts. With this effort, we hope to demonstrate that environmental stewardship can be seamlessly woven into our festive traditions."

The distribution event gar-

nered significant community engagement, reflecting a heightened awareness of sustainable practices. The event also saw the participation of Women's Wing Past Coordinator Suma Burugupalli, Joint Secretaries Kanchetti Srinivas and P Narasimha Rao, along with committee members M Krishna Mohan Rao and Kiran Kumar Rajana.

DC flags off flood relief vehicles

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Huge quantities of essential commodities, including drinking water, milk and food items, were sent to the flood-affected areas in Vijayawada from the district on Thursday.

District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani flagged off the vehicles at Telaga Kalyanamandapam. Essentials including rice, biscuits, milk and water packets, sufficient to distribute to over 5000 families were sent in 14 vehicles. The Collector along with MLA Bommidu Nayakar flagged off the vehicles.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that 15 tonnes of rice, three tons of essential commodities, three tonnes of fruits and vegetables, 25,000 water bottles, 500 five-litre water bottles, 7000 milk packets, bread rolls, blankets



and other materials were sent to the flood affected areas in Vijayawada 14 vehicles for five

thousand families. The essentials and other materials were collected and sent under the

supervision of MLA Bommidu Nayakar, she complimented. The Collector recalled that

from the Chief Secretary to the Secretariat staff, all are taking part in the relief operations in the flood-hit areas in Vijayawada. West Godavari district is also contributing its mite by sending essential commodities, food items and other materials to the victims, she acknowledged. Essential commodities and other needed materials would continue to be sent till normalcy is restored in the flood-hit areas, Collector Nagarani asserted.

MLA Nayakar said that in response to the call given by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, the essential commodities and other material are being sent to the flood-hit areas.

RDO M A Ambarish, Tahsildar T Srijayeswari and other officials were present.

MP underlines need to establish cancer hospital

PNS ■ NANDYALA

Nandyal MP Baireddy Shabari underlined the need to establish a cancer hospital in Nandyal and promised to strive for the same.

The Government General Hospital development committee meeting was held here on Thursday presided over by Minister for Minority Welfare NM Farook and District Collector Rajakumari.

Speaking on the occasion, the MP said that there are a large number of cancer patients in the district and she emphasized setting up a cancer institute here.

She said that the 10-bed government hospital in Nandyal was upgraded to a 100-bed hospital during the previous TDP regime. She



recalled that the Centre had permitted to establish a medical college hospital here.

The MP acknowledged that she would give priority for the development of the GGH here and allocate MPLAD funds for the development of the GGH. She alleged that the GGH was ruined during the

five years of the YSRCP regime. The then Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy promised to set up CT Scan and MR Scan in the GGH here but did not fulfil the same. The GGH here was subjected to negligence during the five years YSRCP regime, the MP regretted.

Pemmasani Foundation donates Rs 1 cr to CMRF



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Pemmasani Foundation has come forward with a helping hand for the flood-affected people. On behalf of the

Foundation, the Minister for Rural Development and Communications Pemmasani Chandrasekhar, and Pemmasani Ravishankar, on Thursday handed over a

cheque of Rs 1 crore meant for the CM Relief Fund to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, in the presence of Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chowhan.

Rs 1.5 cr by Magunta for flood relief

PNS ■ ONGOLE



Ongole MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy has donated Rs 1.50 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

The MP, on behalf of Pearl Distilleries Private Limited, donated R 1.5 cr to the CMRF for carrying out relief operations in the flood-affected areas.

The MP, along with Anam Siva Kumar Reddy, handed over the cheque to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Seethakka must apologise to tribals, demands BJP

Rape being depicted as communal clash: Shilpa



attacked innocent Adivasi women and youth. Instead of taking action as the incident took place five days ago, the government is trying to play down the issue, he said.

He said that there is no safety for Adivasi women in agency areas now and that Adivasi women are being frequently raped due to the negligence of the state government.

Addressing a press conference at the State BJP office, Adilabad MP Godem Nagesh demanded that Seethakka should apologise to Adivasis first as the government is trying to play down the incident saying that there was no rape. He said the police filed a case only after dharnas by Adivasis and that it is shocking that the police did not care even though the victim clearly said that one Shaik Maqdoom raped her. Meanwhile, Mahila Morcha activists blocked Minister Seethakka under the leadership of Telangana Mahila Morcha President Shilpa Reddy at the Gandhi Hospital.

The Mahila Morcha demanded that Seethakka should consider the incident as rape and attempt to murder and not depict it as a communal incident.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJPLP Leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy demanded that Women's Welfare Minister Seethakka should apologise to tribals for saying that the victim was only attacked and that she was not raped.

He termed Seethakka's comments as outrageous and demanded that the government should hang the culprit. He said that Bangladeshi Rohingyas are entering tribal agency areas and are attacking Adivasis.

Speaking to the media after consoling Jainur rape victim (a Adivasi woman) at the Gandhi Hospital here on Thursday, Maheshwar said that the Congress government is trying to protect the culprits.

He said the government is not taking the issue seriously even though a section of people

Siddhartha Engg College Dean inspects damaged Durga temple ghat road

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Siddhartha Engineering College Dean Pandu Ranga Rao inspected the Ghat Road damaged by boulders falling from the Indrakeladri, the uphill of the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, in Vijayawada on Thursday. He spoke to temple Executive Engineer KS Rama Rao regarding the matter.

During the inspection, Pandu Ranga Rao said that within a short period, he will hand in the plans to prevent the landslides and to construct a retaining wall to stop further damage. Temple EE KVS Koteswara Rao explained the road damage to Pandu Ranga Rao.

New low pressure to bring more rains to AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As some regions of Andhra Pradesh recover from the recent spell of incessant rains and floods, the Met Department on Thursday said a new low pressure area has formed over the Bay of Bengal, which is likely to bring heavy rainfall in parts of the state till September 9.

The weather system formed over the west-central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal off the north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coasts.

The Met Department forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places over north coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam on Thursday and heavy rain in parts of south coastal Andhra Pradesh. It also forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning in parts of north and south coastal Andhra, Yanam and Rayalaseema with wind speeds reaching up to 40 km per hour.

River Krishna in spate again

Two gates of Srisailem Dam lifted

PNS ■ KURNOOL

River Krishna is once again in spate, prompting authorities to lift two crest gates of the Srisailem Dam to release floodwater.

This marks the fifth occasion in the past two months that the crest gates of the Srisailem Dam have been opened to manage excess water.

Official sources indicate that the Srisailem Dam is receiving 106,000 cusecs of water, which is being released downstream to the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam. As of Thursday, the water



level at the Srisailem Dam was 884.60 feet, just short of its full capacity of 885 feet. Currently, 213.40 TMC of water is stored at the dam, with

its full capacity being 215 TMC. Hydropower generation is ongoing at both the Left and Right power stations of the project.

VPA achieves 100% renewable energy use

Port Authority has undertaken ambitious projects aimed at enhancing environmental performance

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA) has emerged as the leading major port in India to utilise 100 per cent renewable energy, setting a new benchmark in the maritime sector. This remarkable milestone not only highlights VPA's commitment to sustainability, but also positions it as a leader among all major ports in the country.

Under the Green Port initiatives launched by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, the Visakhapatnam Port Authority has undertaken a series of ambitious projects aimed at enhancing environmental performance. These



A view of the solar power plant at Visakhapatnam Port Authority

initiatives are closely aligned with the blue economy's objectives and the 'Amrit Kaal Vision 2047', which aspires to achieve zero carbon emissions in Visakhapatnam. Key projects include the establishment of a

state-of-the-art solar power plant, extensive green cover through plantation drives, the introduction of CNG buses to reduce vehicular emissions, and the deployment of sweeping machines for better clean-

liness and waste management. Expressing pride in this achievement, Port Authority Chairman Dr M Angamuthu, stated, "Achieving 100 per cent renewable energy usage is a significant milestone for us. It is a testament to our unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship and our responsibility towards future generations. We are proud to lead the way in green port initiatives, setting a benchmark for other ports across the country."

The port's transition to renewable energy is a major step towards the nation's broader goal of reducing carbon footprint and embracing sustainable practices.

Speedy completion of rly station works likely

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has called for the speedy completion of development projects at key railway stations in Srikakulam district under the Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme. During a meeting held on Thursday at his camp office, Vijaya Nilayam, the Minister met with DRM of Waltair division Saurabh Prasad, and other senior officials to review the progress of various works at Srikakulam Road (Amadalavalasa), Palasa, Naupada, and Ichchapuram stations.

Rammohan Naidu highlighted the need to enhance passenger amenities at these stations, stating, "The priority must be to ensure basic facilities like clean



toilets, necessary lifts, free Wi-Fi, and kiosks for local products. Passengers also deserve upgraded information systems and better accessibility for differently-abled individuals."

Special focus was placed on the development of Harichandrapuram railway station, located near the National Highway, which the Minister

Development projects underway at key railway stations in Srikakulam under Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme

envisions as a future multi-modal hub. "Harichandrapuram station holds strategic importance, and transforming it into a multi-modal hub will significantly benefit commuters," Naidu emphasised. The meeting also addressed broader infrastructure improvements across district stations, including the provision of drinking water, street lights, seating arrangements, and foot-over bridges (FOBs). The Minister called for the construction of underpasses to address level crossing challenges, stressing that these should be roofed to prevent waterlogging during the monsoon season. "We need to solve the problem of water accumulation in these underpasses during rains, and the construction must be resilient enough to withstand such conditions," he noted.

Minister extols services of voluntary organisations

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathi has lauded the services of voluntary organisations in the flood-affected areas.

The Minister distributed essential commodities to the flood-affected families at Velampet locality in Nuzvid on Thursday. The fertiliser traders donated Rs 1 lakh for relief operations in the flood-hit areas and they handed over the cheque to the Minister. The Anganwadi staff also donated Rs 50,000 and handed over the cheque to the Minister. Speaking on the occasion,



Minister Parthasarathi said that no matter how many relief programs the governments do during natural calamities, the

cooperation of voluntary organizations is necessary to carry out the relief operations at the full level.

Paramotoring takes flight in Vanjangi Hills

PNS ■ PADERU

A thrilling new adventure is set to take off in Vanjangi Hills as the Paderu Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) has given the green signal for a one-month paramotoring trial. The initiative aims to assess the potential of this aerial sport to boost tourism in the picturesque region.

ITDA Project Officer V Abhishek expressed optimism about the trial, stating, "We believe paramotoring will be a major draw for tourists, especially as the tourism season begins in October. We anticipate generating an income of Rs 35 lakh this year from tourism activities here."

The trial runs will not only help determine the feasibility of

Green light for one-month trial



paramotoring, but also serve as a test for the long-term sustain-

ability of the activity. Abhishek emphasised the importance of

environmental preservation, urging tourists to avoid litter-

ing, especially with plastic waste. "We are committed to ensuring that tourism development does not harm our natural surroundings," he said.

The ITDA PO also encouraged other villages in the region to follow the example of Vanjangi Hills and explore tourism opportunities. During his visit, Abhishek toured the Bolegama Tribal Traditional Centre and inaugurated three newly modernised primary school buildings, funded by the revenue generated from tourism in Vanjangi Hills.

Paderu MPDO K. Sai Naveen, Tehsildar V. Trinadha Rao, MEO Saraswati, and Vanjangi Sarpanch Vantala Bonju Babu were among the officials present during the visit.

ACROSS THE STATES



EC notifies 3rd phase of J&K Assembly elections

The Election Commission of India on Thursday issued a notification for the third and final phase of the Legislative Assembly polls for Jammu and Kashmir. The notification was issued for 40 assembly constituencies, spread across Kupwara, Baramulla, Bandipora, Udhampur, Kathua, Samba, and Jammu districts, where polling will be held on October 1. In Kashmir Division, 16 assembly constituencies will go to polls, while in Jammu region voting will be held on 24 seats. The seats going to polls in Kashmir are Karnah, Trehgam, Kupwara, Lolab, Handwara, Langate, Sopore, Rafiaband, Uri, Baramulla, Gulmarg, Wagoor-Kreeri, Pattan, Sonawari, Bandipora, and Gurez (ST). In Jammu division, the constituencies going to polls are Udhampur West, Udhampur East, Chenani, Ramnagar (SC), Bani, Billawar, Basohli, Jasrota, Kathua (SC), Hiranagar, Ramgarh (SC), Samba, and Vijaypur, Bishnah (SC), Suchetgarh (SC), R S Pura, Jammu South, Bahu, Jammu East, Nagrota, Jammu West, Jammu North, Marh (SC), Akhnoor (SC), and Chhamb are the other constituencies going to polls in the region.



NEET aspirant hangs self in Kota, father alleges 'scam'

A 21-year-old student preparing for NEET-UG in Kota allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of a rented room in a house on Wednesday night. This is the 14th case of suicide by a student in the coaching hub Kota this year since January, while 26 cases of death by suicide were reported in the city in 2023. The father of the deceased held the alleged NEET-24 exam scam responsible for the extreme step taken by the youth. However, he did not level any allegation in the report to the police in the matter. No suicide note was recovered from the room in which the student stayed. The deceased, identified as Parshuram Jatav (21), a resident of Barsana in Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh, last spoke to his father on Wednesday around 1.15 pm and expressed his wish to return home. His father, Khacharmal, asked him to come back home. However, the son did not attend to his calls after that.



Govt extends ceasefire pact with NSCN-IM Niki group

The Centre on Thursday extended the ceasefire agreement with a break-away faction of the Naga insurgency group NSCN-IM for another year. The NSCN (K) Niki group is led by Niki Sumi against whom the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh for allegedly killing 18 Indian Army soldiers in Manipur in 2015. The ceasefire agreement is in operation between the government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (K) Niki group and it was decided to extend the pact for a period of one year with effect from September 8, 2024 to September 7, 2025, an official statement said. This agreement was first signed on September 6, 2021. The government had signed a framework agreement with the major Naga group NSCN-IM on August 3, 2015 in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to find a permanent solution. The framework agreement came after over 80 rounds of negotiations spanning 18 years, with the first breakthrough made in 1997 when the ceasefire agreement was sealed after decades of insurgency in Nagaland which started soon after India's independence in 1947.

India wants to create 'many Singapores' of its own: PM

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday touted Singapore as a model for developing nations and said India wanted to create "several Singapores" of its own.

During his talks with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, Modi expressed confidence in the city-state's fourth generation leadership.

He said Singapore is not merely a partner country, it serves as an inspiration for every developing nation.

"We also aim to create several Singapores within India. I am pleased that we are collaborating towards this goal. The ministerial roundtable we have established is a path-breaking mechanism," the prime minister said.

Congratulating the prosperous nation's premier, Modi said, "This is our first meeting since you assumed the office as prime minister. My heartiest congratulations and best wishes to you. I am confident that under the leadership of 4G, Singapore will achieve progress

Hails nation as global inspiration



even more rapidly."

Wong was sworn in as the new prime minister of Singapore in May. The 51-year-old economist-turned-politician succeeded Lee Hsien Loong, 72, who relinquished his position after two decades; both belonging to the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) that has been driving Singapore's economic progress for more than

five decades. Wong, who was the deputy prime minister, is leading the fourth generation PAP politicians' government as the prime minister and the finance minister.

Modi flew to Singapore on Wednesday after wrapping his visit to Brunei, the first bilateral visit there by an Indian prime minister.

"Collaborative initiatives have

been identified in areas such as skilling, digitalisation, mobility, advanced manufacturing, semiconductors and AI, healthcare, sustainability and cybersecurity," said the prime minister, who is on a two-day visit to the Asian financial centre with the global business network.

Singapore is also an important facilitator of India's Act East policy, Modi said.

"Our shared belief in democratic values connects us. I am delighted to have the opportunity to visit Singapore at the beginning of my third term," he said.

Underlining the strategic partnership between India and Singapore, Prime Minister Modi said, "Over the past 10 years, our trade has more than doubled. Mutual investment has increased almost threefold to cross USD 150 billion. Singapore was the first country with which we launched the UPI Person-to-Person payment facility."

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'Armed forces need to be prepared for war to preserve peace'

India is a peace loving nation and the armed forces need to be prepared for war in order to preserve peace, he said stressing upon the significance of evolving joint military vision to deal with future security challenges



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The armed forces need to be prepared for war in order to preserve peace, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday while addressing the top commanders of the Army, Navy and the Air Force.

In his remarks at the maiden joint commanders conference here, Singh, touching upon the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza as well as the situation in Bangladesh, exhorted the military to analyse these "episodes" and stay prepared to deal with the "unexpected".

India is a peace loving nation

and the armed forces need to be prepared for war in order to preserve peace, he said stressing upon the significance of evolving joint military vision to deal with future security challenges.

The defence minister also referred to the over four-year border row with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh and pitched for deeper analysis of the situation.

"Despite global volatility, India is enjoying a rare peace dividend and it is developing peacefully. However, due to the increasing number of challenges, we need to remain alert," he said.

'Next govt in J&K will be of nationalist people'



PNS ■ NOWSHERA/JAMMU

BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav on Thursday said the next government in Jammu and Kashmir will be of "nationalist people" and "not anti-nationalists".

The BJP leader made this assertion as he blamed the National Conference and the PDP for using former militants in their campaigning and the family members of separatists to plunge into the electoral battle in Kashmir.

He said the BJP will emerge as the single largest party in the elections in Jammu and Kashmir as it will bag 35 seats in the Jammu region besides registering victory in Kashmir as well.

"We have scrapped Article 370 and brought peace, progress and development to this region during the past five years. That progress and development will continue. We have not worked so hard here to hand over the reins of this region to separatists and soft separatists in 2024," Madhav told an election rally here.

"Let us make it clear that the next government, which will be formed here, will be of nationalist people, not anti-nationalists. There will be no government led by the Muftis and Abdullahs in this state," he added.

Madhav, who hit the campaign trail in support of Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Ravinder Raina, said, "We need a government here that will continue the development work done by Modi ji across the country. We are committed to forming that government."

UP court again defers hearing as plaintiff ill

PNS ■ SULTANPUR

The MP-MLA court in Sultanpur on Thursday once again deferred the hearing till September 19 in a defamation case filed against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as the plaintiff did not appear citing ill health, a lawyer said.

Earlier on August 23 also, the court had deferred the matter and set September 5 as the date for hearing. Prior to that, on August 12, the matter could not be heard as the special judge of the court was on leave.

Plaintiff Vijay Mishra's lawyer Santosh Kumar Pandey said the plaintiff did not appear in court on Thursday due to ill health.

"An application was filed in the court to present evidence, which was accepted and the MP-MLA court has given the next date in the case as September 19," Pandey said. "On September 19, the

plaintiff will have to present evidence in the court through the lawyer," he added.

During the Karnataka elections in 2018, Gandhi allegedly made objectionable remarks against senior BJP leader Amit Shah. In August 2018, Mishra, a local BJP leader and former cooperative chairman, had filed a complaint in the court leading to the defamation case.

Gandhi surrendered in the court on February 20 during the 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra'. He got bail on two personal bonds of Rs 25,000 each, after which he was called to record his statement by issuing notices several times by the court.

During the Lok Sabha elections, Gandhi could not reach the court citing poll engagements. Subsequently, the court ordered him in a strict tone to appear.

On July 26, the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha came to the Sultanpur court and recorded his statement.

Birla underscores need to excel in AI, biotech

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday stressed on the need to keep India ahead in the field of artificial intelligence, biotechnology and other modern fields as these will play a key role in the fourth industrial revolution where the country has a crucial part cut out for itself.

He also said that educational institutions determine the direction and future of the country.

Birla said the contribution of teachers is not limited to just imparting education but also in shaping personality, beliefs and skills of a generation.

Addressing the students of a Delhi University college here to mark the Teachers' Day, he highlighted the role of teachers for their valuable contribution to the society.

Referring to the role of teachers in nation building, Birla observed the place of a guru is at the top in the Indian

Birla said the contribution of teachers is not limited to just imparting education but also in shaping personality, beliefs and skills of a generation.



knowledge tradition.

He noted that in the ancient Indian philosophy, guru is not just a source of education but is the architect of character building, personality development, society building and nation building.

The Lok Sabha speaker said that in today's rapidly changing world, the role of teachers has become even more important.

The responsibility of preparing the youth for the challenges and opportunities of the future

rests on the shoulders of teachers, he added.

It is only under the guidance of the teachers that our students will not only learn to adapt themselves to the changes taking place but will also lead this revolution of change, Birla was quoted as saying in an official statement.

He said that India is developed today because of the emphasis on education since ancient times. At present, the youth of India are leading in almost all fields, he added.

Oppn demand Bengal-like law in Odisha for women safety

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Opposition BJD and Congress on Thursday demanded a stringent law in Odisha on the lines of the one passed recently in neighbouring West Bengal for women's safety. The West Bengal Assembly on September 3 unanimously passed the 'Aparajita Woman and Child Bill (West Bengal Criminal Laws and Amendment) Bill 2024' that seeks capital punishment for rape convicts if their actions result in the victim's death or leave her in a vegetative state and life sentence without parole for other perpetrators.

Other significant features of the proposed legislation include the completion of probes into rape cases within 21 days of the



initial report, a reduction from the previous two-month deadline, and a special task force where women officers will lead investigations.

During discussion in Odisha Assembly, both the opposition parties, the BJD and the Congress, alleged that the state's BJP government has no sensitivity towards rape victims and none from the administration have met kin of the victims of rape-murder cases in Remuna in

Balasure district, Naktideula in Sambalpur district, Patana in Keonjhar district and Bhubaneswar that took place after the BJP government formation in the state in June.

Initiating a debate on the alleged rise in the number of rape-murder cases in the state, opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik claimed that incidents of crime against women and children have increased alarmingly after the BJP came to power in the state. Demanding Rs 10 lakh as compensation for the kin of the victim of rape and murder in Remuna area of Balasure district, Mallik said the nine-year-old girl was raped and murdered on August 27, but government representatives were yet to visit their house.

DELHI EXCISE CASE
AAP benefited from funds collected through 'scam': CBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had a "preconceived" plan to privatise liquor business in the national capital and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) benefited from illicit funds it raised through the excise policy "scam", the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has alleged before a special court here.

The CBI made the allegations before Special Judge Kaveri Baweja in its supplementary charge sheet filed against Kejriwal in the case recently.

The court took cognisance of the charge sheet against Kejriwal, AAP MLA Durgesh Pathak and others on September 3.

According to sources, the CBI alleged that Kejriwal, who was the overall in-charge of the party as its national convenor, was behind the criminal conspiracy to generate illicit funds.

It alleged that in order to execute his preconceived plan, Kejriwal sought monetary support for AAP in March 2021, when the excise policy was being formulated by a Group of Ministers (GoM) led by co-accused Manish Sisodia. Sisodia was then the deputy chief minister and held the excise portfolio.

Kejriwal's close associate and AAP's former communication in-charge Vijay Nair, also an accused in the case, was alleged to have approached various stakeholders in the liquor business and demanded illegal gratification in exchange for "favourable



SC reserves order on pleas for bail

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its order on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's separate pleas seeking bail and challenging his arrest by the CBI in the alleged excise policy scam. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan heard arguments put forward by Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, representing the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal. "Thank you for the assistance. Judgment reserved," the bench said after the lawyers concluded their arguments. Kejriwal has filed two separate petitions challenging the denial of bail and against his arrest by the CBI in the the corruption case filed by the central agency.

adjustments" in the policy. The charge sheet claimed that Nair had no authority or reason to approach different stakeholders in the liquor business and that he could not have done so without Kejriwal's authorisation and direction.

Swachh Bharat's toilets helped slash infant deaths: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Toilets constructed under the Swachh Bharat Mission — India's national cleanliness programme — may have helped avert roughly 60,000-70,000 infant deaths every year, according to a study.

A team, including researchers from the International Food Policy Research Institute, US, looked at data from nationally representative surveys covering 35 states/Union territories and over 600 districts over 20 years.

The study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, investigated the link between an

increase in access to toilet, built under the Swachh Bharat Mission, and drop in deaths among infants and children aged under five from 2000 to 2020.

The results suggested that on average, improving district-level toilet access by 10 percentage points corresponded to a lowering of death rates in infants by 0.9 points and those in under-5 by 1.1 points.

Historically, having access to a toilet and deaths among children have been inversely related in India, the authors said.

They further found that improving toilet coverage by 30



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per cent and above in a district corresponded with substantial reductions in infant and children deaths.

"In absolute numbers, this coefficient would scale to an estimated 60,000-70,000 infant lives annually," the authors wrote.

They said the "novel evidence" of reductions in infant and child mortality, following a comprehensive national sanitation program, potentially indicated at the transformative role of Swachh Bharat Mission.

The findings are in line with evidence from global and South Asian contexts, with multiple studies, that analysed popula-

tion-level data collected via surveys, indicated that improved sanitation can potentially cut child mortality rates by 5-30 per cent, the researchers said.

They added that recent studies have highlighted the broader benefits of increased access to toilets, including women's safety, financial savings because of reduced medical expenses and improved quality of life overall.

However, despite the benefits, inequalities in adopting and using toilets persist owing to caste and religion-based discriminatory practices, the authors said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India shines at Paralympics

India puts up best-ever show at Paralympics; PM Modi lauds athletes' perseverance and talent

India's performance at the 2024 Paralympics will be etched in the annals of sporting history, as the country witnessed its best-ever showing at the Games. With a record-breaking tally of medals, the athletes' determination, grit, and sheer willpower resonated deeply with millions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, visibly elated, interacted with the Paralympic contingent, hailing their indomitable spirit as an inspiration to the nation. India sent its largest-ever contingent of 84 athletes to the 2024 Paralympics, competing across various disciplines like archery, athletics, and shooting. Among the many standout performances, Indian archer Sheetal Devi captured the world's attention, competing without hands and displaying an extraordinary level of precision and resilience. Her triumphs, alongside other athletes, served as a testament to the extraordinary abilities of differently-abled individuals who continue to defy the odds and break barriers. PM Modi, in his conversation with the athletes, expressed his deep admiration, stating,

"Your hard work and dedication have brought glory to the nation... You have shown that challenges, no matter how daunting, can be overcome with perseverance." The success of Indian Paralympians is not merely a result of their training, but a culmination of years of battling personal and societal obstacles. These athletes have defied their disabilities, proving that with determination, no hurdle is insurmountable. Each medal won at the Paralympics tells a story of immense struggle, dedication, and the refusal to accept limitations. Take, for instance, the journey of Bhavina Patel, a para table tennis player who became a beacon of hope after her exceptional performances on the



global stage. Diagnosed with polio at a young age, Bhavina's journey from rehabilitation to becoming a Paralympian exemplifies the strength of human willpower. Such athletes embody the essence of perseverance, redefining success not by their victories alone but by their unwavering resolve to overcome challenges. As India celebrates its best-ever Paralympics performance, the spotlight on para-athletes has intensified, garnering widespread support from all sections of society. What makes these athletes stand apart is their ability to transform adversity into strength. Despite the physical and emotional challenges, they face, they continue to push boundaries, proving that talent knows no bounds. For every medal India wins at the Paralympics, there are countless hours of practice, numerous setbacks, and a tireless pursuit of excellence. As India celebrates the achievements of its Paralympic athletes, their stories remind us that greatness is often born out of struggle. Their success is a beacon of hope for millions, showcasing that with determination, talent, and an unbreakable spirit, anything is possible. India's Paralympians have made the nation proud, and their stories will inspire generations to come. As they continue to rise and break records, their message is clear: Perseverance, dedication, and talent can overcome even the greatest of challenges.

PICTALK



Nuns offer prayers during observance of the death anniversary of Mother Teresa, in Kolkata

IC-814: Lessons beyond the binary



BHOPIINDER SINGH

The web series 'IC-184: The Kandahar Hijack' has reignited debate over the moral and strategic dilemmas faced during hostage crises

Web series IC-184: The Kandahar Hijack, has triggered debate on the complexities and 'greys' that accompany such incidents. Beyond obvious things like the lack of coordination, responsiveness or even allowing the flight to take off from Amritsar – one important query is if India did wrong in negotiating with terrorists. Given the handiwork of these released terrorists in the subsequent terror attacks, the question acquires even gravity. However, beyond the simplistic and binary 'yes' or 'no' position that is often postulated in the argument, lies the necessity of nuance in attempting to answer the same. It is universally agreed that negotiations with terrorists are a bad idea, however, sometimes, the consequences of not negotiating can have far more debilitating and costly consequences.

Sifting the wheat from the chaff of the supposed 'no-negotiation' stance of some countries (as often banded) is important. It is frequently argued that countries like Israel or the United States of America do not negotiate with terrorists. It is further claimed that because of such an unbending posture, the Israelis and Americans avoided being taken as hostages. But such beliefs are untrue, misplaced, and belie the wheels-within-wheels of the American or Israeli reality, beyond the publicly stated position of 'no-negotiation'. It is the worst-kept secret that such countries have funnelled money through proxies, 'friendly countries', or even masked the same as 'aid' to secure their citizens, whilst maintaining the official stance. The Iran-Contra affair (1981-86) during the Reagan era wherein American hostages held by the Lebanese group, Hezbollah, were exchanged for weapons for Hezbollah itself, exemplifying the deals cut beyond the public gaze. As recently as 2014, the Americans had released five Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo, to secure an American hostage. Last August, the United States is believed to have unfrozen \$6 bil-



lion of Iranian funds in South Korean banks to secure the release of five US citizens. It is now argued that the same money could have been invaluable for the cash-strapped Iranians (widely believed benefactors of Hamas) in launching the subsequent '7th Oct' attack on Israel. Israelis themselves are the masters of the backdoor negotiations, irrespective of the belligerent stand adopted for public consumption. In the Gilat Shalit (Israeli prisoner) exchange of 2011, it is believed that Israelis released 1027 prisoners who were held in jails. Even now as the bludgeoning of the Gaza Strip continues, the Israelis in parallel (and in support of the Biden administration) are still negotiating with Hamas for the release of their citizens held hostage. Often, the aggrieved government can end up losing a lot of leverage and lives when they refuse to engage with bad actors. Negotiations help immediate outcomes, buy crucial time for alternate reactions, and most importantly, help establish critical information and 'leads' about the captors that could be invoked, productively. Lastly, a well-managed ransom payoff (with 'marked' bills and telltale trails) can also lead to discovering broader networks and bases to take down the terror infrastructure, subsequent-



THE CALCULATION AND OPPORTUNITIES WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR MORE CREATIVE WITH POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS, HAD IC-814 BEEN HELD UP IN AMRITSAR, AS OPPOSED TO KANDAHAR

ly. Negotiations or engagement does not have to be tantamount to surrender or even a 'bad deal', necessarily. From the post-released activities of the three terrorists in the IC-814 case, it was a costly 'deal' – but was there an alternative? The hijacked plane was parked in the backyard of Pakistani ISI's supported Afghan base (at least then) with 158 precious lives (not including the 5 terrorists). The terrorists in this case (under the direct supervision of the ISI and Taliban) were not exactly known to be reasonable, and if anything, had given a glimpse of their intent with the brutal and fatal stabbing of passenger, Rupin Katyal. Even an Entebbe-like commando operation using Indian Special Forces was impractical and fraught with additional risks. With the clear intention of harming Indian interests without an iota of any fear of getting caught (given the location) – the risk to the lives of all passengers and crew of IC-814 was not possible, but imminent. The calculation and opportunities would have been far more creative with possible solutions, had IC-814 been held up in Amritsar, as opposed to Kandahar. Could India have forsaken the lives of its citizens? Has any other country ever forsaken lives in similar circumstances? Did the USA attempt negotiating with the Iranian

authorities when its Embassy staff was held hostage or did it steadfastly hold to the 'no-negotiation' posture? The 'no-negotiation' is more of an ideal, but a fuzzy line, practically. It is a deterring policy but has never been an ironclad law, anywhere in the world. However, countries like Israel (or even India) do convey behaviorally is the guarantee of serious reprisals and redeeming their losses. For example, 'Operation Hot Pursuit', the cross-border operation against NCSN-K insurgents in Myanmar 'normalised' the expectation for bad actors, hereinafter – this, when done systematically, surgically and purposefully conveys solid sovereign intent. So, there is no silver bullet or inviolable guardrails in tackling terror, except adapting and responding according to the situation, whilst ensuring the overall objectives are not lost to inflexibility, weakness, or indecision. IC-814 was indeed a lapse of immense proportion but the complexities of the eight-day ordeal necessitated negotiations in that specific case, as insisting any other way is easier said than done, as instructed by history anywhere in the world. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOCIETAL ATTITUDE CHANGE A MUST

Madam — Nirbaya's case and Abhaya's cases caught the attention of the public and attracted stir. The Mollywood case got the importance of retired judge's involvement and submission of a report which, with four year's dust got released last week and the different associations rather than taking action on the perpetrators crime abdicated their responsibility and resigned. A woman from Hyderabad came out in to the streets and complained that she was sexually assaulted promising her roles in movies.

The exploitation of the fairer sex has been happening every where and every day. The fast track courts which PM was talking about in the SC's 75th year celebrations is not a solution to the problem and President calling it "enough is enough" is not an answer. It is not long ago when the then CJI in 2019 was accused of sexual torture and victimization by a staff member. Since then four CJI's have changed. Still there has been neither an institutional response nor a fair investigation and due process in case of a sexual-harassment allegation against a CJI.

These allegations illustrate a structural issue with the judiciary; the question of sexual harassment should not be dismissed as harming judicial independence. Similarly when there was a similar complaint against a sitting Governor, police was not allowed to investigate in the matter citing the immunity enjoyed by the constitutional head. The same logic or the thought process goes in the minds of the people who are decision makers in these cases for they try to protect the image of the household or the institution where the exploitation is reported. Law and judiciary can come in to play only when the matter is brought out but when the same is suppressed for whatever reason the women who are addressed as fair sex suffers with an unfair treatment. We need an attitudinal change to address the problem!

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Bengal passes Aparajita bill



As per news report "WB Government passes anti-rape Aparajita bill" published on 4th September, here is my response. West Bengal government must be applauded for passing Anti rape bill and seeking death penal-

ty for rape convicts. Hope Governor and President of India give their go ahead to this bill. It is also a welcome step for creating a special task force which is expected to complete the probe in 21 days. This horrific rape and murder case must become a watershed moment to turn things around for women for the better in future in our society.

But merely having a law to award death penalty to rape convicts may not suffice as unfortunately rapes incidents both in West Bengal and elsewhere in the country have not stopped even after this tragic RG Kar Hospital rape and murder case on 9th August. What is required is strict and unbiased implementation of the rule and law at the ground level. Because we have had tough laws in our country but what we lack is serious implementation which defies the whole purpose of framing a law.

Bal Govind | Noida

TEACHERS DAY CELEBRATION

Madam—As we celebrate yet another teachers day to commemorate the birth anniversary of our great teacher president Dr S Radhakrishnan and to honour the architects, the creators and producers of tomorrow's citizens a look into the world's noblest profession goes to show that it's not all well in the teaching field in the present fast paced global scenario. According to the 2018 Global Teacher Status Index India ranks eight in the top ten countries where teachers are held in the highest esteem. Though it is a matter of pride it is not all smiles for the teaching community. Exploitations, coercion and threats loom above the teaching fraternity. Thousands of teachers get very poor salaries in spite of the hard work they do. Poor working conditions, continuous work, discrimination, pressure from the higher ups and regulatory bodies have driven many teachers to leave the profession. Time has changed and this is not a society that once not long ago revered the Guru next to the father and the mother.

M Pradyu | Kannur

J&K ELECTIONS

Madam — In Jammu & Kashmir, political parties must prioritize growth and avoid revisiting the legacy of Article 370, as its abrogation is irreversible. They should instead highlight how this move will drive development, curb terrorism, and strengthen national security along the Pakistan and China borders, where POK, Aksai Chin, and Shaksgam Valley remain under illegal control. Avoiding conflicts with the Central Government is crucial, given J&K's strategic location and heavy reliance on central financial aid. Campaigns focused on regional, caste, or religious divides will only harm Kashmir's political future. The era of the 1990s must not return, and a Pakistan-centric approach will be disastrous, as seen in POK's decline. Parties should honestly work for unification and the betterment of the state.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Childhood trauma and its lasting impact on adult relationships

Recognising the impact of childhood trauma on adult relationships is crucial. By seeking therapy individuals can heal emotional wounds and foster healthier relations



DEEBA SALIM IRFAN

Childhood trauma, a deeply distressing experience that occurs before the age of 18, can have a profound and lasting impact on an individual's life. One of the most significant areas where this influence is felt is in adult relationships. Understanding the connection between childhood trauma and adult relationships can help individuals recognize the patterns that may be affecting their lives and seek appropriate support. When a child experiences trauma, it can disrupt their development and create a sense of insecurity and fear. This can lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy relationships in adulthood. Individuals who have experienced childhood trauma may struggle with trust, communication, and emotional intimacy. They may also be more prone to attracting or engaging in toxic relationships. One of the most common ways that childhood trauma can manifest in adult relationships is through difficulties with trust. Individuals who have been betrayed or abused as children may find it chal-



lenging to trust others, even in seemingly harmless situations. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as difficulties forming deep connections with others. Communication can also be a challenge for individuals who have experienced childhood trauma. They may struggle to express their emotions or be overly sensitive to criticism. This can lead to misunderstandings and conflict in relationships. Additionally, individuals who have been traumatized may be more likely to engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or avoidance, which can further hinder their ability to communicate effectively.

Emotional intimacy is another area where childhood trauma can have a significant impact. Individuals who have been traumatized may find it difficult to open up to others and share their feelings. They may fear rejection or abandonment, and may instead withdraw from relationships. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as difficulties forming deep and meaningful connections with others. Another way that childhood trauma can manifest in adult relationships is through the attraction to or engagement in toxic relationships. Individuals who have been traumatized may be more likely to attract or engage in relationships that replicate the abusive or neglectful dynamics of their childhood. This can be a way of unconsciously reliving past trauma and seeking to resolve it. It is important to note that not everyone who experiences childhood trauma will develop these patterns in their adult relationships. However, understanding the connection between childhood trauma and adult rela-

tionships can help individuals recognize the patterns that may be affecting their lives and seek appropriate support. If you are struggling with the impact of childhood trauma on your adult relationships, it is important to seek help. Therapy can be a valuable tool for understanding and addressing the underlying issues affecting your relationships. A therapist can help you develop healthy coping mechanisms, improve communication skills, and build stronger, more fulfilling relationships. Additionally, support groups can provide a safe and supportive space to connect with others who have experienced similar challenges. By understanding the connection between childhood trauma and adult relationships, individuals can take steps to heal from past wounds and build healthier, more fulfilling relationships. (The author is Dubai-based award-winning Poet, Novelist, Writing Retreat Curator and Founder of TheWriteScene.com. Views expressed are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA BOLSTERS 'ACT EAST' POLICY

PM Modi's Brunei visit highlights India's commitment to strengthening ties in Southeast Asia



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Modi is wasting no time in walking the talk as far as his foreign policy goals are concerned. This week, with a clear focus on Look East policy the Indian PM was in Brunei and Singapore. The Brunei visit was the first state visit by an Indian PM, after establishing diplomatic relations in 1984. The Indian Mission in Brunei came nearly a decade later in 1993. PM Manmohan Singh had visited Brunei Darussalam in 2013 to attend multilateral meetings of ASEAN and East Asia Summit. Highlighting the importance of the first bilateral visit to Brunei, India's High Commissioner Alok Amitabh Dimri, told news agency ANI "In our four decades of diplomatic relationship, this is the first bilateral official visit by the Prime Minister of India to Brunei Darussalam. It is a historic moment in our bilateral relationship and also for the Indian community in Brunei Darussalam that high-level bilateral engagement between Prime Minister Shri Modi and His Majesty the King is going to take place. This visit is historic in many ways that Brunei and India have been civilizational neighbours as you know that India shares deep historical roots and bonds with Southeast Asia. The Malayan tradition of this geography which is located in the Borneo Island of Southeast Asian Seas derives deep linkages be it, linguistic, anthropological, ethnic, architectural, religious motives, customs and traditions, norms from India, South India." Defence relations between the two countries have been on an upward trajectory since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties.



There have been several official-level defence exchanges and visits of navy, coast guard ships and joint exercises. India has MoU in in defence sector with Brunei till 2026. Several Indian Navy ships and coast guard ships such as INS Rana, INS Airavat, INS Shivalik & INS Kadmat, and Samudra Pahereda to name a few, have been in Brunei waters, given the maritime security concerns. The trade relations between the two countries are not what one can boast of, however, it is of strategic importance.

The recently concluded Brunei trip by the Indian PM has enhanced and deepened the partnership between the two countries. The joint statement issued after the leader's meeting stated "Both leaders held discussions for enhancing cooperation on a wide range of issues including defence, connectivity, trade and investment, energy including renewables, space, ICT, health and pharmaceuticals, education and capacity building, culture, tourism, youth and people-to-people exchanges, as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest." However, the real area of cooperation would be in maintaining international rules of law deep in the Indian Ocean. Brunei is located in the South China Sea region, where China has a significant presence and has been increasingly threatening the bordering countries with its coercive tactics. These issues were raised by the Indian PM in his meeting with his Counterpart on Darussalam. The joint statement read, "Both leaders reiterated their commitment to work closely together in mutually beneficial areas to further strengthen the ASEAN - India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Both leaders reiterated their commitment to maintaining and promoting peace, stability, maritime safety and security, as well as respecting freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce, consistent with international law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. The leaders also urged all parties to resolve disputes through peaceful means in accordance with international law, particularly UNCLOS 1982."

The first state visit by an Indian PM to Brunei just months after taking charge for a third time is a long-term strategic move to secure India's interests for the future.

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

Unified pension scheme: Balancing the old and new



UTTAM GUPTA

Modi Government unveils unified pension scheme to bridge old and new, aiming to satisfy Central and State employees



On August 24, 2024, the Union government announced the new Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) for central government employees. In fact, what looked like a well-orchestrated action plan, on the following day the BJP-led government in Maharashtra approved the implementation of the Scheme for its employees. Madhya Pradesh government is likely to implement the UPS soon. The above announcements are in response to the earlier decisions of Opposition-ruled States, including Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh (before the November 2023 elections), Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh (HP) and Punjab to revert to the old pension system (OPS) which it felt tilted the electoral pendulum towards those parties, particularly in HP. Fearing a repeat during the upcoming elections and Congress having already announced its intent to revert to OPS in Maharashtra, Modi seems to have gone for a preemptory move. Generally, employees of both the central and State governments who joined service after January 1, 2004, and are covered under the national pension scheme (NPS) have been uncomfortable with it. They have been demanding the restoration of the OPS which opposition-ruled states promised. Now, the Centre and BJP-ruled states have come up with the UPS hoping this will satisfy them. Will it? Under the OPS, retired employees received 50 per cent of their last drawn salary as a monthly pension. Just as the government offers its employees an adjustment in dearness allowance or DA to offset the increase in the cost of living, the monthly payouts of pensioners also increase to provide for DA. A government employee under OPS could not have got anything better. He was entitled to a decent 'pre-determined' monthly amount; the pension was fully protected against inflation and got it as long as he lived. After death, his wife gets the same amount for seven years and thereafter the family pension is around 60 per cent of this amount till she is alive. However, from the perspective of the government, the arrangement could not have been worse. Under OPS, there was an inherent tendency for pension liabilities to balloon



A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE UNDER OPS COULD NOT HAVE GOT ANYTHING BETTER. HE WAS ENTITLED TO A DECENT 'PRE-DETERMINED' MONTHLY AMOUNT; THE PENSION WAS FULLY PROTECTED AGAINST INFLATION AND GOT IT AS LONG AS HE LIVED

due to the addition to the pensioners' club every year, higher salaries of those joining, inflation indexation, increased longevity and so on. In 1990-91, the Centre's pension bill was Rs 3,272 crore. By 2020-21, it had jumped 58 times to Rs 190,886 crore. For all states, it shot up from Rs 3,131 crore in 1990-91 to Rs 386,001 crore in 2020-21 or 125 times. Financial prudence requires that every year, the government set aside capital which together with return accruing thereon would create a growing corpus sufficient to pay for the pension liabilities on a sustainable basis thus avoiding any stress on the budget. But, that was never done. Instead, both the Centre and states have followed what in jargon is known as 'pay-as-you-go'. This has made the present generation of taxpayers bear the continuously rising burden of pensioners. To deal with these pitfalls, the then UPA dispensation introduced the NPS for government employees joining service from January 1, 2004. Unlike OPS where the employee doesn't contribute anything, NPS is a contributory pension scheme under which employees contribute 10 per cent of their salary (Basic + DA). The government also contributes 14 per cent towards the employees' NPS accounts. The money is invested in multiple investment avenues i.e. equity, government bonds etc where it grows into a sizeable corpus by the time an employee reaches retirement age. On retirement, she is allowed to withdraw 60 per cent of the corpus (this is tax-free), and buy an annuity from the remaining 40 per cent. NPS offers a self-financing and fully funded arrangement for discharging pension liabilities in which the state knows 'how much it has to contribute'. There won't be any major stress on the budget even as the employ-

ee gets a good pension depending on the contribution made, the age of joining, the type of investment, and the income accruing from that investment. The NPS is good for the fiscal health of the government. However, from the pensioner's angle, it doesn't match the OPS. Modi has brought a new UPS to bridge the gap between the two. Does it? Under UPS, which kicks in from April 1, 2025, employees who joined the service after January 1, 2004, and have worked for 25 years or more, after retirement, will be given 50 per cent of their basic average salary of the last 12 months as pension every month. However, employees who have served less than 25 years will get proportionately less or Rs. 10,000 per month minimum pension to employees who have served for a minimum of 10 years. If an employee dies on or before retirement, then the husband or wife will be given a pension, but the pension amount will be 60 per cent of the pension received by the employee immediately before her or his demise. Employees who have already retired or retiring on or before 31 March 2025, with arrears, will be eligible under UPS. The Scheme offers an adjustment in DA on assured pension, assured family pension and assured minimum pension. The DA will be calculated based on the All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (AICPI-IW) as in the case of service employees. How will the government fund it? It will build a pension corpus out of the employee contribution of 10 per cent (of basic pay plus DA) and the government's contribution of 18.5 per cent. The pension corpus will be divided into two portions: an individual pension fund (IPF) to which the employee's contribution of 10 per cent and matching government contribution will be credited; and a pool corpus created out of the

remaining 8.5 per cent contribution of the government. The employee can exercise an investment choice for the IPF alone. The employees looking for higher pensions will have the option to get their pension monies (from IPF alone) invested in high-risk instruments for better returns. However, they will have to forego the UPS guarantees viz. monthly pension payouts of 50 per cent of the final service year's monthly pay, with full inflation adjustment. UPS guarantees will only be for those who opt for the "default investment option" which means an employee should leave it entirely to the government to manage the IPF besides the 'pool corpus'. The former has anyway no claim. Needless to say, the 'pool corpus' will be used to make up for the shortfall in the returns generated from the investment of the IPF to ensure a 50 per cent pension. Under UPS, there is no provision for the return of capital to the heirs of the pensioner in the event of her death. This makes perfect sense as one can't have the cake and eat it too. The shift to UPS is a good move. It gives what the OPS gave even while preserving the good features of NPS like self-financing for discharging pension liabilities. It puts a little extra burden on the taxpayers being the extra 4.5 per cent of the government's contribution (18.5 per cent under UPS against 14 per cent under NPS). One wonders whether this will fully satisfy the employees. The answer is 'Yes' if they see reason. It will be 'No' if they don't. For instance, they could still argue under OPS, they were getting a 50 per cent pension without having to contribute even a Rupee whereas under UPS, an employee has to contribute 10 per cent of basic pay plus DA every month. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Cloud seeding, climate change, and agriculture: A call to action

While cloud seeding holds promise for supporting agricultural livelihood, this intervention also raises questions about its sustainability

The increasing severity of climate change makes it all the more urgent to consider creative ways to lessen its effect, particularly in vulnerable sectors like agriculture. One of the current alternatives is cloud seeding, a technical intervention designed to increase precipitation. While cloud seeding has the potential to alleviate drought, it also raises important considerations about sustainability, effectiveness, and long-term influence on agriculture. It is now up to us to investigate this developing practice and decide whether or not to incorporate it into our fight against climate change. Cloud seeding, which involves introducing compounds such as silver iodide or even plain salt into the sky



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

to increase cloud condensation and thus precipitation, is becoming a more popular practice in water-scarce places. The highest ideal that cloud seeding can achieve is increasing rainfall to replenish reservoirs and rivers, as well as soil moisture, all of which feed agriculture. However, cloud seeding has shown to be a vital weapon in combatting long-term droughts, rescuing crops, and

sustaining livelihoods in agriculture-dependent countries such as the United States, China, and the United Arab Emirates. Yet, cloud seeding will provide short relief, so climate change and its far-reaching effects on agriculture require a comprehensive adaptation and resilience strategy. Climate change is more than just a temperature rise; it includes changes in precipitation patterns, increasing frequency and severity of meteorological events, and variations in growing seasons. These changes pose serious threats to global food security, necessitating an integrated approach to adaptation and resilience building. This is where the challenge of relying on cloud seeding for

a solution arises. Though it seems like a quick answer for severe water shortages, its long-term viability and environmental impact are unknown. If not properly managed, the chemicals used in cloud seeding can hurt soil fertility, water quality, and even human health. This approach is unpredictable and dependent on meteorological circumstances, therefore it is not a fixed cure. Furthermore, cloud seeding doesn't address the underlying reasons for climate change. Agriculture is one area that is deeply connected with climate systems and cannot be solved just through technological means. Other key modalities for achieving climate change resistance



include sustainable farming, which can be improved by effective irrigation systems, soil conservation, crop diversification, and the introduction of drought-resistant crop types. Furthermore, the topic of cloud seeding must address a variety of ethical concerns.

Who gets to pick where and when the clouds are seeded? What are the geopolitical consequences of influencing the weather? Seeding clouds over one location may inadvertently create adverse circumstances in another. Determining these multifar-

ious problems will necessitate a free and open worldwide conversation to ensure that this technology is used equally and by justice values. Negotiating the tumultuous currents of climate change, and cloud seeding serves as both a beacon of hope and a warning lesson. It demonstrates our ingenuity—the ability to think up something new when confronted with a challenge—while also conveying a message about our need to proceed with caution and planning. Agriculture is the lifeline of many communities around the world, particularly in developing countries, and its resilience is crucial to our shared future. While cloud seeding may serve as a temporary solution

to the impending problem of water scarcity and its impact on agriculture, it cannot replace truly effective techniques for combating the bigger challenge posed by global warming. If we want to ensure a future in which the Earth and all of its people thrive, we must make prudent investments in long-term mitigation methods centred on resilience, sustainability, and international collaboration. Let it be viewed as a severe challenge that requires immediate attention; it should raise consciousness and move us beyond symptomatic solutions to create a world that is robust and sustainable. (The author is a freelance writer and a motivator; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Alembic Pharma gets USFDA nod for generic product

Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Thursday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic drug used to treat infections caused by worms. The company has received approval from the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) for its Abbreviated New Drug Application (ANDA) Albendazole Tablets USP (200 mg), the drug maker said in a statement. The approved ANDA is therapeutically equivalent to Impax Laboratories, Inc.'s LAlbenza tablets, it added. Albendazole tablets are indicated for the treatment of parenchymal neurocysticercosis due to active lesions caused by larval forms of the pork tapeworm, *Taenia solium*. It is also indicated for the treatment of cystic hydatid disease of the liver, lung, and peritoneum, caused by the larval form of the dog tapeworm, *Echinococcus granulosus*. Alembic Pharma shares on Thursday ended 2.79 per cent higher at Rs 1,145.80 apiece on the BSE.



Gold up Rs 74,100 per 10 gms; silver rallies at Rs 1,000

Gold prices climbed by Rs 500 to Rs 74,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to fresh demand by jewellers amid a strong trend in the overseas markets. The precious metal had closed at Rs 73,600 per 10 grams in the previous close on Wednesday. Tracking gold, silver also rallied by Rs 1,000 to Rs 84,600 per kilogram on Thursday due to increased offtake from industrial units and coin makers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. It had finished at Rs 83,600 per kg in the previous trade. In addition, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped by Rs 500 to Rs 73,750 per 10 grams from Rs 73,250. Domestically, traders attributed the rise in gold prices to a strong trend in the international markets, which influenced the market sentiment to an increased buying from local jewellers.



Suresh Prabhu nominated to World Agriculture Forum

Former Union Minister and Rajya Sabha member Suresh Prabhu on Thursday nominated to the World Agriculture Forum (WAF) Board. In a communication, Rudy Rabbinge, Chairman of WAF Board, said that Prabhu's expertise would be invaluable to the discussions that shape the future of the agri sector. "Given your role and respected position in the global food and agriculture arena, I believe you would be invaluable to the WAF Board. Your insights and experience could greatly contribute to the forum's objectives," he said. The forum aims to function as a global body dedicated to advancing agricultural development on a worldwide scale. This initiative aims to bring together prominent thought leaders, innovators, policy-makers, business CEOs and heads of global institutions in the agricultural sector to address critical issues related to food and nutrition security, sustainable practices, and policy and trade agenda.

Target 500 million tonnes of steel production by 2047: Goyal

Suggests talks on carbon tax issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday suggested discussions on carbon border adjustment tax with top steel industry leaders to promote sustainable manufacturing in the sector.

He also asked the industry to target 500 million tonnes of steel production by 2047. At present, the industry is eyeing 300 million tonnes by 2030.

The minister suggested the industry find newer and better ways on lowering carbon emission and promoting high productivity and quality steel in the country.

"Let's try and utilise AI (artificial intelligence) to optimise our production, reduce waste, and improve efficiency across the value chain and work towards a circle economy in a bigger way," he said, while addressing a steel conclave virtually.

On carbon tax, he suggested that 4-5 top leaders of the steel industry can sit with him on this important subject

for deliberations.

The minister added that to extend the benefits of the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme to the sector due to shortage of funds.

"Let's make one more effort on the border adjustment tax... Imported steel which comes into India does not have to pay all these taxes (like coal cess and electricity duty). Border adjustment tax is a WTO (World Trade Organisation) complaint mechanism.

"Electricity duty, any additional state levies or taxes that you are not getting remitted, which are not being charged in other countries can be adjusted through a border adjustment tax. So let 4-5 us sit down and take this dialogue forward," Goyal said.

Goyal also asked the industry to inform the government of any unfair trade practices in other countries so that India can also take retaliatory measures against those.

He asked the domestic industry to consume Made in



India steel like in Korea and Japan. "Sadly, we don't have a similar approach," he said.

He further noted that the industry should come forward and suggest how free trade agreements can be made more beneficial for them.

India has not signed any FTA without 100 per cent concurrence from the steel industry and India has always included stringent rules of origin norms so that the domestic players are not discriminated against.

In July, the European Union (EU) suggested that India can devise its own mechanism instead of paying the carbon tax to the European Union.

'Singapore plans to invest in India'

Singapore has already invested about USD 150 billion in India (about Rs 12 lakh crore) and the island country is ready to invest probably five times that amount in the coming years, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. He also said that India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA have signed a free trade agreement under which New Delhi has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion over the next 15 years. These investments will come in states and they have to take advantage of this, Goyal said here while addressing state industry ministers and senior officials. "Today the world wants to invest in India. Everybody wants to come to India. Singapore has already invested about USD 150 billion (about Rs 12 lakh crore) in India.

Electric vehicle makers no longer need subsidy: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said there is no need to provide subsidy to electric vehicle makers as consumers are now choosing EVs or CNG vehicles on their own.

Addressing BNEF Summit, Gadkari said initially costs of manufacturing electric vehicles were high, but as demand has increased, production costs have dropped, making further subsidies unnecessary.

"Consumers are now choosing electric and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles on their own and I do not think we need to provide much subsidy for electric vehicles," the road transport and highways minister said.

The minister pointed out that GST on electric vehicle is lower than petrol and diesel vehicles. "In my opinion, manufacturing of electric vehicles no longer needs to be subsidised by the government. "The ask for subsidies isn't justified anymore," he said.

At present, 28 per cent GST is levied on vehicles powered by internal combustion engines, including hybrids, and 5 per cent on electric vehicles.

While ruling out additional taxes on petrol and diesel vehicles, Gadkari said the overall



shift away from fossil fuels to alternative fuels would be a gradual process, given the size of India's economy and energy needs.

The minister also opined that further reduction in cost of lithium-ion battery will bring down the cost of electric vehicles.

"Within 2 years, the cost of diesel, petrol and electric vehicles will be same...at the starting time, cost of EVs were very high, so we needed to subsidise EV manufacturers," he said.

Asked whether the government will extend FAME scheme, the minister said, "FAME scheme subsidy is a good subject and it is not related to my ministry."

Average household spending on food falls to less than half since 1947

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's average household spending on food has fallen to less than half for the first time since 1947, according to a recent working paper by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

The paper titled 'Changes in India's Food Consumption and Policy Implications: A Comprehensive Analysis of Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 and 2011-12 further said significant changes are unfolding in India's food consumption pattern.

According to the paper, the share of total household expenditure on food has declined substantially in rural and urban areas across all states and UTs.

"It is the first time in modern India (post-independence) that average household spending on food is less than half the overall monthly spending of households and is a marker of significant progress," it said.

The paper is a comprehensive analysis of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 and comparison with 2011-12.

"Overall, there has been a significant increase in households' average monthly per capita expenditure across rural and urban India across all states and UTs," the paper said,

adding that the magnitude of the rise is substantial but varies across states and regions.

For example, the paper said among rural areas, West Bengal has seen a consumption expenditure growth of 151 per cent in the period between 2011-12 and 2022-23, while Tamil Nadu witnessed a growth of approximately 214 per cent.

Sikkim witnessed a consumption expenditure growth of a massive 394 per cent.

"Overall, we find that growth for rural households was higher than for urban households, 164 per cent for rural households versus 146 per cent for urban households," it said.

According to the paper, within food items, the share of expenditure on cereal has declined significantly across rural and urban areas.

However, it pointed out that this decline was more substantial for the bottom 20 per cent of the households in rural and urban areas.

"In all likelihood, this reflects the effectiveness of the government's food security policies, which provide free foodgrains to large numbers of beneficiaries across all states of the country, with a particular focus on the vulnerable bottom 20 per cent of households," the report noted.



Reliance board approves 1:1 bonus issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The board of Reliance Industries Ltd on Thursday approved issuing 1:1 bonus shares -- the first bonus issue in seven years.

Reliance, the nation's most valuable company, had last issued bonus shares in September 2017. In a regulatory filing, the company said its board recommended to shareholders for their approval "issue of bonus shares in the ratio of 1:1 ie 1 (one) new fully paid-up equity share of Rs 10 each for every 1 (one) existing full paid-up equity share".

The record date for such issuances will be determined separately, it said. Prior to the 1:1 bonus issue in 2017, Reliance had in 2009 issued 1:1 bonus share.

The company board also approved and sought shareholder nod for increase in authorised share capital of the company from Rs 15,000 crore to Rs 50,000 crore

Sensex, Nifty extend losses into 2nd session as Reliance, Airtel drag

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close lower for the second straight day on Thursday, tracking losses in the most valuable firm Reliance Industries, Bharati Airtel and L&T amid a sluggish trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex failed to hold on to initial gains and declined 151.48 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at 82,201.16. During the day, it dropped 222.2 points or 0.26 per cent to 82,130.44.

The NSE Nifty dipped 53.60 points or 0.21 per cent to 25,145.10 despite a positive beginning of the trade.

Markets ended weak in a volatile trading session led by profit-taking in Reliance Industries. Globally, most of the equity indices were sluggish to mixed and are awaiting key US data on Friday, which would provide some hint on the Federal Reserve chief's likely stance on the interest rate



in this month's policy announcement," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Reliance Industries declined over 1 per cent. Tata Motors, Nestle, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, JSW Steel and Mahindra & Mahindra were other big laggards.

In contrast, Titan, ITC, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel and State Bank of India were among the biggest

gainers. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed by 0.56 per cent, and the mid-cap index rose by 0.27 per cent.

Among the indices, reality declined 0.95 per cent, capital goods (0.61 per cent), industrials (0.38 per cent), power (0.37 per cent) and oil & gas (0.30 per cent).

Healthcare, commodities, consumer discretionary, telecommunication, consumer durables, IT and tech were the gainers.

'Renewable energy sector to provide momentum to economy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Thursday said the rapidly growing renewable energy sector will provide momentum to the Indian economy in the years to come.

Addressing the BNEF Summit here, the New & Renewable Energy Minister highlighted the steps being taken by the Modi government to promote the renewable sector.

"A sector growing so rapidly will definitely provide momentum to India's growing economy. India has created a competitive industry structure in renewables," the minister said.

He noted that the cost of

solar power in India is among the cheapest in the world, saying that this is also because we get a good number of sunny days.

The key to the decarbonisation of India's electricity sector lies in being able to meet all incremental demand from non-fossil fuel sources.

For this to happen, success in creating large-scale grid storage is essential, he pointed out.

A policy to promote pumped storage projects in India is being planned to store excess electricity, facilitate the integration of renewable energy into India's energy mix, and accelerate the development of PSP projects.



INDIA-EFTA TRADE PACT

Swiss Council begins ratification process

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Switzerland's federal cabinet has adopted the ambitious trade pact between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and placed it before Parliament as part of the ratification process.

The ambitious trade pact, signed in March between India and the European bloc comprising Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein, aims at expanding trade across a range of areas, including pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, new technologies and machinery.

Under the mega trade deal, the four European countries are

looking at making an investment of USD 100 billion in India over the next 15 years.

Each of the signatory countries will have to ratify the pact for its roll out.

On Wednesday, the Federal Council adopted a dispatch on the free-trade agreement between the EFTA states and India, the Swiss government said in a statement.

The Federal Council, which is the Swiss federal cabinet, is the highest executive authority in the country.

The Swiss Parliament is expected to debate the dispatch in the upcoming winter or spring sessions, according to the statement.

Govt to soon launch INDIAsize initiative, says Textiles Minister Giriraj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will soon roll out the much-awaited 'INDIAsize' initiative, which aims to establish standardized measurements designed to better suit the Indian body types, Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh said on Thursday.

Presently, international and domestic brands available in India use measurements from the US or the UK for garments, having 'small', 'medium' and 'large' sizes.

However, Western body types differ from Indians in terms of height, weight or specific measurements of body parts, which sometimes causes fitting issues. The Ministry of Textiles sanc-



tioned the INDIAsize project to develop standard body sizes for the Indian apparel sector to address the prevailing disparities and inconsistencies in provided fits. "On IndiaSIZE, I'm trying to get the Prime Minister to inaugurate it, it should be launched soon," Singh told reporters here on the sidelines of the launch of VisioNxt. VisioNxt is India's

first-ever initiative that combines Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) to generate fashion trend insights and forecasts. Its mission is to identify, map, and analyze geo-specific trends, reflecting the positive plurality, cultural diversity, and socio-economic nuances of India while collating comprehensive trends and insights.

"In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, this VisioNxt portal has been launched. Earlier America and Europe used to do fashion design forecasting, but under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for the first time the Textiles Ministry in collaboration with NIFT... have launched this historic initiative," Singh said.

E-COMMERCE IN THE FOREFRONT: INDEED
Gig hiring to soar by 20 pc this festival season

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As festival season is about to begin, seasonal hiring is projected to surge by 20 per cent over last year, with the e-commerce industry leading the trend amid increased demand, according to the data by job site Indeed.

The top gig roles that have been witnessing increased hiring are delivery executives, warehouse workers, logistics coordinators, in-store sales executives, and customer care executives, the data showed.

Several industries are reporting a marked increase in demand for seasonal workers, with e-commerce leading the trend with a 35 per cent rise in demand, followed by logistics (15 per cent), retail (14 per cent), and quick commerce (11 per cent).

"The festive season is a crucial peri-



od for businesses across India, and we're seeing a significant uptick in hiring for seasonal roles as companies prepare to meet heightened consumer demand.

"The industries that are growing -- e-commerce, logistics, quick commerce

-- are doing so because they're aligned with the needs and behaviours of today's consumers. This is where the future of India's job market could be heading," Sashi Kumar, Head of Sales, Indeed India, said.

The increased demand in e-commerce is driven by the rapid expansion of the industry and the requirement for additional warehouse workers and delivery executives to handle larger order quantities and guarantee on-time deliveries, Indeed said.

While metro cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, and Kolkata are witnessing an 18-20 per cent of year-on-year increase in seasonal hiring, it is the tier-2 and tier-3 cities that are emerging as the real engines of growth, it further said.

"Tier 2 and 3 cities such as Nagpur, Jaipur, Vadodara, Kochi, Vizag, Madurai, Lucknow, Gurugram, Chandigarh, Indore, Coimbatore, Surat, Bhubaneswar, and Bhopal are experiencing an even higher surge, with a 22-25 per cent increase in hiring," Indeed said.



MONICA BELLUCCI REVEALS HAVING MUCH SUBSTANCE IN TIM BURTON'S FAIRY TALES

Actress Monica Bellucci, who will be seen in the upcoming film *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, has heaped praise on filmmaker Tim Burton and said that there is a lot of substance for an actor in his fairy tales. Bellucci said, "I have to say that I'm so honoured to be part of this amazing cast and to enter into Tim's fantastic and magical world. His vision is so personal, so unique. And his characters often have naive and child-like qualities." She added that even the villains are, most of the time, unintentionally disruptive.

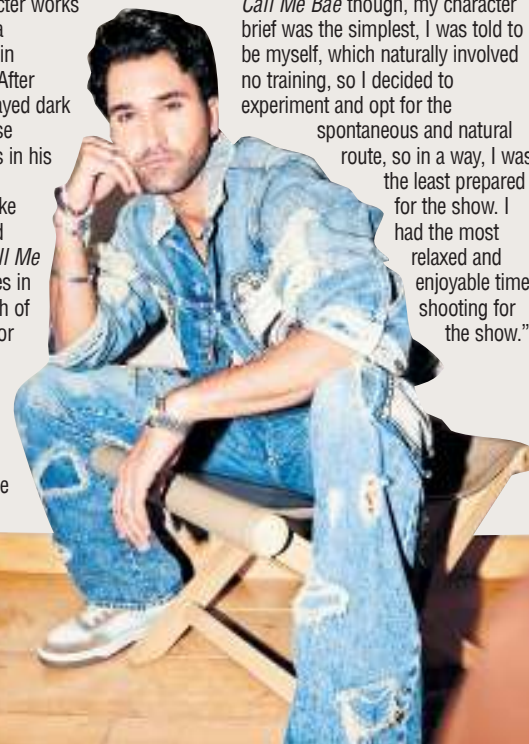
"There is so much substance for an actor in his fairy tales. Joining this film happened because Tim told me that there was a key role in the movie and he thought about me. I was very happy to accept and to play it." Talking about working with Michael Keaton, she said, "Almost all my scenes are with Michael Keaton. And Michael was so kind. He has amazing energy. So gentle and creative. And it was beautiful to see the creative connection between Tim and Michael that has been built through the years." "You can feel the energy that they know each other very well. It was beautiful for everybody to see this creative synergy between them from their years working together. I really loved working with him." Asked her about the impact the 1988 *Beetlejuice* had on her, Bellucci said, "Why is *Beetlejuice* such a beloved character? Because *Beetlejuice* is so funny, it's so unpredictable. Everything is so creative. And at the same time, there is a meaning. It's about love, it's about death... and life. All those questions that we are so curious about, and now *Beetlejuice* is back to haunt

the Deetz family again." "But now, there are three generations of Deetz women and everything starts again when they come back home to Winter River after an unexpected family tragedy and the portal of the afterlife is accidentally opened." She says she knows that there are different generations who want to see this movie, because the world of Tim Burton is a type of fantasy world that all different generations love, children and adults. "It is a kind of universe that touches all souls in a very profound way. What I can say about Tim is that he's so precise. He knows what he wants. And the atmosphere on set is very calm and beautiful. And his energy—it's really inspiring for everybody. And it is really wonderful to work in this kind of atmosphere," she said. Warner Bros. Pictures presents a Film by Tim Burton, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, which will be released on September 6 in cinemas in India. It will be distributed worldwide by Warner Bros. Pictures.

'My character in Call Me Bae required no training'

The much-anticipated and buzzing show *Call Me Bae* is now streaming on Amazon Prime Video. Gurfateh Pirzada, who portrays the character of Neel, recalls his experience preparing and shooting for his character. His character works at a media company in Mumbai. After having played dark and intense characters in his previous projects like *Guilty and Class*, *Call Me Bae* comes in as a breath of fresh air for the actor, in fact, Gurfateh also labelled Neel as the

least prepared character he has played till date. He shares, "Ever since I began my journey, I've played some really complex characters, preparing for which involved workshops, exercises, research and training. For *Call Me Bae* though, my character brief was the simplest, I was told to be myself, which naturally involved no training, so I decided to experiment and opt for the spontaneous and natural route, so in a way, I was the least prepared for the show. I had the most relaxed and enjoyable time shooting for the show."



King Khan leads the highest income-tax-paid celebs list



The latest information on the highest income tax paid by celebrities in India for 2024 reveals that actor Shah Rukh Khan leads the list. According to a report from Fortune India, the young actor allegedly paid Rs 92 crore in taxes. Vijay, Salman Khan and Amitabh Bachchan are among those who follow Shah Rukh Khan. Virat Kohli is the top celebrity cricketer in India in terms of taxes paid, with a total of Rs 66 crore contributed. Vijay, about to embark on his political career, contributed Rs 80 crore in taxes, while Salman Khan, most recently seen in *Tiger 3*, contributed Rs 75 crore. Amitabh Bachchan and his wife Jaya Bachchan reported total assets

of Rs 1,578 crore and paid Rs 71 crore in taxes. The next celebrity on the list is Ajay Devgn, said to have contributed Rs 42 crore in taxes. Ajay has been in two movies this year—*Shaitaan* and *Maidan*—and will soon star in Rohit Shetty's police movie *Singham Again*. Ranbir Kapoor, who paid 36 crore rupees in taxes, followed him. Ranbir's most recent appearance was in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Animal*. Alia Bhatt, who is Ranbir's wife, is not included in this list. Hrithik Roshan paid a sum of Rs 28 crore in taxes, while Kapil Sharma paid Rs 26 crore. Kareena Kapoor, who recently appeared in *Crew*, contributed Rs 20 crore in taxes. Her husband, actor Saif Ali Khan, is not included in this list. Shahid Kapoor, Mohanlal and Allu Arjun each paid Rs 14 crore. Kiara Advani, known for endorsing multiple brands, paid Rs 12 crore, while both Katrina Kaif and Pankaj Tripathi followed with Rs 11 crore each. Aamir Khan, who has taken a hiatus from films after the failure of *Laal Singh Chaddha*, shelled out Rs 10 crore.

Orlando's witty comeback to Katy's X-rated confession

Katy Perry has shared details about her romance with Orlando Bloom, discussing her preferred way of expressing affection. Perry, who has been struggling to make a comeback in recent months, appeared on the *Call Her Daddy* podcast to discuss her marriage to her famous Hollywood actor husband. When host Alexandra Cooper inquired about her warning signs in men, her answers promptly delved into explicit subjects. Talking about positive qualities she appreciates, she mentioned that if the kitchen is clean, dishes are done and pantry doors are closed when she comes downstairs, she expects to show appreciation in a certain way. After Cooper chuckled, Perry included, "I'm saying, exactly. This is how I express my affection. I have no use for a red Ferrari. I am able to purchase a red Ferrari. Simply wash the dishes." Bloom has now publicly reacted to the attention-grabbing statements made by his long-term partner. In a response to Perry's recent Instagram post promoting the podcast appearance, he simply commented: "I've finished cleaning the entire house." She continued to criticise her former partners, making it clear that she now avoids dating "narcis-

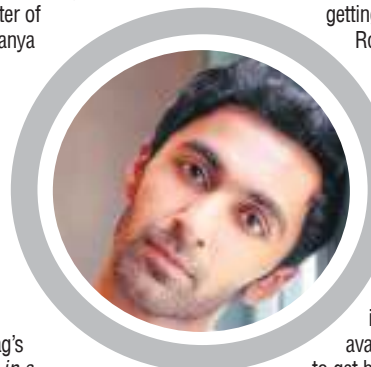
sists." Although not explicitly mentioned in the preview clip, the former *American Idol* judge was in a relationship with John Mayer and tied the knot with Russell Brand in 2010, but their marriage ended when the comedian filed for divorce in late 2011. "I'm no longer attracted to narcissists," she said. "Also, anyone that is constantly changing the goalpost or pulling the rug out from you emotionally, not it. Perry added: "Anyone that says that they know you better than you know yourself."



Rohan Gurbaxani bags Anurag Basu's Metro... In Dino

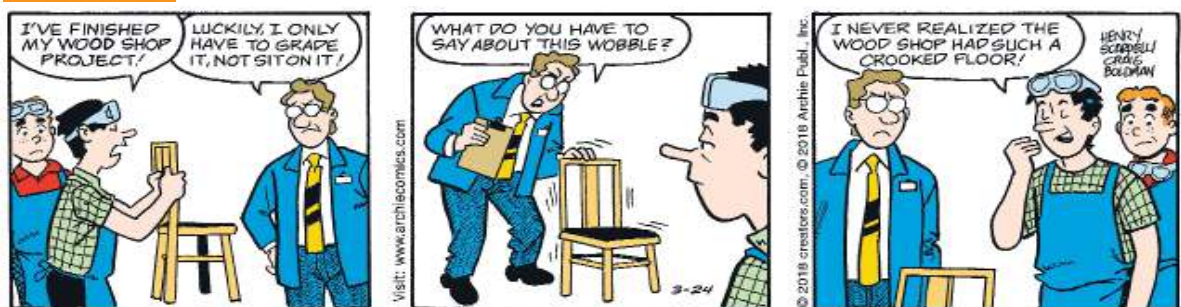
The year 2023 turned out quite well for actor Rohan Gurbaxani who gave two memorable and impressive performances in the show *Made In Heaven 2* and *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*. While he played the ultimate 'green flag' partner in the former show, he played the character of Rohan Bhatia, Ananya Panday's toxic boyfriend in the latter, garnering a lot of love and appreciation. Now, he has bagged his next big project with Anurag Basu-directed *Metro... In Dino*. A sequel to Anurag's 2007 release *Life in a... Metro, Metro... In Dino* features an ensemble cast including Aditya Roy Kapur, Sara Ali Khan, Ali Fazal and Fatima Sana Shaikh, amongst others.

Rohan is excited to be associated with the project and says, "It is a pleasure to be a part of a film that has such a great ensemble cast. Ever since I decided to become an actor, working with Anurag sir was on my wishlist, and with *Metro... In Dino*, that goal is getting fulfilled." Rohan reveals that he has shot for certain portions of his role in the film, with one schedule still left to take place. "It is a very interesting character and I can't wait for the audience to see me in this different avatar. I am very excited to get back on set and wrap the film next month," says the actor, whose next project is the web series *Bandish Bandits*, where he plays a musician.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



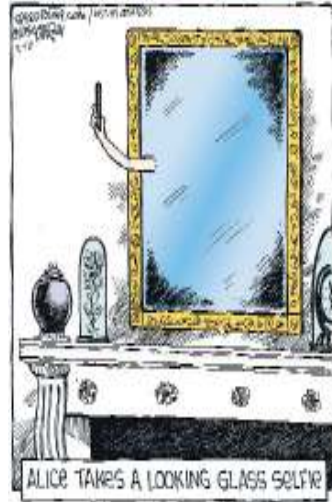
GARFIELD



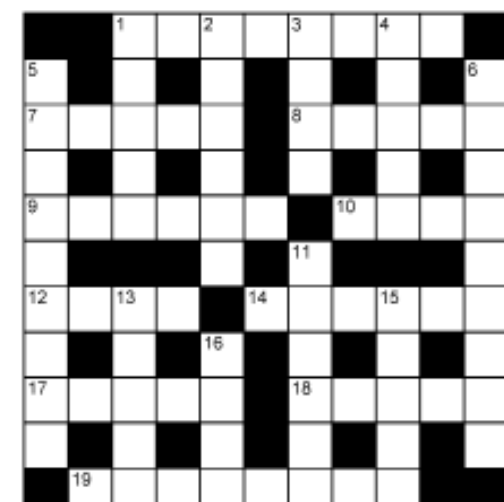
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

- ACROSS**
- Calm and quiet
 - Sit on this
 - Steam bath
 - Oboe player
 - Applaud
 - An area of cut grass
 - A box for a body
 - Once more
 - Heartbeat
 - Practise something before doing it for an audience
- DOWN**
- A keyboard instrument
 - From one side to the other
 - Simple to do
- 4 Normal
5 A student might carry this (6,3)
6 Someone who makes things out of wood
11 A reddish-brown metal
13 The largest mammal
15 Untrue
16 Leg joint
- SOLUTION**
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GINGER MEGGS



UNFORGETTABLE KURUKSHETRA SOJOURN

AARTI SREENATH

Priyanka Bajaj Sibal, a proud titleholder of Mrs. India 2022 and an award-winning actor, embarked on a memorable trip to Kurukshetra, a destination rich in history and spirituality.

Kurukshetra was also the place; she was honoured with her 6th Best Actress award for *Kathakaar* during the Haryana International Film Festival. "What I enjoyed the most was the deep sense of history and culture that the place embodies. The warmth and appreciation from the people there made the experience even more memorable," begins Priyanka in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*.

Kurukshetra, a city steeped in the lore of the Mahabharata, left a profound impression on her. Kurukshetra, she says, boasts a rich historical legacy, being the land of the Mahabharata. "It's where spirituality and history intertwine, creating an atmosphere that's both profound and inspiring," she observed, emphasising the city's unique blend of cultural and spiritual significance.

Her visit wasn't just about exploring the past; she also made sure to make a bold fashion statement. "I made sure to set the gram on fire! I wore a hand-painted red butterfly print blazer, inspired by the painting 'Butterfly Wings' and paired it with stunning accessories by E'clat Designer Jewellery. The look was bold, commanding attention and I was showered with compliments. It was like bringing the essence of the butterfly's transformation to life, turning heads everywhere."

Delving deeper into the cultural tapestry of Kurukshetra, she shared, "Kurukshetra is steeped in cultural richness, with its ancient temples and deep spiritual energy making a lasting impression. I explored historical sites that vividly tell the stories of the past." Her interactions with the locals added another layer to her experience, sharing fascinating

insights into their traditions and customs. At the Haryana International Film Festival, she had the pleasure of engaging with filmmakers and artists who are deeply connected to the region and its culture.

Among the hidden gems, she uncovered sites of immense spiritual importance. "In Kurukshetra, I explored a hidden gem called Jyotisar, believed to be where Lord Krishna delivered the Bhagavad Gita and the serene Brahma Sarovar, especially beautiful at sunset," she recalled, painting a vivid picture of the tranquil beauty she encountered.

When asked about a place in India that stands out to her, she said, "I find Varanasi truly unique. The city's blend of spirituality, tradition and life on the ghats is unmatched. Nowhere else in the world do life and death coexist so naturally, with rituals and celebrations happening side by side. The energy there is otherworldly, making it a place like no other."

Her accommodation in Kurukshetra was nothing short of luxurious. During her stay in Kurukshetra, she was welcomed into the hotel's biggest suite with an exquisite lobby that set the tone for luxury. The entire experience felt like a perfect blend of style and relaxation, making it much more than just a stay for her.

Beyond her recent travels, she shared where she finds solace when life gets overwhelming. "When under intense pressure, my go-to place for rejuvenation is the beach. The sound of waves, the salty breeze and the endless horizon have an instant calming effect on me." Walking barefoot on the sand, feeling the sun's warmth and simply soaking in the ocean's vastness helps her reset and recharge. It's the perfect place for her to find clarity and peace.

Her travel adventures haven't always been smooth sailing. She recounted a particularly thrilling and frightening experience. "It was during a paragliding flight that took a wild turn when strong winds suddenly swept in. For a few heart-pound-

ing moments, I was tossed around like a leaf in the air, not sure where I'd land! It was both terrifying and thrilling—a real rollercoaster of emotions that I'll never forget."

Travelling, for her, is not just about visiting new places but also about immersing herself in the culture and cuisine.

"Travelling to this place was liberating because it offered the perfect mix of adventure, culture, and serenity. The open landscapes and deep connection to nature made

me feel truly free. As for the cuisine, I stumbled upon a hidden gem where the chef's passion shone through every bite of a traditional dish. The rich, authentic flavors made it an unforgettable culinary experience, capturing the essence of the region perfectly!"

Her travels are filled with activities that bring out both the thrill-seeker and the culture enthusiast in her. "During my trip, I engaged in a mix of activities that ranged from exploring local markets and trying traditional cuisine to outdoor adventures like paragliding. I also took time to visit historical landmarks and enjoy serene moments by the beach, soaking in the natural beauty. The combination of thrill, culture and relaxation made the experience truly fulfilling."

Her love for travel is deeply rooted in her childhood memories. "One of my fondest childhood travel memories is a beach vacation with my family. We spent hours building sandcastles, chasing waves and collecting seashells. I remember the pure joy of running barefoot on the sand and stopping at a roadside stall for hot Maggi noodles. The laughter and carefree moments made it a magical experience that still warms my heart."

Every journey for her is accompanied by the perfect soundtrack. She's always been passionate about curating playlists that align perfectly with the vibe of each travel destination. "My go-to soundtrack typically blends calming acoustic melodies, inspiring instrumentals and soulful tunes with a touch of upbeat Bollywood tracks to keep the energy vibrant. The playlist evolves with the mood of each trip, ultimately crafting the perfect backdrop to elevate the entire travel experience."

Even her travel mishaps are embraced with humour and grace. She goes on to share, "One of the funniest cultural

misunderstandings I had while traveling was when I attempted a local greeting but completely fumbled the process. The result was both awkward and hilarious, and everyone had a good laugh about it. It turned into a great way to connect and learn more about the culture in a lighthearted way!"

When it comes to travel, she swears by one particular hack: "My go-to travel hack is organising everything into neatly labelled packets. From outfits to toiletries, it's all sorted and easy to grab, which makes packing (and unpacking) a breeze."

As for her bucket list, it's filled with dream destinations, including staying in the overwater bungalows of Bora Bora, exploring the charming streets of Santorini and the historic sites of Athens in Greece and witnessing the magical Northern Lights in Norway. "I'd love to take a road trip through the stunning landscapes of New Zealand and dive into the art, history and culinary delights of Italy, exploring cities like Florence and Rome. These destinations combine natural beauty, adventure, and rich cultural experiences that I can't wait to explore."



Travelogue

Award-winning actor and the titleholder of Mrs. India 2022, Priyanka Bajaj Sibal, takes *The Pioneer* through her memorable trip to Kurukshetra and more around her travels

Review

Call Me Bae: Ananya as 'bae,' is here to 'slay'

TEJAL SINHA

Ananya Panday-starrer *Call Me Bae* is now streaming on Amazon Prime Video. The series, directed by Collin D'Cunha, is presented by Karan Johar's Dharmatic Entertainment. *Call Me Bae* marks Ananya's digital debut!

PLOT

The story of *Call Me Bae* focuses on the main character, Bella Chowdhary, aka Bae, whose life changes drastically when she goes from being a heiress to a hustler, leading her to find her authentic self beyond material possessions. Following financial difficulties and managing both her career and romantic relationships, Bae maneuvers through the newsrooms of Mumbai and embarks on a difficult journey. With all the dramas, chaos, heartbreaks and blings, *Call Me Bae* brings all of it together.

HIGHLIGHTS

Ananya effortlessly maintains a stylish appearance despite trendy clothing, difficult colleagues and a rags-to-riches storyline. Despite being labelled a classic case of "Ananya Panday playing Ananya Panday" on the internet, we still notice the actress' efforts in this particular instance. You see her emoting her emotions so well and to be more specific, she's not the Ananya Panday we've ever seen before on screen. She's fun to watch, but this South Delhi girl is someone here simply to slay, which she has, beyond a doubt. What really wins ones heart during the entire watch is how, irrespective of being broken, her staff loves her. She's certainly the favourite of all except for her family and her close ones. While in the hierarchy, it's always expected the male actors to be on top, the director Collin and Ananya as the lead, break the ice.

Vihaan Samat, as Agastya, is

just like OH MY GOD! Seeing him in *Mismatched* as Harsh or Ray in *Eternally Confused and Eager for Love*, you just won't be able to believe your own

eyes if it actually is Vihaan. He pulls off his character so well. So basically, Agastya is Bae's darling hubby, who has actually got no time for her ever since they've got married. His character seemingly is a person, who makes you dream of a happily-

deserve in your life, after all. So twists and turns, but let me tell you, she's someone you just can't think of as a supporting actor this time.

Going ahead with the rest of the cast, Lisa Misra in her acting debut, Gurfateh Pirzada as Neel and Niharika Dutt, among the other ones, have also done quite a great job.



Cast: Ananya Panday, Vihaan Samat, Varun Sood, Vir Das, Mini Mathur, Gurfateh Pirzada, Muskkaan Jafari, Lisa Misra, Niharika Dutt and more

Director: Collin D'Cunha

Producer: Karan Johar's Dharmatic Entertainment

Written by: Ishita Moitra, Samina Motlekar and Rohit Nair

Streaming on: Amazon Prime Video

Rating: 3/5

DRAWBACKS

Ananya, as this South Delhi rich brat, does get a little annoying here and there, but her true brilliance is much more evident as the plot progresses. *Call Me Bae* doesn't bring anything new to the picture—something we know that happens in the end eventually. But then, again, some scenes make you hooked up and relatable to the character.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Each frame is meticulously crafted, with the lighting skillfully setting the tone of the show. The music is just the best part of the show. Every track showcases a variety of feelings, music styles and themes such as love, identity and personal growth.

VERDICT

Call Me Bae does give you a vibe of *Schitt's Creek*, *Emily In Paris* and *Alia Bhatt* from *Student of the Year*, but there's a fair attempt to keep up the uniqueness about the series.

Initially, the series, which seems a little boring, catches up pretty well with a lot of emotions and dramas that come its way.

Is hard water ruining your hair health?

Over 70% of India receive water that is classified as mild to very hard, understanding the effects of hard water on your hair is essential. While many people notice the white, scaly deposits it leaves on faucets, the real damage occurs on your scalp and hair. Here's how hard water is wreaking havoc on your hair and how Iuvia's hard water shampoo can help you combat these issues:

Harsh metal ion buildup: Hard water contains harsh metal ions like calcium and magnesium, which deposit on your hair and scalp. These deposits make the scalp oily and hair, limp and lifeless. Hard water deposits also clog pores which in turn leads to hair thinning and a dirty scalp. Additionally, hair also become oily, greasy and flat lacking bounce and volume. Iuvia's hard water shampoo gently but effectively removes the metal ion deposits, making hair feel cleaner, lighter and bouncier.

Weakens hair and causes breakage: The minerals in hard water weaken your hair structure, making it prone to hard water related breakage. This buildup can also cause hair to look and feel very thin and flat. Additionally, hard water can significantly affect hair strength, leading to increased damage over time. The hard water shampoo deep-cleanses all the nasties from your hair and scalp that helps reduce breakage, leaving your hair feeling better.

Scalp issues: flaking and irritation: Hard water disrupts your scalp's natural oil balance, leading to flakiness and itching, apart from making it dirty and oily. The accumulation of mineral deposits can cause your scalp to shed excess skin cells, resulting in visible flakes that can be quite uncomfortable. The hard water shampoo works to gently remove these deposits and restore your scalp's natural oil balance, helping to reduce flakiness and promote a cleaner scalp.

The harsh minerals in hard water can irritate your scalp, leading to itching, and discomfort. This irritation can

further hinder overall scalp health. This shampoo is formulated to soothe irritation by cleansing away mineral buildup and rebalancing your scalp's natural oils, providing relief and promoting a more comfortable scalp environment.

Makes hair feel heavy and greasy: Ever feel like your hair is greasy and sticky even after washing it? Hard water is to blame. The mineral deposits can weigh down your hair, making it feel heavy, greasy, and harder to manage, promoting an overall feeling of uncleanliness. This shampoo leaves your hair feeling lighter and cleaner, free from the heavy buildup of hard water minerals. Iuvia does this with naturally sourced chelating agents that bind to metal ions deposited from hard waters and gently removes them. The shampoo prevents further deposition of metal ions by neutralising charge on the hair with advanced water-soluble silicones.

Fades your hair colour faster: If you colour your hair, hard water can quickly diminish the vibrancy of your hues, leading to dull tones. This shampoo is vegan, sulfate free, paraben free and phthalate free making it suitable for colour-treated hair. By understanding how hard water affects your hair and with this shampoo, you can protect and rejuvenate your hair, keeping it clean and beautiful.



Dharambir smashes Asian record for gold, Pranav takes silver in Paralympic

PTI ■ PARIS

Dharambir shattered the Asian record to win the gold medal while compatriot Pranav Soorma clinched the silver as Indian club throwers dominated the men's F51 event at the Paralympics here. After four fouled attempts, the 35-year-old world champion's bronze medallist from Sonepat, Dharambir hurled the club to a distance of 34.92m in his fifth attempt to claim the top spot on the podium on Wednesday. Soorma, who injured his spinal chord at 16 when a cement sheet fell on his head, then produced a throw of 34.59m in his first attempt but the 29-year-old from Faridabad couldn't better and

get past Dharambir as India completed a one-two. The third Indian in the fray, 2017 world championship silver medallist, trailblazing Indian para-athlete and Dharambir's menton Amit Kumar Saroha, however, finished last with a best effort of 23.96m. Serbia's Filip Graovac bagged the bronze, courtesy a 34.18m throw in his second attempt. The F51 club throw event is for athletes who have movement affected to a high degree in the trunk, legs and hands. All the competitors compete while seated and rely on their shoulders and arm to generate power. From paralysis to Paralympic glory Dharambir faced a life-altering accident when a misjudged



dive into a canal left him paralyzed from the waist down. Para-sports gave him a new direction in life when he was introduced to it by fellow para-athlete Amit Kumar Saroha. Within two years, Dharambir qualified for the 2016 Rio Paralympics, marking the beginning of a successful career. He has since earned multiple medals for India, including a silver at the 2022 Asian Para Games. A cricket and roller hockey enthusiast, Soorma too was just another teenager when a cement sheet fell on his head when he was 16, leaving him paralyzed after causing a severe spinal cord injury. Support of his family and a

positive mindset helped him to turn to meditation and academics, where he excelled with 91.2 per cent in his 12th board exams. He then pursued a postgraduate degree from the Delhi School of Economics and secured a job as an Assistant Manager at the Bank of Baroda. Pranav rediscovered his love for sports through para-athletics and soon received success as he won a silver medal at the 2019 Beijing Grand Prix, a gold medal at the Serbia Open 2023, and both gold and silver medals at the Tunisia Grand Prix 2022. He also produced a record-setting throw at the Asian Para Games 2023, where he won gold in the men's club throw F51 event.

India's focus will be on self improvement: Rishabh Pant



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant warned against taking Bangladesh lightly in the upcoming two-Test series, and stressed on the need for India to keep improving themselves to stay ahead of the competition. Bangladesh, who recently blanked Pakistan 2-0 at Rawalpindi, will face Rohit Sharma's side in the first Test at Chennai from September 19 before moving to Kanpur. India will play a total of 10 Tests within the next five months as the series against Bangladesh will be followed by three Tests against New Zealand at home in October-November before moving to Australia for the five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "Asian countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka perform well in Asian conditions because they are accustomed to the wickets," Pant told Jio Cinema. "As the Indian cricket team, we focus solely on our own standards and how we can improve. Regardless of the opposition, we strive to play with the same intensity and give our 100 percent every single day," he said. Pant said no series can be taken lightly with the margins between the teams decreasing in international cricket. "Pressure will always be there because in international cricket, you can't take any series lightly. The margin between winning and losing is very small, and nowadays, the gap between international teams isn't much either," he said. Pant said playing in the

Duleep Trophy ahead of a long season of Test cricket will give the players quality match practice while young cricketers at domestic level will benefit from the presence of international stars. The opening round Duleep matches got underway here at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium and Anantapur on Thursday. "It is very important for us to play domestic cricket because as a cricketer, match practice is always very important," he said. "Especially coming back to domestic cricket, the youngsters also learn a lot of things from us - they see you playing here even after playing international cricket. There is a lot to give back to domestic cricket." "It also gives us the opportunity to share all the learning and experiences from international cricket with our colleagues, especially with the young players and newcomers; it gives them a huge boost since we all have reached here from playing domestic cricket," Pant added. Pant, who is playing for Team B in Duleep Trophy, said he was looking forward to getting back into domestic cricket as this is his first red-ball game after December 2022. "It is an amazing feeling for me, also because when I met with the accident two years ago, I used to always think about when I will be able to play for India again," he said. "In the last six months I (have) played IPL and we (have) also won the World Cup. It's a great feeling as I had always dreamt of winning the World Cup since I was a kid.

Jannik Sinner beats Daniil Medvedev to reach the semifinals

AP ■ NEW YORK

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner reached the U.S. Open semifinals for the first time by getting past 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 1-6, 6-1, 6-4 on Wednesday night. Sinner, who took over as the title favorite after Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz, is the only man remaining in the field with a Grand Slam trophy. He won his first at the Australian Open in January by beating Medvedev in the final in five sets after dropping the first two. As reflected by the accurate score, this matchup was unusually topsy-turvy as they took turns dominating a set at a time. First, it was Sinner who



was superior. Then that role was played Medvedev. Then Sinner regained the upper

hand in the third. In the fourth, from 3-all, Sinner surged, saving a pair of

break points, then breaking Medvedev to lead 5-3. Sinner - a 23-year-old from Italy who was cleared in a doping case less than a week before the U.S. Open started after testing positive twice for trace amounts of an anabolic steroid in March - will go up against No. 25 Jack Draper of Britain on Friday for a berth in the title match. That day's other semifinal will be No. 12 Taylor Fritz vs. No. 20 Frances Tiafoe in the first all-American men's matchup at this stage at a major in 19 years. The women's semifinals Thursday night are Jessica Pegula vs. Karolina Muchova, and Aryna Sabalenka vs. Emma Navarro. Pegula eliminated No. 1 Iga Swiatek 6-2, 6-4 on Wednesday. The 22-year-old

Draper reached his first Grand Slam semifinal - and became the first British man to get that far at Flushing Meadows since Andy Murray won the 2012 trophy - by overwhelming No. 10 Alex de Minaur 6-3, 7-5, 6-2. Draper has won all 15 sets he's played so far, but things figure to get tougher against Sinner. This is not kind of like an overnight thing for me. I've believed for a long time that I've been putting in the work and doing the right things, and I knew that my time would come," said Draper, whose upper right leg was taped by a trainer after he felt something at the end of the first set. "I didn't know when it would be, but hopefully from here, I can do a lot of amazing things.



Buttler out of T20 series against Australia, could miss ODIs

AP ■ LONDON

England white-ball captain Jos Buttler was ruled out of the Twenty20 series against Australia because of a right calf injury on Thursday and might also miss the one-day series between the teams, too. Buttler has been replaced in the T20 squad by Jamie Overton, while Phil Salt will take over as captain. The three-match T20 series begins on Wednesday. "The five-match ODI series starts on Sept. 19 so Buttler has two weeks to recover. Batter Jordan Cox has been added to the ODI squad as cover in case Buttler doesn't make it. England T20 squad: Phil Salt (captain), Jofra Archer, Jacob Bethell, Brydon Carse, Jordan Cox, Sam Curran, Josh Hull, Will Jacks, Liam Livingstone, Saqib Mahmood, Dan Mousley, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Reece Topley, John Turner. England ODI Squad: Jos Buttler (captain), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Jordan Cox, Ben Duckett, Josh Hull, Will Jacks, Matthew Potts, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Jamie Smith, Reece Topley, John Turner.

Kapil Parmar to compete for bronze in judo



PTI ■ PARIS

Iran's S Banitaba Khorram Abadi in the 60kg (J1) men's para judo semifinals of the Paralympics and will now compete for the bronze medal, here on Thursday. The 24-year-old Parmar was beaten 0-10 in semifinals A by his Iranian opponent here at the Champs-de-mart arena. The J1 class in para judo is for the athletes who suffer from no to very low visual activity. Athletes in this category wear red circles to indicate that they may need guided support before, during and after a contest. Parmar, who won the silver medal at the 2022 Asian Games in the same category, had ear-

lier beaten Venezuela's Marco Dennis Blanco 10-0 in the quarterfinal. Parmar was, however, handed a yellow card in each of the two contests on Thursday. Meanwhile, India's Kokila suffered a defeat to Kazakhstan's Akmaral Nauatbek 0-10 in her women's 48kg J2 class quarterfinals. Later, Kokila was beaten by Ukraine's Yuliya Ivanyska 0-10 in her J2 Final of Repechage A, a contest wherein she was handed three yellow cards while her opponent got two. Yellow cards in judo are given for minor violations such as passivity or using a technique that might hinder the opponent or cause injury. In J2 category, the competing athletes have partial eyesight.

New Zealand arrive in India for one-off Test against Afghanistan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

New Zealand arrived here on Thursday ahead of their one-off Test against Afghanistan, scheduled to be played in Greater Noida from September 9. The one-off Test, the first red-ball fixture between the two nations, will be held at the Greater Noida Sports Complex Ground. The BlackCaps have named a strong side for the Test against Afghanistan. Veteran pacer Tim Southee will lead the team which includes the likes of former

skipper Kane Williamson, who opted out of a central contract earlier this year, Devon Conway, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra, while Tom Latham continues to be the vice-captain. The BlackCaps have included five spin bowling options in Michael Bracewell, Mitchell Santner, Ajaz Patel and part-timers Phillips and Ravindra for the Test. They will hold their first practice session on Friday. The Test against Afghanistan will serve as a preparation for

a two-match series against Sri Lanka, which is part of the World Test Championship. After the tour of Sri Lanka, New Zealand will return to India as they take on Rohit Sharma and his men in a three-match Test series, also a part of the WTC calendar. The three games will be played in Bengaluru, Pune and Mumbai in October and November. New Zealand currently occupy the third spot in the ICC WTC points table behind last edition's finalists, India and Australia.

I was trying to play close to my body to counter swing and cut: Centurion Musheer

PTI ■ BENGALURU

After underscoring his talent with a robust hundred, Musheer Khan on Thursday said he centred his batting strategy around playing close to the body to nullify the pronounced movement of the ball in overcast conditions. Musheer's unbeaten 105 rescued India B after India A bowlers reduced them to 94 for seven on the first day of the Duleep Trophy match at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. India B finished the day at 202 for seven.

"I wanted to play as many balls as possible without thinking too much about runs. I wanted to bat the whole day, and I was taking it session by session. The ball was swinging and cutting when I came to bat," Musheer said in the post-day press meet. "So, I was trying to play the ball as close to my body as possible, and was looking to avoid those risky shots. I knew runs would eventually come," he added. But Musheer was not alone in his rescue mission as late-order batter Navdeep Saini helped him add 108 runs for the unbro-



ken eighth wicket alliance. "When wickets were falling at the other end, I told myself to play intelligently and look for a partnership. Then Saini bhai gave me a lot of confidence saying he will play whether it is two balls or six balls in an over, and just keep faith in him.

"He was also able to match my thinking and approach while batting. But generally, I was trying to defend the first three or four balls and then take a single," he elaborated. Another salient feature of his batting was the way he handled Kuldeep Yadav as five of his 10 fours came off the left-arm wrist spinner, including two successive biffs down the V. Musheer said conversations with senior batters in his side like Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant helped him prepare against Kuldeep.

ONE ARROW AT A TIME

Making of paralympic champion archer Harvinder Singh

PTI ■ PARIS

Dealing with the unexpected, whether in archery or life in general, is no big deal for Harvinder Singh. He has aced the anticipation game thanks to the hard lessons that came his way. The 33-year-old from Haryana, who scripted history by becoming the first Indian archer to win a Paralympic gold, has impaired legs owing to a dengue treatment gone wrong when he was just one year old but instead of lamenting his fate, he chose to become bigger than his circumstances. Harvinder's journey to Paralympic glory began with a bronze three years back in Tokyo, which made him the first Indian to finish on the Games podium. On Wednesday, he showed neither fatigue nor nerves to secure five back-to-back wins in a day to bag his second successive Paralympic medal in recurve open category,

bettering the previous performance by quite a margin. All his achievements are a first in Indian archery. And when he is not shooting down medals, Harvinder is busy pursuing a Ph.D in economics. "In the last few months, I was shooting very well in practice, more than the world record in qualification. Here, I finished ninth (in the ranking round), and my confidence went a little bit down. Anyway, I focused on the matches because anything could happen," Harvinder was quoted as saying by 'World Archery'. "Archery is a game of unexpected. Everything can happen. I focused on every arrow. Only the next arrow counts," said Harvinder, who reserved his best for the final, nailing three 10s in his last four arrows to knock out his 44-year-old opponent from Poland Lukasz Ciszek 6-0 (28-24, 28-27, 29-25). His was India's second medal in



archery at the ongoing Games after Sheetal Devi and Rakesh Kumar combined for the compound mixed team bronze. Harvinder what works best for him is to stay in the moment and think too far ahead. "I was just focusing on my next match. Only that way, I could move to the next round, and one by one, I moved to the final. And eventually won gold," he broke down the process. Three years back in Tokyo, Harvinder who hails from Ajitnagar in Kaithal district of Haryana, could not realise his dream of a gold. He said his teammates had a role to play in instilling belief in him that he could aim for the top podium finish. "In Tokyo, I won bronze, so I'm happy I could change the colour of my medal. Before the (Paris) Games, everybody told me I had a chance to reach gold, and I'm happy I was

able to," said Harvinder, who comes from a farming family. Harvinder's consistency and his monk-like demeanour ensured that he lost no more than three points in each of his matches. The archer, who started taking interest in the sport after watching the action on TV during London Olympics, said that he felt "blessed". "It feels fantastic. I'm just blessed to achieve this fold for India," he said after the medal ceremony. Harvinder's mantra is to always aim for a '10' with his final arrow, something he says, helped him achieve his goal in Paris. If you have confidence, you can learn the arrow. Sometimes it can slip to nine, but you always have to finish with a 10, because it's your last arrow. In my matches and many situations, I landed my last arrow in a 10. I focused on my last arrow," he said.

GOAT: FALLS SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS

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Since Tamil superstar Thalapathy Vijay has announced his entry into politics, he first intended to work on a few projects. *Goat: Greatest of All Time*, helmed by Venkat Prabhu,

is among them. While some claim this is Vijay's final movie, others speculate he might do another movie. That being said, there is absolutely no buzz about the Telugu version of this movie. Prashanth, Prabhu Deva, Mohan, Ajmal, Sneha, Meenakshi Chaudhary and numerous other celebrities are among the film's enormous star cast. The soundtrack was composed by Yuvan Shankar Raja and we'll find out how the Telugu movie is doing.

STORY

Gandhi (played by Vijay) is working as an agent in the Special Anti-Terrorist Squad (SATS) along with Sunil (played by Prashanth), Kalyan (played by Prabhu Deva) and Ajay (played by Ajmal Ameer). Anu (played by Sneha), is the wife of Gandhi and is expecting their second child, although she is unaware that Gandhi works for SATS. The family suffers in Thailand, where he brought his wife and son on a mission. Jeevan, their five-year-old son, passes away. Gandhi, who was dissatisfied, departed from SATS and was put in a distance by his wife.

After fifteen years, Gandhi travelled to Russia regarding some work and found Jeevan (Vijay), who bore a striking resemblance to him. There, Gandhi

rescued his son from a gang and got him back to India. The family is back together. Here's where the crisis begins, when Nazir (played by Jayaram), the boss of the SATS squad and a few other members were also killed. Who put them to death? When Jeevan left Thailand at the age of five, what happened to him? For what reason does Jeevan wish to exact revenge on his own father? How come Menon (played by Mohan) desired Gandhi's death? If you want to know all these things, please watch this film.

ANALYSIS

Venkat Prabhu's previous film *Custody* starring Akkineni Naga Chaitanya was a major flop. He has now produced the big-budget movie *Greatest of All Time* starring Vijay. It's a huge movie featuring one of the top Tamil actors, so Venkat needed to focus on the script and pay special attention to the de-aging technology. However, the director told the story in a simple manner and was not quite engaging. While the concept of father-son revenge dramas is not a new one, the director presented it in a unique manner yet fails to deliver an engaging story or narrative.

After 15 years, a son who lost his parents as a child returned to seek revenge against his father. This is not just a spy thriller with unexpected twists and turns; you can easily anticipate every scene in the movie. The film begins with an intriguing scene in which the main character res-

cues the powerful uranium from terrorists. Following this, attention turned to Vijay's family, which truly tested the audience's patience. The initial part wraps up with the friends and family exchanging corny jokes, but it isn't until young Vijay enters the scene just before the interval that things start to get interesting.

The director disclosed that young Vijay desired to seek revenge on his father by reuniting with his family. Therefore, the audience was interested in learning about how Vijay's battles with one another were engaging until the very end. The songs are dull and the movie is too long to endure. The latter half of the movie outshines the initial half. Venkat Prabhu becomes more careful with the plot and script when working with a major star like Vijay. While Vijay fans might enjoy some aspects of the movie, it may not be well received by the Telugu audience. Excessive use of technology can also be detrimental, as demonstrated by Venkat Prabhu in the sad state of late Vijaykanth through the use of AI technology. De-aging software also makes some parts of the younger Vijay appear pale. The climax is uninteresting and expected. The movie lacks emotional intelligence.

PERFORMANCES

When it comes to the artists' performance, Vijay did a great job playing Gandhi and surely captivated his fans. The de-aging software was not

Cast: Thalapathy Vijay, Sneha, Prashanth, Prabhu Deva, Mohan, Jaiaram, Laila, Meenakshi Chaudhary, Ajmal, Vaibhav, Yogibabu and others
Cinematography: Siddhartha Nuni
Producer: Kalapathi S Agthoram, Kalapathi S Ganesh, Kalapathi S Suresh
Written by: Venkat Prabhu
Release Date: September 5, 2024
Rating: 2/5

utilised correctly when it comes to the younger Vijay and did not meet expectations. Prashanth and Prabhu Deva did a great job. Sneha and Meenakshi Chaudhary have very restricted roles. Ajmal performed adequately. Yogibabu is completely futile. Mohan from the famous movie *Mouna Ragam* portrays a villain; however, his character is badly developed and he is not the right fit for the role. Trisha and Siva Karthikeyan make cameo appearances, while other actors have brief roles. Siddharth Nuni's cinematography excels due to his well-choreographed action sequences and intriguing capture of them. Yuvan Shankar Raja's music is below expectations.

VERDICT

The *Greatest of All Time* does not meet expectations and falls short of expectations. The film has been released at a time when Vijay has entered politics, which might generate interest but there is no excitement in Telugu. You might overlook it entirely and anticipate an OTT debut.



Gajaanana featuring Varalaxmi released

It's already known that Sudarshan Paruchuri is making his debut as a hero with the upcoming movie *Mr Celebrity*. The film also stars Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, Sri Deeksha, Nassar and Raghu Babu in pivotal roles. Meanwhile, a song from the movie was released and it's already making waves, with chants of Lord Vinayaka being heard everywhere. To celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi, the makers released a vibrant devotional song

titled *Gajaanana* from the movie. Composed by Vinod and written by Ganesh, the song brings an energetic vibe. Crooned with high pitch vocals by Mangli, the song is poised to become a hit during the Navaratri celebrations. Varalaxmi Sarathkumar has set the dance floor on fire with her graceful and appealing moves in the song. After a long time, she appears with such energy in a song. Watching the video feels

like witnessing a real festival and it's sure to be a celebration on screen. The movie is produced by N. Panduranga Rao and Chinna Reddaiah under the RP Cinemas banner, with Chandina Ravi Kishore directing it. The teaser, which had released a few days ago, has garnered a lot of attention and the release date will be announced soon.



Behind the scenes with Bench Life squad

AARTI SREENATH

As the much-anticipated release of SonyLiv's new series *Bench Life* approaches, *The Pioneer* sits down with some of the key players behind the show to dive deep into their experiences, character portrayals and the vision driving this corporate comedy-drama at Taj Krishna.

From the witty yet immature Ravi, played by the dynamic Charan Peri, to the creative force behind the project, producer Niharika Konidela and the talented director Manasa Sharma, we bring you exclusive insights into what makes *Bench Life* a series to watch this season. Charan Peri, portraying the role of Ravi, a young corporate employee on the verge of personal and professional conflicts, offered an exciting glimpse into his character. "Ravi is married, but he's mentally still stuck in his college days," Charan explained with a laugh. "He's immature, wants to go to Goa, chill with friends and live that carefree life, but now he's got a family, a wife—and that's a whole new dynamic. It's about how he mentally deals with this situation."

When asked how Ravi's journey unravels in *Bench Life*, he said, "He wants to go on this Goa trip without telling his wife, so you'll see him trying to navigate that. Does he find a mentor? How does he deal with these desires while balancing his responsibilities? That's the crux of the character."

Interestingly, he admitted that playing Ravi wasn't too much of a stretch for him. "I didn't need to do extensive corporate research because this character is very similar to my life," he shared, adding, "This guy is on the 'bench'—which means he's not assigned any tasks at work—so he's outside the office most of the time. I found that super relatable and I think many people will, too." Delving deeper into the character, he shared an amusing

anecdote about how Ravi's behaviour hits home. "I remember the days when I used to lie to my mom about where I was going or cover things up. Ravi does that a lot with his wife and it's hilarious. You'll definitely have a blast watching him squirm through these situations," he said, laughing.

Comparing his experience from his previous show *MAD* to *Bench Life*, Charan highlighted the shift in creative freedom. "In *MAD*, everything was more relaxed, even on set. We were free to experiment and improvise a lot. But in *Bench Life*, there's a proper structure to the characters. My director, Manasa Sharma, had a clear vision and I had to stay within that. There was no room for improvisation—just playing Ravi as she envisioned him."

One of the most exciting aspects of Charan's journey in *Bench Life* was working with veteran actors like Rajendra Prasad and Tanikella Bharani. Reflecting on the challenges of comedy, Charan admitted, "Comedy is tough. You can't just act—you have to feel it. It's definitely challenging, but that's what makes it so rewarding. I had a lot of fun navigating that balance between Ravi's immature antics and the more serious, emotional undertones of his story."

Niharika Konidela, who wears the hats of both actress and producer, opened up about her journey in production, starting from her first venture, *Muddapappu Avakai*. "I was a producer first and then I became an actor. I didn't even know I was producing when I did *Muddapappu Avakai*—I just thought I was putting money into something I believed in," she chuckled. "It was only later that I realised there was a term for it—production." *Bench Life* marks Niharika's seventh production under Pink Elephant Pictures and she explained what drew her to this particular story. "Manasa narrated the concept to me and I was hooked. I didn't even know what being 'on the bench' meant in corporate terms, but I was fascinated

by how the show portrayed it. It's about why these characters, who should be worried about losing their jobs, are actually happy to be benched. It's about how they use that free time to explore other avenues." On the challenge of establishing her identity as a producer, Niharika said, "It's about baby steps for me. I don't have long-term goals of where I see myself in ten years. If people see our name associated with a project and immediately think, 'This is going to be good,' then I've done my job."

When asked about the challenges of producing *Bench Life*, she surprisingly said the process was quite breezy. "With big names like Rajendra Prasad and Tanikella Bharani on board, it wasn't difficult. They were all committed to the story, which made it easy for us. The real challenge was shooting in real IT offices—on weekdays, no less! We had to coordinate our shoots with actual employees working there. That was tricky." She also praised Charan Peri, who, despite not having an extensive acting background, stood out to her. "We chose Charan because he has this rare quality—he's got a serious face, but he does comedy so well. That's hard to find. Manasa herself has a great sense of humour and I think it's really funny," she admitted.

Director Manasa Sharma, known for her previous hit *Okachinna Family Story*, brings her unique narrative style to *Bench Life*. "This project is different from anything I've done before," she shared. "With *Okachinna Family Story*, we focused on a single family. But in *Bench Life*, we're juggling four distinct stories, which makes it more engaging. I wanted each episode to have that emotional punch, leaving the audience with something to think about."

Manasa's approach to directing *Bench Life* was driven by her desire to balance comedy with emotion. "Comedy is the foundation, but it's the emotional undertones that will stay with the audience. By the time you finish watching



As the team of Bench Life begins with its promotion, The Pioneer interacts with the lead, Charan Peri, producer Niharika Konidela and director Manasa Sharma, bringing to you our exclusive tid-bits with them

the series, I want viewers to feel both entertained and moved." So, what can audiences take away from *Bench Life*? Charan summed it up best: "It's not just about software or corporate life. It's about relationships, emotions and how each character deals with their circumstances. You'll laugh, you'll cry and most importantly, you'll see a part of yourself in these characters."

Hit 3: Arjun Sarkaar now takes charge

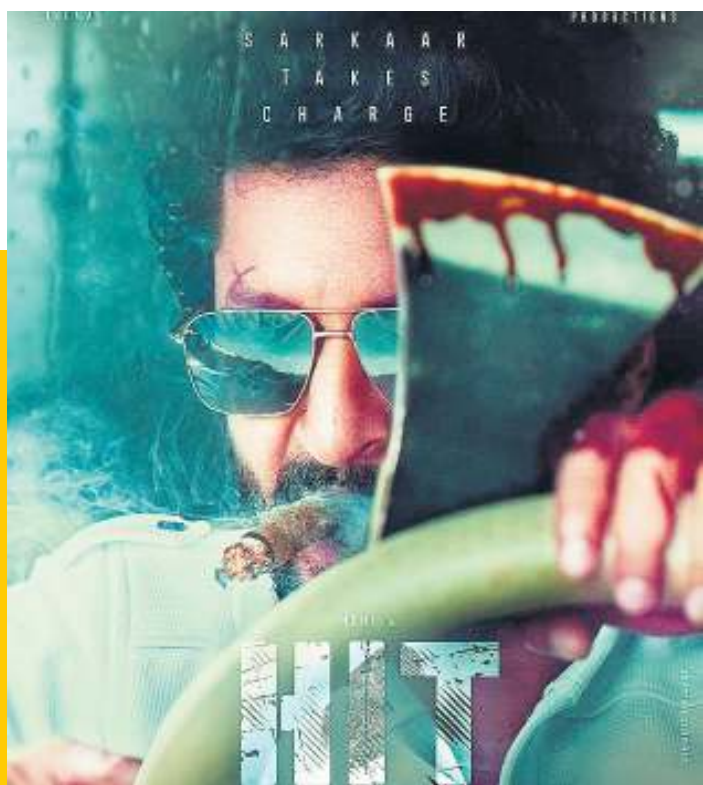
On Thursday, the poster and teaser for Telugu actor Nani's *Hit 3* were released. According to the teaser, Nani is a brutal police officer who will stop at nothing to accomplish his objectives.

Following the release of the teaser by PVR, Nani posted the poster for the film along with a caption which read, "Less of a cop, More of a criminal. Arjun Sarkaar takes charge. #Nani32 is #HITTheThirdCase. Blood gates

will open May 1st 2025 (sic)."

Director Dr. Sailesh Kolanu had already announced *Hit 3* a few years back. In May of next year, the movie will be released in theatres. Wall Poster Cinema and Unanimous Productions collaborated on its production.

Nani was last seen in *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram*, which was a box office success. Under Vivek Athreya's direction, Priyanka Mohan and SJ Suryah both had prominent roles.



Janhvi shot for Daavudi 3-days post-her recovery

Janhvi Kapoor looks absolutely radiant in the newly released song *Daavudi* from the highly anticipated film *Devara*, where she stars alongside the charismatic Jr NTR. In this energetic track, Janhvi showcases her incredible dance prowess, effortlessly executing complex choreography with a level of dynamism and precision that is truly captivating. Her movements are technically impressive and brimming with energy, ensuring that she is the undeniable highlight of the performance. The chemistry between her and Jr NTR amplifies the overall appeal, making *Daavudi* a must-watch for dance and music enthusiasts alike. Beyond her striking beauty and flawless execution, Janhvi's dedication to her craft shines brightly in this performance. As per reports, a few months back it was reported that Janhvi was hospitalised for food poisoning, but Janhvi's commitment to her art is exemplified by her swift return to work. Just three days after being discharged from the hospital, she was back on set, diving into the rigorous



demands of the *Daavudi* shoot. This remarkable feat underscores her resilience and passion for her profession. According to reports, "Janhvi Kapoor shot for the song *Daavudi*, just three days after being discharged from the hospital. Her energy and dedication shine throughout the song as fans and audiences pour in praises for her transformation into a mass heroine for her first ever big commercial pan-India film!"

Pranitha Subhash & Nithin Raju welcome baby boy

Actress Pranitha Subhash and her husband Nithin Raju have welcomed their second child, a son, on September 5. After the news was announced, the couple received an abundance of well wishes and messages of congratulations. The couple recently had their first baby girl. She gave birth to the boy on September 5 at a private hospital in Bengaluru.

The stunning actress, who hails from South India, excitedly announced the happy news to her dedicated fans and the public through a fun post on July 25th. In a series of photos she posted to announce the news, the actress also showed off her pregnant belly.

In 2021, the actress tied the knot with her long-term partner Nithin Raju in a small, traditional

Hindu ceremony at her Bengaluru residence amid the COVID pandemic. The actress is famous not only for her portrayal as a heroine in the industry but also for her charitable acts and dedication to the community. The couple revealed news of their first pregnancy in 2022 and introduced a baby girl to their family. Her name was Arna.

Sunny Leone's Petta Rap to release on Sept 27

Sunny Leone will appear alongside renowned choreographer, director and actor Prabhu Deva in her upcoming Tamil movie *Petta Rap*. The film's creators used social media to reveal the release date and a new poster showcasing Sunny, Prabhu Deva and Vedhika. The movie, expected to be a great crowd-pleaser, will be out on September 27.

The poster showcases Sunny returning to her glamorous persona. It was previously announced that the actress will be performing a dance number with Prabhu Deva and ever

since the news broke, her fans have been excitedly anticipating the song.

Before, Sunny impressed her audience with her appearance in the Tamil movie *Quotation Gang*, where she portrayed the character of a killer. In addition to *Petta Rap* and *Quotation Gang*, Sunny is set to appear in *Badass Ravikumar* with Prabhu Deva and Himesh Reshammiya. She has also starred in the film *Shero* and has an untitled Malayalam movie. Apart from acting in movies, the actress is making a strong effort to disrupt the entrepreneurial world with her cosmetic brand.

