



**INDIA bloc unity can write new history**

5

**'COLLECTING CHANDAS FOR GANESH CHATURTHI WAS ONE OF MY BEST CHILDHOOD MEMORIES'**



10


**Ram Pothineni and Harish Shankar's project ON HOLD**



P12

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

*This is not the time to engage in politics. It is the time to work together for the people. The people are in trouble and so I went to the secretariat keeping politics aside. The previous government did not invite and did not meet Union Ministers when floods occurred.*



**- Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister**

P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Roads on 287 km stretch damaged...**

The incessant rains and the Krishna floods battered the district severely as crops, as well as roads, were damaged to a large extent. According to official sources, roads over 287 km were damaged at various places in the district due to heavy rains and the Krishna River floods. In the Prathipadu constituency, the Abbineniguntapalem-Valluru Road in Kakumanu mandal was badly damaged. During the YSRCP regime, the then government had sanctioned Rs 2.06 crore for the reconstruction of the road. The then MLA Mekathotu ...

-PAGE: 4

**Thousands take part in human ...**

Thousands of people across five districts of Imphal Valley on Friday took part in a series of human chain rallies to protest the recent drone and gun attacks in Manipur that resulted in two civilian deaths and 12 injuries. Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the ongoing conflict in the state. Organised by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), the rally saw school and college students in uniform, as well as women from various localities, lining up ...

-PAGE: 5

**Carbon fibre will be produced by ...**

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh on Friday expressed confidence that the niche carbon fibre -- which is used in aerospace, civil engineering and defence as an alternative to metal -- will be produced by India in 2025-26. Currently, India does not produce any carbon fibre and relies completely on imports from countries such as the US, France, Japan and Germany. The European Union's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, a tax on embedded carbon imports, is expected to kick in ...

-PAGE: 8

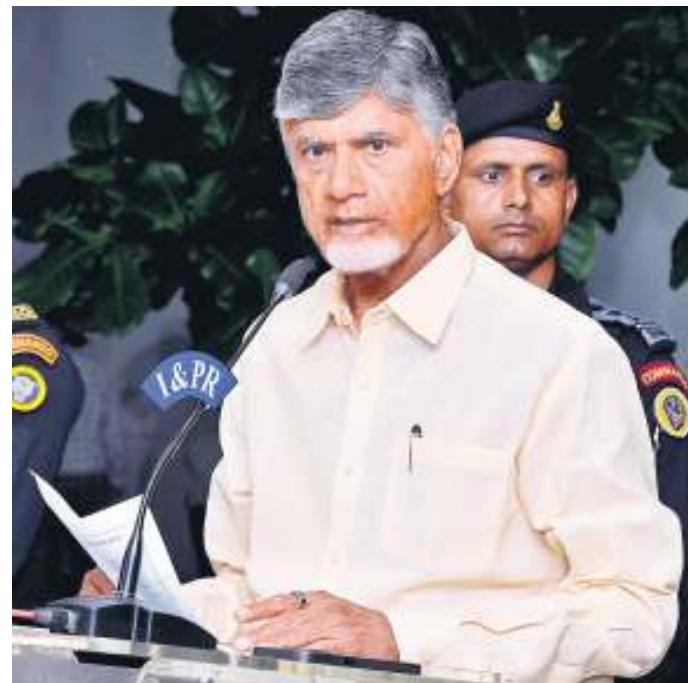
**Neeraj Chopra qualifies for...**

India's two-time Olympic medal-winning javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra has qualified for this month's season finale of the prestigious Diamond League after finishing fourth in the overall standings at the end of its 14 series meetings across the world. The season finale will be a two-day affair on September 13 and 14 in Brussels. Chopra accumulated 14 points from his two second-place finishes in the one-day meets held in Doha and Lausanne. He skipped the last series meet in Zurich...

-SPORTS



- Immediate relief measures include distributing food packets, water, milk, biscuits, and candles. Power has been restored in most areas, and sanitation work is 72% complete.
- The primary focus is on urgently closing breaches in the Budameru canal, with two of three breaches already sealed.
- Power supply has been restored in all areas except where water remains logged, and electricity connections have been re-established in rural areas.
- Free bus services have been arranged for flood victims
- 28 people have lost their lives across the State due to the floods



**HAPPY GANESH CHATURTHI**

The Pioneer wishes its readers, advertisers, suppliers, vendors, and agents a happy Ganesh Chaturthi. As our offices will remain closed today (07-09-2024), there will be no issue of the paper on Tuesday (08-09-2024)

— Resident Editor

# No Central aid for AP yet: CM

## Preliminary report on flood damage to be sent today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has made it clear that no Central aid has been received for the flood-affected areas in Andhra Pradesh so far. He dismissed as mere rumours the claims that the Centre has announced Rs 3,448 crore flood relief to the Telugu states.

Addressing the media at the Vijayawada Collectorate on Friday, Naidu confirmed that the Central government has yet to provide assistance, and a preliminary report on flood damage will be submitted to the Centre on Saturday morning. He added that discussions with the Centre are going on to secure aid for the victims.

The Chief Minister said that fill-

ing the breaches in the Budameru canal is the primary objective and must be tackled urgently. He reviewed the ongoing relief efforts in flood-affected areas and announced that free bus services have been arranged for flood vic-

tims and reported that 28 people have lost their lives across the State due to the floods. Naidu also mentioned that efforts are underway to address the loss of household equipment.

Continued on Page 2

**Clean up roads, colonies: Naidu**

**VIJAYAWADA:** Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has instructed the officials to speed up the cleaning of roads, colonies, and damaged houses, using fire engines to assist in the process. During a teleconference with Ministers and officials to discuss relief efforts in the flood-affected areas on Friday, Naidu was briefed on the sanitary work being carried out. This

was the sixth consecutive teleconference. With the Indian Army's Engineering Task Force actively helping to fill the Budameru trenches, the Chief Minister asked for an update on the progress. Two trenches have already been filled, although officials are facing difficulties with the third.

Continued on Page 2

**Centre announced Rs 3,448 cr aid to AP & TG, claims Union Minister Chouhan**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday announced an immediate assistance of Rs 3,448 crore to mitigate the impact of floods in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Chouhan, who is in Telangana today after reviewing the flood situation in Andhra Pradesh, said: "No one needs to be disappointed. We are working to provide immediate help".

Continued on Page 2



**Naidu conducts aerial survey of Budameru**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu conducted an aerial survey of the Budameru embankment areas on Friday, examining the regions where the Budameru flows towards its confluence with Kolleru Lake.

Continued on Page 2

**Panic returns to city as Budameru rises again**

2,500 cusecs of water being discharged from Velagaleru Regulator

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As residents of Ajith Singh Nagar, Payakapuram, Paipula Road, and other areas began cleaning their homes as floodwaters started receding early on Friday, the Budameru Rivulet saw a sudden increase in flood levels for the second time. This unexpected rise has caused renewed fear of another flooding event. Currently, around 2,500 cusecs of water are being discharged from the Velagaleru Regulator.

After five days of flooding, police had allowed travel between Ajith Singh Nagar Flyover and Paipula Road starting Thursday night. However, on Friday, the flood levels rose again, halting efforts to clean homes.



The ongoing work to close the breach in the Budameru Diversion Channel (BDC) has diverted all floodwaters towards Vijayawada City. Consequently, areas such as Singh Nagar, Payakapuram, Prakash Nagar, and Kandrika Colony are expected to experience flooding once more. Earlier in the day, 4,770 cusecs were released, later reduced to 2,500 cusecs.

Continued on Page 2

**Army on the job to close third breach to Budameru**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Efforts to repair the breaches in the Budameru Diversion Channel (BDC) are progressing steadily. The Water Resources Department (WRD), under the directions of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, is aiming to complete the work on the third breach by September 7.

At the request of the Chief Minister, the central government has deployed a 40-member Army Engineering Task Force, which entered the field on Friday to help close the third breach at Kondapalli. Their expertise has been vital in managing this larger breach and stabilising the situation.

The Army unit is working closely with WRD officials and the contracting agency. Two of the breaches at Kondapalli have already been closed, with the supervision of Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu. This coordinated effort has been crucial for both immediate relief and long-term recovery.

While a large volume of floodwa-

**2 of the 3 breaches at Kodapalli already closed**



ter has been released into the BDC, which slightly hampered the breach-closing work, the Army team and WRD officials are working together to speed up the process of closing

the third, larger breach to prevent further flooding towards Vijayawada City.

Until the BDC breaches are fully repaired, areas like Ajith Singh Nagar,

Payakapuram, Prakash Nagar, Devi Nagar, Rayanapadu, Pudurapadu, Jakkampudi Colony, and Ambapuram remain at risk. The Chief Minister is closely monitoring the progress, receiving hourly updates through drone footage.

For the past few days, Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu has been staying on-site at the BDC bund to oversee the repair work at Kondapalli. Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad, former minister Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao, and other leaders have also been supervising the efforts.

Meanwhile, Rajamahendravaram MP and BJP State President Daggubati Purandeswari inspected the breach-closing works alongside Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu and other officials. She urged WRD officials to complete the repairs as soon as possible.

Continued on Page 2

# Floods dampen Vinayaka Chavithi spirit in city

C PRADEEP KUMAR  
cpk007@gmail.com  
■ VIJAYAWADA

The recent deluge in Vijayawada has cast a shadow over the Vinayaka Chavithi festival, with the city grappling with severe flooding. The heavy rains of the past few days have inundated large areas, compelling residents to observe the festival with subdued fervour.

While the desire to honour Lord Ganesha with the first pooja remains strong, many are disheartened by the adverse conditions. The Vijayawada One Town area, particularly affected by the Krishna River and Budameru floods, has seen a marked decline in the usual festival fervour. The city's residents are fervently praying to Vinayaka for relief, as they contend with ongoing flooding, power out-



**The flooding has also impacted the local economy, driving up the prices of fruits and flowers due to crop losses. Despite the challenging circumstances, the people of Vijayawada are determined to celebrate Vinayaka Chavithi, hoping it will help them navigate these difficulties. Traditionally bustling marketplaces, brimming with shoppers purchasing Ganesh idols, fruits, flowers, and 'patris,' now show only a modest crowd. Small traders, who had invested heavily in Ganesh idols, are concerned about their financial returns amid reduced sales.**

ages, and unclean living conditions. The flooding has also impacted the local economy, driving up the prices of fruits and flowers due to crop losses. Despite the challenging circum-

stances, the people of Vijayawada are determined to celebrate Vinayaka Chavithi, hoping it will help them navigate these difficulties. Traditionally bustling marketplaces,

brimming with shoppers purchasing Ganesh idols, fruits, flowers, and 'patris,' now show only a modest crowd. Small traders, who had invested heavily in Ganesh idols, are con-

cerned about their financial returns amid reduced sales.

The price of 'patris,' flowers, and fruits has surged, and the usual vibrant decorations and street stalls have diminished phenomenally. While some areas unaffected by the floods exhibit a slight festive buzz, overall business remains subdued. In the lead-up to Vinayaka Chavithi, the city's streets, typically lined with stalls, are notably sparse.

Markets that once thrived with families shopping for the festival are now eerily quiet. Both clay and Plaster of Paris Ganesh idols are available, but small traders who invested heavily are struggling to make sales due to the current flood situation. Many fear financial losses from poor sales, adding to the overall sense of uncertainty and concern during this year's festival.

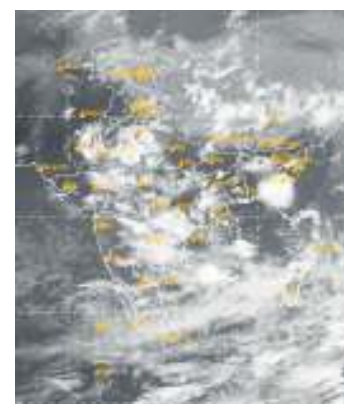
# Low pressure forms over central, north Bay of Bengal

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A low pressure area over West Central and the adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal has now positioned itself over Central and the adjoining north Bay of Bengal as of 0830 hrs on Friday.

The associated cyclonic circulation extends up to 7.6 km above mean sea level, tilting southwards with altitude. It is expected to move slowly northwards and intensify into a depression over the northwest Bay of Bengal and adjacent regions, including Gangetic West Bengal, northern Odisha, and the coasts of Bangladesh, around September 9.

Subsequently, the system is likely to shift west-northwestwards across Gangetic West Bengal and adjacent areas of northern Odisha, Jharkhand,



and northern Chhattisgarh over the next 3-4 days, according to the Meteorological Centre.

Continued on Page 2

"A wife who loses a husband is called a widow. A husband who loses a wife is called a widower. A child who loses his parents is called an orphan. There is no word for a parent who loses a child. That's how awful the loss is." These words by American novelist Jay Neugeboren aptly capture the grief of a parent who loses a child: that which no parent wishes even on their worst enemies.

A study in the prestigious scientific journal Nature analysed data from 35 States and Union Territories and concluded that the 11.7 crore toilets built over the last 10 years with an outlay of Rs 1,40,000 crore reaped by the Modi government under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has saved 60,000 to 70,000 mothers and fathers every year from the devastation and emptiness of losing a child. After a granular study of 600 districts, the study further points out that for every 10% increase in access to toilets at the district

# Saving lives: The Swachh Bharat way

**Only a push for universal access to toilets, clean water, and clean cooking fuel combined with universal access to healthcare can push the infant mortality rates further down. Luckily, the Modi government has focused relentlessly on these aspects over the past decade through its Swachh Bharat (toilets), Jal Jeevan (clean tap water), Ujjwala (cooking gas), and Ayushman Bharat missions and continues to do so even today.**

level, there's a 0.9 points reduction in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and 1.1 points reduction of Under Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) in that district. For every 1000 children born, IMR represents the number of children who die within a year of their birth, and U5MR represents the number of children who die within five years of their birth.

The study also points to the significance of saturation in access to toilets. Once access to toilets reaches 30% and above in any district, IMR steeply declines by 5.3 points and U5MR by 6.8 points. This correlation implies that one's health depends not only on one's access to a toilet but also on everyone's access to it.

Universal access to toilets eliminates open defecation,

thus improving sanitation and reducing disease incidence for everyone. Access to toilets not only serves the humanitarian purpose of saving parents the grief of losing a child but also impacts our nation's social, economic, mental and spiritual well-being.

On the social front, toilets provide privacy and dignity, especially to women and the girl child. It raises girls'

school attendance and women's workforce participation while reducing crime against women, thus improving gender justice. Studies have also shown that lowering infant mortality rates lowers population growth rates. When the chances of infant survival decrease, the 'insurance' effect kicks in, leading to couples having more children. As one study puts it, "The more babies a



KISHORE POREDDY

woman loses, the more children she is likely to have".

"Health is wealth" captures the essence of the economic impact of access to toilets. Improving sanitation in general and access to toilets in particular curtails the loss of productivity due to missed school and work

days. The World Health Organisation says inadequate sanitation amounted to a loss of about 6.4% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), citing a study of 2006 data. The study also estimated that every rupee spent on sanitation saves nine rupees on treatment, healthcare costs, and lost productivity costs.

India currently enjoys a substantial demographic dividend with a young population. This dividend will diminish by the 2050s. If India has to reach the next level of economic orbit and grow into a developed nation, the next three decades are the most crucial. India cannot ignore the humble toilet's necessity for this historic transition.

While numbers clearly show the demographic,

social, and economic impacts of improved or universal access to toilets, they also have a tremendous mental, psychological and spiritual impact. "A healthy mind in a healthy body" captures the importance of hygiene for one's mental health. Sanitation improves not only health but also the sense of self-worth and confidence levels. Mahatma Gandhi lived by the dictum that cleanliness is next to godliness and stressed the importance of sanitation to spiritual well-being. He said, and I quote: "We can no more gain God's blessings with an unclean body than with an unclean mind. A clean body cannot reside in an unclean city".

While universal vaccination, Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) sachets, gov-

ernment interventions in prenatal care and improved access to healthcare have brought down infant deaths considerably over the past decades, they are still high in India. Only a push for universal access to toilets, clean water, and clean cooking fuel combined with universal access to healthcare can bring these numbers further to reach those attained by the developed world. Luckily, the Modi government has focused relentlessly on these aspects over the past decade through its Swachh Bharat (toilets), Jal Jeevan (clean tap water), Ujjwala (cooking gas) and Ayushman Bharat missions, and continues to do so even today. There is no doubt that future studies assessing these schemes and the Modi government's missionary focus on implementing them at a saturation level will highlight their transformational role in turning India into Viksit Bharat.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

## No Central aid for ...

Continued from Page 1

Naidu said that water levels are gradually receding in Vijayawada and emphasised that the immediate priority is to close the breaches in the Budameru canal and restore normalcy. Army personnel have been deployed to assist with this task; of the three breaches, two have been sealed, with work on the third expected to be completed by late tonight.

Relief measures are being implemented with urgency, according to the Chief Minister. The authorities have distributed 312,000 food pack-

ets, 1.15 million water bottles, as well as milk, biscuits, and candles from 149 urban and 30 rural secretariats. Power supply has been restored in all areas except where water remains logged, and electricity connections have been re-established in rural areas. Sanitation efforts are progressing, with 72 per cent of work completed and 7,100 sanitation workers deployed. Additionally, 1,300 Public Distribution System (PDS) vehicles have begun distributing essential commodities to affected families, with distribution expected to be completed within three days.

## Centre announced Rs 3,448 cr aid...

Continued from Page 1

Presently, the arrangement is being made to provide immediate assistance of Rs 3,448 crore under the State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF), which also includes the central government's share, he said.

After providing immediate assistance, the government will think about making available fertilisers and seeds to farmers for the next crop, he added.

The minister also assured the farming community that the Centre will provide appropriate

compensation after the assessment of the crop damage.

"We will ask the banks not to recover loans from farmers in times of crisis," he added.

Chouhan conducted an aerial survey of crop damage in flood-hit areas of Meenavalu, Peddagopavaram, Mannur, and Kattleru, of Telangana. He also met people in Khammam and discussed their problems, an official statement said.

The minister mentioned that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is concerned about the flood situation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

## Clean up roads, colonies: ...

Continued from Page 1

However, with the Army's support, the work is moving quickly.

The Chief Minister also inquired about the restoration of power supply, telephone signals, and the distribution of drinking water through tankers, as well as the supply of essential goods. Officials

informed him that food packs have been prepared and are being distributed to the victims.

Chandrababu Naidu also urged officials to hire private technicians from other areas if needed, even if higher payment is required, to repair damaged electronic items in the affected homes due to the heavy flooding.

TODAY ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Chaturthi: Sep 06 03:01 PM to Sep 07 05:37 PM
Panchami: Sep 07 05:37 PM to Sep 08 07:58 PM
Nakshatram: Chitra: Sep 06 09:25 AM to Sep 07 12:34 PM
Swati: Sep 07 12:34 PM to Sep 08 03:30 PM
Rahukalam: 9:10 AM to 10:42 AM
Yamagandam: 1:45 PM to 3:17 PM
Varjyam: 06:51 PM to 08:39 PM
Gulika: 6:06 AM to 7:38 AM
Amritkalam: None
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:49 AM to 12:38 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Heavy Thunderstorm
Temp: 29°
Humidity: 85%
Sunrise: 5:55 AM
Sunset: 6:16 PM
Updated: September 6, 2024 5:00 PM

## Naidu conducts aerial survey ...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also inspected areas along the Budameru that have been illegally encroached upon, as well as the ongoing works to fill the trenches. From the helicopter, he closely observed the condition of the villages surrounding Kolleru Lake and monitored the flow of water from the Krishna River beneath the Prakasam Barrage.

During his aerial survey, Chandrababu also covered the Hamsaladeevi area, where the Krishna River meets the sea and the Krishnalanka region.

# Anagani blames Jagan for Budameru disaster

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Revenue, Registration, and Stamps Minister Anagani Satya Prasad has alleged that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is a major disaster for the State. The Minister claimed that the widespread loss of property and life caused by the recent floods was due to human error, for which Jagan Mohan Reddy is responsible. In a statement released on Friday, the Minister accused the Chief Minister of neglecting all irrigation projects during his five-year rule, resulting in such calamities.

Minister Anagani criticised Jagan Mohan Reddy for failing to maintain irrigation projects, including the greasing of project gates, which has led to man-made disasters. He further claimed that YS Jagan was



responsible for the submergence of Chandrababu Naidu's residence in August 2019 due to the halt of water flow at the Prakasam Barrage. In 2021, 44 people lost their lives, and thousands were rendered homeless following the collapse of the Annamaya Dam, which the Minister attributed to YS

Jagan's alleged sand mafia. Additionally, the second gate of the Gundlakamma project was washed away in December 2023, and the collapse of the Polavaram guide bund in August 2023 was, according to Anagani, another instance of human error under Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership.

The Minister further alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy was responsible for the breach of Budameru, which led to the submergence of several areas of Vijayawada. According to him, YSRCP leaders encroached upon Budameru canals, exacerbating the disaster. He also pointed out that the TDP government had allocated Rs 150 crores in 2017 to divert floodwater from Budameru to the Krishna River, but the Jagan Mohan Reddy government halted the project upon assuming power, leading to the flooding of Vijayawada. He claimed that followers of YS Jagan had illegally occupied lands adjacent to Budameru by fabricating documents, creating layouts, and selling them to unsuspecting citizens.

## YSRCP flays CM for focusing on publicity over relief efforts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu has strongly criticised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for prioritising publicity amidst the recent floods that submerged parts of Vijayawada.

Addressing the media at a press conference in Tadepalli on Friday, Sudhakar Babu accused Naidu of focusing more on his political image than on the plight of the flood victims. He claimed that Naidu's frequent tours, accompanied by large entourage, were hampering relief efforts and failing to meet the real needs of the affected people.

Sudhakar Babu pointed out that the Budameru stream, which caused the flooding, had turned into a curse for Vijayawada due to the negligence of Chandrababu Naidu. He argued that during Naidu's previous tenure, the much-needed modernisation of the Budameru Diversion Channel (BDC) was overlooked, a measure that could have averted the disaster. According to Babu, Naidu's inaction on the Budameru project has led to severe flood damage and the



suffering of lakhs of people. He further questioned the lack of flood mitigation measures at upstream reservoirs like Srisailem, Nagarjuna Sagar, and Pulichintala. Despite having a 20-hour window before the Budameru floodwaters reached Vijayawada, no precautions were taken, nor were any relief camps set up, he stated. Babu held Naidu responsible for the loss of lives and property, noting that 47 deaths had been reported, although the actual toll could be higher.

Sudhakar Babu urged Naidu to abandon his obsession with publicity and take accountability for the plight of the flood victims in Vijayawada. He demanded an apology from the Chief Minister for his role in the disaster and questioned his capability to continue in office given the scale of the ongoing crisis.

## Army on the job ...

Continued from Page 1

Rayanapadu and Pydurapadu submerged

Heavy rain in Telangana's Khammam district on Friday caused a significant rise in the Budameru Diversion Channel's water levels, leading to the submergence of Rayanapadu and Pydurapadu villages in Vijayawada Rural Mandal. Efforts are underway to evacuate residents and move them to nearby rehabilitation centres. WRD officials reported that

approximately 3,775 cusecs of floodwater have been released from the Velaguleri Regulator into the BDC, with an additional 500 cusecs flowing through Budameru's original course. Authorities have warned that the flood levels in the BDC continue to rise, creating a dangerous situation in several parts of Vijayawada City, Vijayawada Rural, and other areas in the Krishna district. Residents in flood-prone areas have been advised to evacuate for their safety.

## Panic returns to city as ...

Continued from Page 1

Residents, already reeling from the initial flood, have been without power for six days. Should the floodwaters rise again, over 300,000 people could face property damage and displacement. The threat of another flood has caused widespread anxiety among Vijayawada City residents regarding the safety of their properties.

The rising waters have also disrupted sanitation efforts in Ajith Singh Nagar, Payakapuram, Prakash Nagar, and other affected areas. Despite state government directives and the mobilisation of fire tenders and personnel to assist with cleaning, the sudden increase in water levels has stalled these operations.

With the slight rise in the

Budameru Rivulet's flood levels, Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) P Narayana visited Ajith Singh Nagar and Ayodhya Nagar on Friday night. He spoke with affected residents, urging them to remain vigilant.

During his visit, Minister Narayana also reviewed the distribution of essential supplies such as rice, dal, oil, vegetables, and onions to the flood-affected residents, who expressed gratitude for the assistance. Minister Narayana assured the public that within 12 hours of addressing the BDC breach, flood levels in Ajith Singh Nagar and Payakapuram would decrease. Following this, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation would resume sanitation efforts in the affected areas.

## Russia warns US not to cross its 'red lines' on Ukraine issue

PNS ■ MOSCOW

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned the US not to cross Russia's "red lines" on the Ukraine conflict, asserting that Washington is starting to lose its sense of mutual restraint with Moscow, state-owned TASS news agency reported.

In an interview on Wednesday, Lavrov said that Americans have "crossed their own red lines" on the supply of arms to Ukraine, the Russian news agency reported.

"They (the US) should understand that our red lines are nothing to fool with. And they know very well where they are," the report quoted him as saying.

Lavrov said the US is starting to lose its sense of mutual restraint with Russia, calling it "dangerous".

(US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that the issue of stepping up support for Ukraine should be approached carefully so as not to provoke World War III because it will be sad to see

Europe gone," he said, adding that the US has a "deep-seated conviction that they are untouchable".

Lavrov said he hoped Washington would realise the potential consequences of supplying Ukraine with weapons. "I am convinced that there are reasonable people with significant influence left there. And I hope that the interests of the US will be taken into account," he said.

Meanwhile, at a press conference on Wednesday, Kirby said the US welcomes any nation that is willing to try to help end the conflict in Ukraine. "Any nation that is willing to try to help end this war and do so in keeping with President Zelenskyy's prerogatives, his plan for a just peace, we would certainly welcome a role like that," he said.

On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin named India among the three countries he is constantly in touch with over the Ukraine conflict, asserting that they are sincerely making efforts to resolve it.

## Low pressure forms over central, north Bay ...

Continued from Page 1

In its daily weather report, the Centre noted that the southwest monsoon remains active over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and normal over Rayalaseema. Heavy to very heavy rain is expected at isolated locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on 8 and 9 September.

Heavy rain is also anticipated at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours and on 10 September. Thunderstorms, accompanied by lightning and strong surface winds with speeds ranging from 30-40 kmph, are likely in isolated areas of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next five days, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next

three days. Strong surface winds with speeds of 30-40 kmph are expected in isolated areas of South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on 9 and 10 September. Light to moderate rain or thunder-showers is predicted in many places, or a few places, or one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Heavy rainfall was recorded in the Anakapalli and Parvathipuram Manyam districts of Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the past 24 hours. Rainfall also occurred at various locations across Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at a few places in Rayalaseema during the same period, the report concluded.

## YSRCP MPs, MLAs, MLCs donate one month's salary for flood relief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP has announced additional support for the flood-affected people in Vijayawada. The party's MPs, MLAs, and MLCs have decided to donate one month's salary to assist with relief efforts in the flood-hit areas. This donation will be utilised in the aid programmes organised by the party.

Earlier, YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had announced Rs 1 crore in aid,

which was used to distribute large quantities of milk packets and water bottles to those affected. The party has also identified further needs of the victims and pledged to continue distributing essential supplies. The recent contributions from the MPs, MLAs, and MLCs will enhance the ongoing relief efforts, ensuring more help reaches the affected communities. This step reflects the party's commitment to supporting the people during this difficult time.

## SRK, Thalpathy, Salman among highest taxpayers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan topped the list of celebrity taxpayers with advance tax payment of Rs 92 crore in 2023-24, followed by Tamil actor 'Thalpathy' Vijay at a distant second, according to a list compiled by Fortune India Magazine.

Fortune India's 'The Star Cast' list is based on advance tax payments by celebrities and places film star Salman Khan in the third position and Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan in fourth place. Virat Kohli paid Rs 66

crore in advance tax in 2023-24 fiscal -- making him the highest taxpayer among cricketers in the country. "Shah Rukh Khan tops the list of celebrity taxpayers in FY24 while Tamil superstar 'Thalpathy' Vijay moves ahead of the likes of Salman Khan, Amitabh Bachchan and Virat Kohli to emerge second (Advance Tax payment, FY24)," Fortune India said.

According to Fortune India, "Thalpathy" Vijay paid an advance tax of Rs 80 crore, followed by Salman Khan (Rs 75 crore), and Amitabh Bachchan (Rs 71 crore).

# Minister distributes food, medicines to flood victims

Assures victims that the government will stand with them

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations Kolu Parthasarathy took part in distributing food, milk and medicines to the flood-affected people, besides cleaning various areas in Vijayawada city on Friday. He visited 32nd and 52nd divisions of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation and supervised the sanitation in many colonies.

The Minister visited the Budameru flood-affected areas and interacted with the people. Later, he participated in the cleaning of roads and houses along with fire tenders.



Minister Kolu Parthasarathy visiting the flood-affected areas in the 32nd division of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation on Friday

Speaking on the occasion, he appealed to the public to stay

vigilant against seasonal diseases and take preventive steps. Also, he directed the Medical and Health department officials to be ready with medical kits to provide assistance to the flood victims. Also, he asked the officials to conduct medical tests on the people.

He said various government departments have taken steps to remove the stagnated flood water in various colonies in the city. Later, he visited Amaravati Colony, Sundaramma Dibba, Urmila Nagar and other areas and assured the residents that the government would stand with them. Later, he distributed food, milk, biscuits and drinking water to the people.

## Jagan extends Vinayaka Chavithi greetings

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy



conveyed warm wishes to the people of the State on the occasion of Vinayaka Chavithi.

He prayed for Lord Ganesha's blessings to bring prosperity, good health, and happiness to all. YS Jagan expressed hope that with Ganesha's grace, all obstacles will be removed, and every family will experience success, joy, and progress. He wished for peace and prosperity to touch every household, fostering the overall development of the State and its citizens.

# HCCB distributes drinking water to flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to the devastating floods in the Vijayawada and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB) has mobilised resources to provide essential support to those affected. The firm worked closely with Education, IT and HRD Minister Nara Lokesh to facilitate the delivery of drinking water to flood relief victims. As part of its ongoing commitment to community outreach, HCCB has supplied 60,000 water bottles, each containing 1000 ml of drinking water, to the AP State Disaster Response & Fire Services Department.

This distribution was executed with the cooperation of P Venkata Ramana, Director of Fire Services - Technical, Andhra Pradesh Fire Services;



T Uday Kumar, Additional Director of Fire Services - Admin, Andhra Pradesh Fire Services; and Annamma T, Regional Coordinator, Indian Red Cross Society.

"Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages is deeply committed to supporting our communities, especially in times of crisis," said Himanshu Priyadarshi, Chief Public Affairs, Communications and Sustainability officer at HCCB. "Providing clean drinking water is a critical need that we can meet immediately, helping to alleviate some of the hardships faced by the flood-affected people."

# Floods caused Rs 109.5 cr damage in Krishna: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The floods from the Budameru Rivulet, Krishna River, and heavy rains have caused massive damage in Krishna district, amounting to approximately Rs. 109.50 crore across both public and private sectors, excluding agricultural and horticultural losses. The disaster has affected 2,37,000 people across 62 villages in 15 mandals, with 20 villages completely submerged.

A report released by the Krishna district administration on Friday stated that 1.04 lakh acres of crops and 10,195 acres of horticultural crops were inundated by the Budameru flood. Additionally, 858 houses were damaged in the



Machilipatnam, Vuyyuru, and Gudivada Revenue Divisions. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams evacuated approximately 12,362 people, with 11,287 relocated to 50 rehabilitation centres. The district administration has distributed 22,574 food and water

# No fodder for cattle in flood-affected areas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

While the government is providing food, water, and milk to flood victims in the affected regions, cattle are suffering due to a severe shortage of fodder.

Typically, cattle grazers lead their animals to open spaces like irrigation tanks and canal embankments for grazing. However, with these areas submerged, they are struggling to find fodder for their livestock.

Ramana Rao, a cattle grazer from Jakkampudi, said that his hay stock was washed away in the floods, and his five buffaloes have been starving for the past six days as he has been unable to secure any hay for them.

Cattle in the flood-affected areas have been confined to

sheds for the last five days. Many farmers rear cattle, sheep, and goats. One farmer mentioned that he is raising sheep to sell during the 'Dasara' festival, but due to the floods, he cannot find fodder for them. While some farmers and cattle rearers have moved their livestock to safer locations, others have not been able to.

In the island villages along the Krishna River, officials transported farmers and cattle rearers to safer locations by boat, leaving cattle, goats, and sheep behind. Several buffaloes were seen being swept away in the Krishna River five days ago. Officials are uncertain whether the animals reached safety or drowned.

"I managed to bring green grass and rice bran with great

difficulty from the city to feed my buffaloes, as I rely on them for my livelihood," a cattle grazer from Nunna said.

However, official sources have stated that steps have been taken to distribute fodder to cattle grazers in the flood-affected areas. Each grazer will receive a 25kg bag of fodder, enough to feed each animal for four days, sources added.

An official release on Friday confirmed the loss of 462 animals and 61,974 poultry birds due to the floods. Health camps have been set up specifically for livestock, with 14,092 animals treated so far. The government has also distributed 421 metric tonnes of TMR and 140 metric tonnes of concentrated feed to cattle grazers in the flood-hit areas.



APSRTC MD Dwaraka Tirumala Rao appreciated the officials and staff for bagging the award, at the RTC House in Vijayawada on Friday

# Award for APSRTC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), currently, Andhra Pradesh Public Transport Department (APPTD) has been selected for the 'Pravas 4.0 Red Bus People's Choice' for the year 2024. For the second time consecutively, the APSRTC bagged the prestigious award. In this connection, APSRTC Managing Director (MD) Ch

Dwaraka Tirumala Rao appreciated the RTC staff for securing the award. With the efforts of the officials by coordinating with the staff, APSRTC has won the award for the second time, he said. APSRTC Executive Directors (EDs) KS Brahmananda Reddy (Admin), Chandrasekhar (Operations), Chief Engineer (IT) V Sudhakar, Chief Traffic Manager Nagendra Prasad and other IT officials participated.

# Restoration works of coal handling plant inspected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

APGENCO Managing Director KVN Chakradhar Babu visited the Dr NTTPS plant and reviewed the ongoing restoration works of the coal handling plant. In coal handling plant, he inspected the wagon tipplers, all conveyor belts, BOBR track hopper,



vibrating feeders, stacker reclaimers and entire coal yard and instructed the three chief engineers and team to restore all works in the entire coal handling plant in complete shape at the earliest to feed coal to all the units without any further interruption to the generation.

Further visited the Stage-IV (1x500 MW) unit, which is under biannual overhaul. He

visited the Electro Static Precipitators (ESPs) area and entire boiler area up to 80 m elevation and inspected all the overhaul areas. He instructed the concerned to complete all the overhaul works in full shape by the end of this month.

He also visited the Stage-V (1x800 MW) unit, where the

rotor is being replaced. He discussed with BHEL and APGENCO officials in detail to bring back the unit into operation by the end of this month. He had instructed the civil wing to take up immediate works on all hydrological structures by plugging breaches and strengthening of bunds-Budameru drain, intake structures and canals were also inspected.

Complaint lodged with police on sand boats hitting Prakasam Barrage gates

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

PVR Krishna Rao, the Executive Engineer (EE) and River Conservator of the Water Resources Department's Vijayawada Circle Krishna Central (KC) Division, lodged a complaint with the One Town police station on Friday about sand boats hitting gates 67, 68, and 69 of the Prakasam Barrage during the recent floods.

On September 2, while the flood inflows to the barrage were on spate, five sand boats hit the three gates 67, 68, and 69. At that time, the Prakasam Barrage received the highest flood inflows of 11.43 lakh cusecs. As a result, the counterweights of these three gates were damaged. In response, the Water Resources Department officials, under the direction of Water Resources Department Mechanical Wing Advisor K

Kannayya Naidu, removed these counterweights on September 5.

The details of the sand boat owners have not been traced. The State government has expressed doubts that a conspiracy was involved in this incident, and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Minister for Water Resources Nimmala Ramanaidu said that a thorough investigation will be conducted. Following the government's directions, PVR Krishna Rao lodged a complaint with the police.

In a statement to 'The Pioneer', Krishna Rao mentioned that the counterweights of the three gates were completely damaged and should be replaced by new ones. He expressed doubt that unknown individuals were involved in hitting the gates. Therefore, they filed a complaint at the police station for further investigation.



# Navy intensifies flood relief operations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Navy continues to spearhead relief and rescue efforts in the flood-affected regions of Andhra Pradesh under the Eastern Naval Command's guidance. With relentless rains wreaking havoc across several districts, the Navy's operations have become a lifeline for hundreds stranded by rising floodwaters. Naval helicopters have been tirelessly flying over the submerged areas, airdropping essential supplies such as food packets,

medical kits, and water bottles to individuals cut off by the deluge. "Our priority is to ensure that no one remains without help. We are doing everything possible to reach the most inaccessible areas," said a senior officer overseeing the operations.

The Navy's Flood Relief Teams (FRTs) have been actively engaged in rescuing stranded civilians and bringing them to safety. "So far, over 180 people have been evacuated from critical locations," another Navy official confirmed.

Along with evacuation, the FRTs are also distributing food to affected households in flooded villages and towns. The Eastern Naval Command has mobilised all available resources to provide immediate assistance to the flood-hit regions. "The scale of the disaster is severe, but the Indian Navy is fully committed to alleviating the suffering of the people. Our teams are working round-the-clock," said the Commanding Officer in charge of the rescue operations.

# 40% of Bhogapuram Airport works completed: Union Min Rammohan

Goal is to have the airport operational by June 2026

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu announced on Friday that the construction of Bhogapuram International Airport is progressing at a rapid pace, with 40 per cent of the work already completed. During his visit to the construction site, the Minister reviewed key aspects of the project, including the runway, terminal building, and air traffic control centre, alongside officials and representatives from GMR.

Addressing the media after inspecting the construction site, Rammohan Naidu stated, "The airport construction is progressing rapidly, and we are confident it will be completed six months ahead of schedule. Our goal is to have this world-class airport operational by June 2026, making it a gateway for global talent to Uttarandhra." He also highlighted the strong support the project has received from the



Central and State governments, local authorities, and the district administration.

The Minister highlighted that the construction is being closely monitored, inspired by Chief Minister Chandrababu's vision. "Last month, we had completed 36 per cent of the work, and now we've reached 40 per cent. We are building this airport to international standards, ensuring it meets the needs of modern aviation," he stated. Rammohan Naidu also reaf-

firmed the government's commitment to the displaced families impacted by the airport construction. "We are determined to do full justice to those who gave up their lands for this development. This project will not only boost regional growth, but also position Uttarandhra on the global map," he said. He added that India's civil aviation sector is witnessing remarkable growth, noting, "A decade ago, there were only 74 airports in the country. Today, that number

has increased to 157, and we are on track to reach 400 airports in the near future."

On the topic of flood relief efforts, Minister Naidu praised the proactive response from the State government, particularly the efforts of the Chief Minister. "The Chief Minister has been working tirelessly to support the flood victims, with the Collectorate acting as the central hub for relief operations. Unfortunately, former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is politicising natural calamities. The Central government is fully prepared to extend support as soon as the damage is assessed," he asserted.

MP Kalishetti Appalanaidu, Nellimarla MLA Lokam Naga Madhavi, District Collector Dr BR Ambedkar, SP Vakul Jindal, GMR CEO Manore Roy, CDO M. Koteswara Rao, RDO MV Suryakala, Tehsildar Suresh, as well as representatives from GMR, L&T, and TDP leaders were present.

# Clay Ganesh idols distributed in Nandigama

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With just a day remaining for the 'Ganesh Chavithi' celebrations, clay idols embedded with seeds from nine different trees were distributed to the residents and students of Nandigama town by the NGO, Prayavarana Parirakshana Samithi (PPS), on Friday. The event saw the participation of Nandigama Municipal Commissioner Ramana Babu, Inspector YVL Naidu, Mandal Development Officer Srinivas, Lions Club President M. Seetharamaiah, and KVR College's retired Principal T. Koteswara Rao, who graced the occasion as chief guests.

Speaking on the occasion, Ramireddy Sridhar highlighted that for the past 24 years, clay Ganesh idols have been distributed in Nandigama town. This year, in an innova-



tion, the idols have been crafted using nine different types of seeds. Municipal Commissioner Ramana Babu emphasised that the responsibility of protecting the environment rests on all of us. He remarked, "In recent weeks, we have witnessed the consequences of neglecting nature. If we safeguard the environment, it will, in turn, protect us."

Inspector YVL Naidu echoed these sentiments, stat-

ing that environmental protection is a collective responsibility. He urged everyone to celebrate 'Vinayaka Chavithi' in a way that avoids any mishaps or harm to nature.

Lions Club members G. Subramanian, P. Narendra, M. Satyanarayana, T. Seetharamaiah, and others also took part in the programme. A total of 5,000 clay Ganesh idols were distributed during the event.

# Vizag welcomes giant, edible Ganesh idol

First-of-its-kind in India both in terms of size and material

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Lambodhara Charitable Trust has created a truly extraordinary spectacle for this year's Vinayaka Chavithi celebrations. A colossal 75-foot-tall statue of Lord Ganesha, crafted entirely from jaggery, stands tall in the Kotta Nakkavanipalem near Gajuwaka bus depot in the city.

This edible masterpiece, a first of its kind in India both in terms of size and material, is a testament to the trust's commitment to innovation and tradition. Over 20 tonnes of jaggery, primarily sourced from Rajasthan, were used to construct the statue. The choice of Rajasthan jaggery was strategic, as it is known for its durability and ability to withstand various weather conditions for extended periods, ensuring that the idol could be worshipped for

21 nights as planned. "We wanted to create something truly unique and memorable for this year's Vinayaka Chavithi," said M Srinivasa Rao, the chief spokesperson of the Lambodhara Charitable Trust. "Rajasthan jaggery was the perfect choice for this project due to its durability and the fact that it is a natural, biodegradable material."

The creation of this monumental statue was a significant undertaking, requiring substantial resources and the expertise of skilled artisans. The trust invested over Rs 10 lakh in the project, with each tonne of jaggery costing Rs 50,000. A team of sculptors from Mumbai, Kolkata, and Anakapalli worked tirelessly under the guidance of Anakapalli-based sculptor Srinivasa Rao to bring this vision to life.



# 287 km stretch of roads damaged in Guntur dist due to rains, floods

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The incessant rains and the Krishna floods battered the district severely as crops, as well as roads, were damaged to a large extent.

According to official sources, roads over 287 km were damaged at various places in the district due to heavy rains and the Krishna River floods.

In the Prathipadu constituency, the Abbineniguntapalem-Valluru Road in Kakumanu mandal was badly damaged. During the YSRCP regime, the then government had sanctioned Rs 2.06 crore for the reconstruction of the road. The then MLA Mekathotu Sucharita laid the foundation stone for the road construction works on December 1, 2022, but the works did not begin.

The flood water was overflowing on the Nandivelugu road at Uppalapadu and the road was badly damaged. The



Vatticherukuru-Mutluru R&B road was also damaged due to heavy rain. The YSRCP regime had sanctioned Rs 23.40 crore for the construction of the damaged road but works did not begin. Now the road is in such bad shape that it is beyond use by motorists.

TDP leaders alleged that the New Development Bank extended funds to reconstruct 11 roads in the district but the previous government diverted the funds for other purposes.

The R&B officials confirmed that roads to a length of 287 km were badly damaged in Guntur district. As much as Rs 13 crore is required to carry out temporary repairs to the damaged roads. The R&B engineers prepared proposals to reconstruct the damaged road at Rs 120 crore. However, proposals are being received from various mandals on the damaged roads.

## Kerala Govt will support AP: MP Santhosh Kumar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

P Santhosh Kumar, CPI Rajya Sabha member from Kerala, has stated that the Kerala State government will stand with Andhra Pradesh to support the flood relief measures. He appreciated Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for his efforts in providing relief measures, as well as distributing essential goods to the flood-affected people.

Santhosh Kumar, along with party State secretary K Ramakrishna, met Chandrababu Naidu at the NTR district collectorate in Vijayawada after their visit to the flood-affected areas in the NTR, Krishna, and Guntur districts on Friday. During the meeting, the MP pointed out various lapses in the relief measures.

# Officials told to serve mid-day meals as per menu

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Nagarani has emphasised the need to serve the Dokka Seethamma mid-day meal to the students as per the menu. The Collector directed the officials to make specific suggestions to implement the mid-day meal scheme more efficiently in the district.

A workshop was organised here on Friday on the implementation of the Dokka Seethamma mid-day meal scheme. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the government is implementing the mid-day meal scheme for the students to serve them nutritious food and suggestions and advice were sought



on its implementation from the officials and the students.

"The government has already suggested a menu and the official should give specific suggestions for changes and additions in it. The officials should advise to include food that children like to eat in the menu. The main intention of the government is that no student should go hungry," the Collector observed.

Collector Nagarani said that a wide range of opinions were

elicited from the children and a report was being prepared. "If necessary, some parents and teachers also can know the opinions, she said adding that the menu has been designed in such a way that 16 types of dishes are suggested for six days a week, and the egg is given as food for five days of the week, groundnut chikki for three days and ragi java for three days in the mid-day meal," the Collector asserted.

Students can grow mentally and physically and excel in education only when they are provided with good nutritious food, the Collector felt. She said that there is a need to make a menu so that all the students in the school must eat a midday meal.

# DigiYatra app launched at Visakhapatnam Airport

App enables passengers to enter terminal in just five seconds



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu inaugurated the DigiYatra app at Visakhapatnam Airport on Friday. The innovative app streamlines airport procedures, enabling passengers to enter the terminal in just five seconds, a substantial reduction from traditional processing times.

Minister Naidu expressed his enthusiasm for the app's

potential to enhance the passenger experience. "The DigiYatra facility offers a seamless and contactless journey, significantly improving the efficiency of air travel," he stated. The app is part of a broader initiative to modernise airport infrastructure and provide a more convenient and secure travel experience.

The DigiYatra app has already been implemented at 15 airports across India, with plans to expand its reach to

nine more in the near future. The app's user-friendly interface and efficient functionality have contributed to its growing popularity, with over three crore users to date.

Minister Naidu emphasised the app's commitment to data security. "We are dedicated to protecting passenger privacy and ensuring a safe and secure travel environment," he said. The government's goal is to eventually extend the DigiYatra system to all airports in India.

# Centre will announce help only after estimating the loss: Bandi

'Went to the Secretariat keeping aside politics'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said the Centre will announce help only after estimating the loss due to floods. He said that he had discussed it all with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

"This is not time for politicking. It is time to work together for the people. The people are in trouble and so I went to the Secretariat keeping politics aside. In the past, the BRS government did not invite me and did not meet Central Ministers when floods occurred," Sanjay said.

During a chat with journalists at Hotel Haritha Plaza on Friday, Sanjay said the floods are not connected to politics and that governments have the responsibility to help when people are in trouble.

He said that Central teams were touring the state and



that the Centre would allot funds after estimating the loss. He said the Telugu states suffered heavy losses due to the heavy rains and floods.

The Telangana Government's report has reached the Centre. The Centre will help both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as per rules after examining the reports.

Sanjay said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

appealed to the Centre to relax rules for using National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) funds. He said the state has Rs 1340 crore of NDRF funds and the Centre will take a decision soon regarding this.

He said that the BRS government failed to use Central funds and that the Centre would help the State. The Centre is ready to help people, he added.

# GITAM, ICAR-CIFT sign MoU



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Deemed to be University has forged a strategic partnership with the ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) to boost research and development in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The collaboration aims to foster innovation and sustainable practices in the industry. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the two institutions on Friday. The agreement was exchanged by Prof KS Krishna, Dean of GITAM School of Science, and Dr George Ninan, Director of ICAR-CIFT, in the presence of university and institute officials.

Dr Ninan emphasised the comprehensive scope of CIFT's research, encompassing various aspects of the fisheries sector. "We offer expertise in everything from fishing gear to fish processing and waste management," he stated. The partnership will provide GITAM students with access to CIFT's cutting-edge resources and support for startups in the fisheries field. The ICAR-CIFT Director highlighted the immense potential of the fisheries sector, calling it a "sunrise sector" for Indian youth. He encouraged students to explore emerging areas like seaweed culture and enzyme development, which are supported by government initiatives.

## 2 engineering students die as lorry hits bike



PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

In a tragic incident, two engineering students were killed when the motorcycle on which they were going to college was knocked down by a lorry in the Diwancheruvu area, near here, on the national highway on Friday. Police said that the two deceased were studying B.Tech second year at a private engineering college here.

When they were going to College on a bike, a speeding lorry knocked the bike killing the two students instantaneously. The deceased were identified as Ronanki Pravin Kumar (20) and Chinta Kartik (19). Pravin Kumar belonged to Srikakulam district while Chinta Kartik belonged to Palnadu district. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.

# Fisheries Minister calls for strengthening shrimp farming

Emphasises government's goal of making India an international processing hub for seafood

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, has underscored the government's commitment to transforming India into a global seafood powerhouse. He chaired a high-level stakeholder consultation on Fisheries Export Promotion with focus on strengthening shrimp farming and value chain here on Friday.

Highlighting the sector's nine-per cent growth rate, Singh emphasised the government's goal of making India an international processing hub for seafood. "We aim to leverage AI and digital technologies to ensure traceable and sustainable fish exports," he stated. The Minister also called for upgrading fishing infrastructure in the Andaman &



Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands, with a particular focus on boosting tuna exports. He acknowledged the efforts of startups in the fisheries sector and urged seafood exporters to modernise their processing plants.

George Kurian, Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Minority Affairs, echoed these sentiments, stressing the government's commitment to the fisheries sector through enhanced budgetary support.

"The government has increased financial allocation to the Department of Fisheries and significantly enhanced funding under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)," he said. He also pointed to the Rs 1564 crore worth of new projects inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Palghar, Maharashtra, expected to create over five lakh jobs.

Dr Abhilash Likhi, Secretary of the Department of Fisheries, underlined the gov-

ernment's various initiatives to formalise the fisheries sector. "We are focusing on cluster-based development in areas such as seaweed, ornamental fisheries, and pearl culture, ensuring the sector's long-term sustainability," Dr Likhi said.

Key industry leaders, including Elias Sait of the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) and Ravi Kumar Yellanki of the All India Shrimp Hatcheries Association (AISHA) were present.



# 143 red sanders logs seized, 5 held

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Red Sanders Anti Smuggling Task Force personnel seized 143 red sanders logs worth Rs 1 crore and arrested five smugglers at Tada on the Chennai-Nellore highway. RSASTF SP P Srinivas said that on the directions of district SP L Subba Rayudu, a task force team led by Inspector K Suresh Reddy and RSI Y Viswanath conducted a checking of vehi-

cles on the Chennai-Nellore highway at Tada.

The task force team noticed a car and lorry moving suspiciously on the national highway. When the task force team stopped the car and lorry, the occupants of the vehicles tried to flee. However, the task force team personnel chased and apprehended five of them.

The task force team opened the container lorry and found 143 red sander logs. The red

sander logs were being transported illegally to Kolkata from Chennai in the container lorry. The car was going as a pilot to the container lorry.

The police seized 143 red sanders logs, weighing 1664 KGs worth about 1 crore, one container truck and a Maruti car.

One of the arrested persons was involved in 20 red sander illegal transport cases and the PD Act was invoked against him previously.

# Vizag Police hold medical camp at KGH

Three-day camp offers comprehensive health check-ups for families of police officers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a commendable initiative to prioritise the health and well-being of its personnel and their families, the Visakhapatnam city police, under the leadership of Commissioner Dr Shankhabrata Bagchi, organised a three-day medical camp at KGH Hospital. The camp, which commenced on September 6 and will continue on the 9th and 10th, is offering comprehensive health check-ups for the families of police officers. On the inaugural day alone, over 57 individuals underwent various medical tests.

Speaking about the initiative, Commissioner Bagchi emphasised the importance of providing healthcare services to the families of police personnel.



"We have already ensured medical examinations for over 3,500 of our personnel, but the health of their families is equally important," he stated. KGH Hospital Superintendent, Dr P Shivananda, expressed his support for the initiative, stating, "We are always ready to assist

the police force in providing medical care. It is our duty to ensure that those who protect us are also cared for."

Bagchi also highlighted the Police Department's responsibility to safeguard healthcare professionals. "It is crucial that we ensure the safety and secu-

rity of doctors and medical staff so they can carry out their duties without any hindrance," he said. Addressing the issue of alcohol addiction among some home guards, the Commissioner announced that those affected would receive treatment at a de-addiction centre. "We have identified certain personnel struggling with addiction, and we are committed to providing them with the necessary help."

Dr Shivananda praised the hospital staff for their dedication to the initiative, saying, "I would like to extend my gratitude and congratulations to the medical team for their efforts in making this camp a success." Commissioner Bagchi commended the city police department for prioritising the welfare of its personnel and their families.

# APATA seeks enhanced air connectivity, infrastructure in Visakhapatnam

Plea to restore SpiceJet and Akasa Airlines operations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Air Travellers Association (APATA) has submitted a detailed proposal to Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu, urging for substantial improvements in air connectivity and infrastructure at the Visakhapatnam Airport. In a representation presented during the launch of DigiYatra on Friday, APATA president Dr K Kumar Raja emphasised the city's rapid economic growth and its potential to become a prominent hub for business and tourism. "Visakhapatnam's



strategic location and thriving industries make it a prime candidate for enhanced air connectivity," he stated.

Raja advocated for the restoration of SpiceJet and Akasa Airlines operations at

Visakhapatnam Airport, citing the potential to reduce air travel costs and increase frequency for travellers. He also called for a direct flight to Dubai, a major international transit hub, to streamline inter-

national travel and boost tourism.

APATA vice-president O Naresh Kumar highlighted the need for improved infrastructure at Bhogapuram Airport, including budget hotels, a Civil Aviation University, and a drone hub. He stressed the importance of completing the proposed flyovers and Metro Rail link to alleviate traffic congestion and reduce travel time between Visakhapatnam and Bhogapuram. The association further urged the Minister to expedite the completion of the Sagarmala Beach Corridor, a coastal development project that would enhance tourism and improve connectivity.

ACROSS THE STATES

INDIA bloc unity can write new history

Time to rise above oneself in Haryana



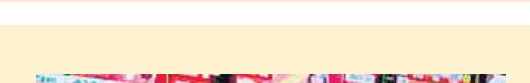
People of J&K owners of their land: Farooq Abdullah

PNS ■ SRINAGAR People of Jammu and Kashmir are not slaves of the Centre but the real owners of their land, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Thursday said.



Former BJD Rajya Sabha MP Sujeta Kumar joins BJP

Former BJD Rajya Sabha MP Sujeta Kumar joined the BJP in the presence of senior party leaders on Friday. The move came after the BJD expelled Kumar for anti-party activities earlier in the day.



SC dismisses PIL for regulating exit polls

The Supreme Court on Friday junked a PIL seeking to regulate exit polls for its alleged impact on election results, saying "let us get on with governance in the country" and close this "saga".

Punjab farmers end protest after CM Mann's assurance

Farmers protesting against the alleged delay in implementation of Punjab's new agriculture policy ended their strike on Friday, a day after Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann assured them that a draft of the policy would be shared with them by September 30.



Vinesh Phogat resigns from Indian Railways

Former India wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Friday resigned from the Indian Railways citing personal reasons amid speculation that she would be joining the Congress party.

UP: Legal aid to fellow inmates makes murder convict 'lakhpati'

Prison inmate in Uttar Pradesh's Farrukhabad has become a 'lakhpati', courtesy a remuneration of Rs 1.04 lakh for assisting co-prisoners with legal counsel and letter drafting.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday said the "unity of INDI Alliance member can best defeat the BJP's 'negative, communal, and divisive politics' in Haryana."

Yadav also said his party will support whichever INDI Alliance member can best defeat the BJP's "negative, communal, and divisive politics" in Haryana.

In a post on X, Yadav said this is not the time for SP or any other party of the INDI bloc to explore political opportunities, but a time for "sacrifice and selflessness".

"Crooked and selfish people can never make their name in history. This moment is a historic opportunity to rise above ourselves to defeat such politics. We are ready, with an open heart, to make every sacrifice for the benefit of Haryana," his post in Hindi read.



for selfishness," he added. "Crooked and selfish people can never make their name in history. This moment is a historic opportunity to rise above ourselves to defeat such politics.

We are ready, with an open heart, to make every sacrifice for the benefit of Haryana," his post in Hindi read.

Haryana assembly polls, the SP supreme wrote on X, "We have said this many times before, and we will say it again and continue to do so in the future: It's not about the seat, it's about victory."

Punjab farmers end protest after CM Mann's assurance

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Farmers protesting against the alleged delay in implementation of Punjab's new agriculture policy ended their strike on Friday, a day after Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann assured them that a draft of the policy would be shared with them by September 30.

Mann on Thursday held an over two-hour meeting with leaders of the Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) and Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union, which led the protesting farmers, to discuss their demands.

Farmers under the banner of the Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) and the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union began a five-day protest on Sunday to press for their demands,



including the agriculture policy's implementation. Speaking to reporters at the protest site, Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) president Joginder Singh Ugrahan said they had urged the state government to make the agriculture policy public.

"They (the government) said it was being finalised... They said by September 30, they would finalise it and hand over a copy," he said.

30. After we get a copy of the policy, we will go through it and hold a big meeting and decide the next course of action," he added.

In the interim, "we have decided to end the protest in Chandigarh at 2 pm", Ugrahan said. On Thursday, when asked about the farmers' future course of action following the meeting with Mann, the farmer leader said they would take a call after a meeting.

Vinesh Phogat resigns from Indian Railways

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former India wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Friday resigned from the Indian Railways citing personal reasons amid speculation that she would be joining the Congress party.

"Serving Indian Railways has been a memorable and proud time of my life," she posted on X with a picture of her resignation letter. She was employed as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) with Northern Railways.



Himachal: Tourist from M.P killed, 3 injured as vehicle hit by shooting stones

PNS ■ SHIMLA

A tourist from Madhya Pradesh was killed while three others were injured as the vehicle they were travelling in was hit by shooting stones in Himachal's Bilaspur district, police said on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Kalyan Dhakad (35), son of Banwari Lal Dhakad while the injured included Mahesh Dhakad, Suniel Dhakad and Sudeep Jadaun, all four were residents of Chorpura in Morena district in Madhya Pradesh, police said. The accident occurred on Thursday night near Tunnel no. 2 Kiratpur-Ner Chowk in

Thapna village in Bilaspur when the vehicle was on its way to Chandigarh from Manalim, they said.

The vehicle was hit with shooting stones, leaving one passenger dead and the other three injured, they said.

Upon receiving information, the police reached the spot and rushed the victims to the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) in Bilaspur. Dhakad was declared dead on arrival. The rest are undergoing treatment, they added. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Bilaspur Madan Dhiman said they are investigating the matter.



DEMANDING KERALA CM'S RESIGNATION

Congress takes out protest march to Secretariat

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The opposition Congress in Kerala on Friday took out a protest march to the Secretariat here demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in connection with the allegations by LDF MLA P V Anvar against some top IPS officers in the state.

Hundreds of Congress members, workers and supporters, led by KPCC chief K Sudhakaran, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly V D Sathesnan and AICC general secretary, in-charge, Kerala Deepa Dasmuni, marched to the secretariat holding up party flags. As the protestors reached the secretariat, they shouted slogans against the

ruling Left government and the CM and demanded Vijayan's resignation.

Sudhakaran alleged that the state was in dire straits under the Pinarayi Vijayan led-government for the past eight years. He said the law and order situation was poor as 1.3 lakh FIRs were lodged in the last eight years in the state in connection with the sexual assault of women. He also referred to the lathi-charge of the Youth Congress activists a day ago by the police near the secretariat, saying that they were brutally beaten up for no reason.

Youth Congress state president Abin Varkey was surrounded by police personnel and brutally beaten leading to serious injuries to his head, according to visuals on TV channels on Thursday.

PROTESTING GREEN COVER

SC accepts CEC recommendation to create customised module

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday accepted a set of recommendations made by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) including creating a customised module which would contain data on details of projects requiring cutting of trees, the number of trees to be felled or translocated, and compensatory plantation to tackle dwindling green cover in the national capital.

The apex court was hearing a matter regarding enhancing the green cover in Delhi and creating a mechanism for it.

In its report filed in the top court, the CEC has recom-



mended creation of a customised management information system (MIS) module on which data shall be uploaded by the project proponents on a regular basis for ensuring proper and timely compliance of the orders passed by the court on issues related to the Delhi Ridge. The Ridge is an extension of

the Aravalli hill range in Delhi and is a rocky, hilly and forested area. It has been divided into four zones - south, south-central, central and north - for administrative reasons. These four zones make up a total area of around 7,784 hectares.

"We accept the recommendations and direct the CEC to act upon the recommendations," a bench of Justices A S Oka and A G Masih said after perusing the committee's report. "We hope that Delhi government has stopped exercising powers of the tree authority," the bench observed, adding, it was earlier seen that such power was being exercised by the government.

FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES

SC bins ex-RG Kar principal's plea for impleadment in case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea filed by former principal of Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh challenging a Calcutta High Court order rejecting his petition to be added as a party to a case of alleged financial irregularities at the institute on his watch.



B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said as an accused Ghosh has no locus standi (legal right to approach court) to be impleaded in the matter.

The high court had on August 23 transferred the probe into the alleged financial irregularities from a state-constituted Special Investigation Team (SIT) to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"You were a principal of the college when the incident took place. As an accused you have no locus (standi) to intervene in the PIL, where the Calcutta high court is monitoring the investigation," the bench said.

Thousands take part in human chain rallies

Drone attacks in Imphal valley districts

PNS ■ IMPHAL

Thousands of people across five districts of Imphal Valley on Friday took part in a series of human chain rallies to protest the recent drone and gun attacks in Manipur that resulted in two civilian deaths and 12 injuries.

Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the ongoing conflict in the state. Organised by the Coordinating Committee

on Manipur Integrity (COCO-MI), the rally saw school and college students in uniform, as well as women from various localities, lining up along roadsides in Thoubal Bazar, Lilong Chajing in Thoubal district, and Sekmai, Kwakeithel, Singamei in Imphal West district raising slogans condemning the recent attacks in Koutruk and Senjam Chirang.

Protesters carried placards with messages such as 'Drone bombing is an act of terrorism,'

"We condemn Manipur government's timidity," "Take action against Kuki terrorists," 'Manipur's territorial and administrative integrity cannot be compromised,' and 'We want peace; save Manipur,' among others.

P Herojit Singh, a youth leader from Khurai in Imphal East district, told reporters, "The drone and gun attacks on Koutruk and Senjam Chirang were unprovoked and targeted local villagers. Everyone in the



country should strongly condemn these acts, and the central government should take appropriate action against the perpetrators." He added that the con-

front has escalated from communal violence to terrorist attacks on civilians using sophisticated, high-tech weapons sourced from abroad.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## India the peacemaker

With Putin now suggesting that India could mediate in peace talks, India's role on the global stage continues to grow

The Russia-Ukraine war, which erupted in February 2022, has resulted in devastating human and economic losses, with no clear end in sight. What began as a territorial conflict over Ukraine's desire to align itself more closely with Western institutions like NATO and the European Union has turned into a prolonged military engagement with Russia, leading to mass displacement, thousands of casualties, and significant global economic disruptions. In recent months, efforts to find a peaceful resolution have gained renewed attention. One potential pathway for peace emerged when Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested that countries like India, China, and Brazil could act as mediators in peace talks. This proposal points to a potential role for these major Global South nations in shaping the future of negotiations. Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent remarks on peace efforts are significant, especially in light of earlier failed negotiations. In the initial weeks of the war, a preliminary agreement was reached between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators during talks in Istanbul.



Now, Putin suggests that this could serve as a basis for future discussions, with mediation from nations like India, China, and Brazil, which have historically maintained neutral or balanced positions in the conflict. These nations, particularly India, could bring fresh perspectives to the table. India's long-standing policy of non-alignment and its diplomatic clout as a leader among Global South countries make it a credible mediator in a highly polarised international arena. India has consistently advocated for peace in the ongoing conflict, calling for both Russia and Ukraine to engage in dialogue. Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic stance has been underscored by his visit to Ukraine last month. During this historic visit, PM Modi met with Zelenskyy, who proposed that India could host the second Ukraine peace summit. This proposal, Zelenskyy said, was due to India's position as a major democracy and its efforts to remain neutral in the conflict. India's position as a potential mediator offers several advantages. First, India's diplomatic relations with both Russia and Ukraine have been strong over the years. Second, India's neutrality in the conflict positions it as an acceptable mediator to both sides, which have faced varying degrees of global isolation and support. For Russia, India remains a crucial partner, and for Ukraine, India's growing global influence makes it a key player in any future peace talks. Third, India's active participation in global multilateral forums, including the G20 and BRICS, gives it a platform to influence discussions on peace efforts at a broader level. While the potential for peace talks with India, China, and Brazil as mediators is promising, challenges remain. The conflict has seen entrenched positions from both sides, with Ukraine's territorial integrity at the center of any resolution. The success of such mediation will ultimately depend on the willingness of both Russia and Ukraine to make compromises and find common ground for peace.

While, early this year, Nikki Haley, the first woman governor of South Carolina, when encountered the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, she was dismissed as a 'token' candidate, and her achievements hardly got any attention. In 2016, Hillary Clinton had to undergo similar ordeals with apprehensions about her health and integrity, and even for her political ambitions. In 2008, Sarah Palin wasn't spared, she was constantly jeered at for her looks, personal life and intelligence, while her policy positions and records were overlooked. While only a relatively small share of the US adults (18%) consider that it is important that a woman be elected as president in their lifetime, most (64%) say this is not too or not at all important or that the president's gender doesn't matter. Overall, 62% of Americans believe that the media focuses too much on the physical appearance of women contesting for high elected offices, and there is not enough attentiveness to their views on key policy matters (Pew

### PICTALK



Giant panda cub Katyusha, the first panda bear born in Russia plays with her mother at a zoo in Moscow. AP/PTI

## The death of window shopping: How e-commerce stole the joy

Spontaneity has given way to algorithms, and the sensory delights of browsing have been replaced by sterile scrolling

Once upon a time, I was a passionate window-shopper. I could spend hours gawking in a mall or a market, viewing and trying out things I didn't need, but often ended up purchasing. Not any longer. During my latest visit to a mall this week after several months, I realised how my appetite for browsing and buying had nearly died. Our family now happily gets everything delivered to our doorstep: from Apple to Android phones. Shopping had long been a cherished ritual, offering an experience that transcended mere transactions. It tapped into emotions and senses, creating memories, fostering relationships, and offering solace in unexpected ways. Yet, the rise of e-commerce has drastically altered this landscape, leading to the erosion of the joys of traditional shopping. The sensory overload of colours, smells, and sounds has been replaced by the sterile, one-dimensional world of online shopping. We now scroll through product images on a screen, devoid of any real human interaction. Shopping was



once an opportunity to step out of our daily routines, to wander through aisles with no particular destination in mind, and to let our imaginations run wild as we browsed items we didn't know we needed until we saw them. This spontaneity is all but lost in the algorithm-driven world of e-commerce, where every click is tracked and every recommendation is based on past behaviour, leaving little room for surprise or serendipity. Moreover, shopping in physical stores offered a tactile connection to the products we bought. We could feel the fabric of a garment, test the weight of a book in our hands, or smell the aroma of freshly baked bread before making a decision. These sensory experiences are deeply rooted in our memo-

ries and play a significant role in our attachment to the items we purchase. Online shopping, in contrast, offers a purely visual experience, reducing our interaction with products to mere images on a screen. The absence of this tangible connection often leads to a lack of emotional attachment to the items we buy, turning shopping into a mechanical process rather than an enjoyable pastime. In the past, shopping was as much about the experience as it was about the purchase. The thrill of discovery, the joy of window shopping, and the satisfaction of finding that perfect item after hours of searching were all part of the journey. However, it would be unfair to dismiss the advantages of e-commerce entirely. The convenience of shopping from the comfort of our homes and the ability to compare prices across multiple retailers are undeniable benefits. For those with busy schedules or physical limitations, online shopping has been a game-changer, providing opportunities that would have been unimaginable a few decades ago. Yet, as we embrace these con-

veniences, we must also consider what we are losing in the process. The act of shopping is not just a means to an end but a valuable experience in itself. It is a chance to connect with our communities, indulge our senses, and find joy in the unexpected. As we move towards a digital future, it is worth considering how we can preserve these intangible aspects of shopping that bring richness and depth to our lives. In the end, the choice is not about rejecting technology or clinging to the past, but about finding a balance that allows us to enjoy the best of both worlds. We can find ways to reintroduce the joy of discovery, the pleasure of the tactile, and the warmth of human connection into our shopping experiences, even as we click our way through the digital aisles. In my case, I attribute my loss of interest to a feeling of satiety, a recognition that I have more than I need and it's time for me to stop indulging in senseless accumulation of material things. Period. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

# Sexism in politics: The unfinished battle

The recent disparaging remarks by Donald Trump against Kamala Harris have once again spotlighted the rampant sexism entrenched in politics



ARCHANA DATTA

The Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's recent disparaging comments against her Democratic rival, Vice President Harris about her 'appearance', re-established the fact that 'sexism is very much alive in American politics'. His party, however, had denied that 'it had anything to do with race or gender'. Harris, on the other hand, urged Trump to commit to debating her, 'if he got something to say'. Such sexist vilification, many believe, is on the expected lines in a country that had no women, and only one person of colour as president, which is now, for the first time, having a woman of colour running for the presidency on a major party ticket. Harris' entry into the presidential battle has unleashed a wave of misogyny, and personal attacks on her marriage and stepchildren. She is also accused of leaning into 'being Black for political expediency'. Republican vice-presidential nominee Cyrus Vance's remarks that the Democratic Party is dominated by 'childless cat ladies', with no 'direct stake' in America's future, is also a dig at Harris's life choices.

While, early this year, Nikki Haley, the first woman governor of South Carolina, when encountered the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, she was dismissed as a 'token' candidate, and her achievements hardly got any attention. In 2016, Hillary Clinton had to undergo similar ordeals with apprehensions about her health and integrity, and even for her political ambitions. In 2008, Sarah Palin wasn't spared, she was constantly jeered at for her looks, personal life and intelligence, while her policy positions and records were overlooked. While only a relatively small share of the US adults (18%) consider that it is important that a woman be elected as president in their lifetime, most (64%) say this is not too or not at all important or that the president's gender doesn't matter. Overall, 62% of Americans believe that the media focuses too much on the physical appearance of women contesting for high elected offices, and there is not enough attentiveness to their views on key policy matters (Pew



Research Centre). Along the party lines, 25 per cent of Republicans are of the view that 'men generally make better leaders than women, only 4 percent said that women are better suited to lead'. While, Democrats, were found to be 'more likely to say women were better leaders than men' (August, 22, PerryUdem survey). Many of the politicians may be progressive in their policy beliefs, but, when it comes to equity, their socialisation around gender stereotypes and expectations is quite stubborn, commented Kelly Dittmar, professor, of political science, at Rutgers University. In the USA, women hold only 27.9 per cent of seats in Congress, while, there is currently no Black woman in the Senate. A 2016 IPU study on the experiences of fifty-five women members of national parliaments from 39 countries across the continents of Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and Arab countries, confirmed that 'sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians are very real and rampant'. While, psychological violence, the most widely spread, and, now, more on social media, affected 81.8 per cent of the respondents surveyed. A majority (61.5 per cent) believed that

HARRIS' ENTRY INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL BATTLE HAS UNLEASHED A WAVE OF MISOGYNY, AND PERSONAL ATTACKS ON HER MARRIAGE AND STEPCHILDREN. SHE IS ALSO ACCUSED OF LEANING INTO 'BEING BLACK FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY'

such behaviour and/or violence was intended primarily to dissuade them from continuing in politics. While 'young and feminist women parliamentarians are particularly targeted', said an Asian parliamentarian. A parliamentarian from sub-Saharan Africa underscored that 'men need to be educated about the benefits of women's presence in parliament'. While, many opined that an increase in the number of women in parliament and solidarity among them, can help change such a political culture. While, in India, women parliamentarians, a minuscule minority, just 13.63% of the elected strength of the Lower House, much less than the 33% that the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, proposes to put into effect, face sexist comments from all corners, their colleagues, rivals or voters, and their achievements reduced to their gender only, rued a women's rights activist. An erstwhile woman Union minister lamented that 'when a woman is attacked, she gets attacked for her character, but never for her policymaking'. Women politicians, cutting across party lines, seem to agree on the issue of character assassination, and consider that it 'reflects the larger psyche of the society'. Many also complain that 'women politi-

cians aren't taken seriously... and male members have been often preferred for speaking on serious issues, while, women are only expected to raise soft issues'. Outright misogynist remarks are quite the norm in political discourse. Recently, a senior woman Rajya Sabha MP expressed discomfort with her identity being tied to her husband's name by the Chair. Globally, only 26.9 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are now women (IPU). Many countries have resorted to women's quotas and reserved shares. But, that's not enough. What is needed is a nuanced approach to addressing the issues of sexism and double standards existing within the political parties and parliament. Political parties must have an internal assessment mechanism to look into the gaps in all areas of internal practices and operations. A parliament must also ensure inclusivity in its work processes and outputs, with the help of a strong regulatory framework. Gender parity and pluralism are essential in electoral politics for the greater good.

(The author is former Director General, Doordarshan, All India Radio; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FALL FROM GRACE

Madam — Malayalam film Industry has been in a crisis since the release of Hema Committee report which has recorded sexual exploitation by senior artistes/technicians over the women artistes/technicians. The women artiste/technicians in their enthusiasm/eagerness/greed approach the other side for a favor, over looking the others who score over them on merits in the industry and offer /submit to them with what would please them for grabbing the chance. If the person who is the so called perpetrator of the crime which is sexual exploitation in this case is wrong the lady who has approached him for favor of a chance and offering/accepting to entertain him is considered an abettor of the crime. It is a quid pro quo though apart from crime also unethical on the part of the grantor of the chance. Such quid pro quos exist not only in film industry and every other industry and in fact it is a universal phenomenon in today's world. While this affects the only individuals concerned and to a limited extent the industry or the corporate concerned, the political leaders /parties accepting bribes in any form say organized /un organized methods including through the electoral bonds route is also a quid pro quo even as per SC ruling and more harmful as it harms the nation as a whole.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

**TEACHERS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIETY**  
Madam— The interruption of the Covid had been epochal and served to direct our focus on education, across the globe. It would be a great pity should we fail to subsequently comprehend the vital role of teachers, pe se. A greater tragedy if we still look to stitch up patchwork approach in education that is rendered more complex as the stakeholder base is vast. So are its key elements of content, quality and efficiency of transmission. In each of these there

### Eco-friendly Ganesha



With environmental concerns gaining too much ground, many of the well wishers of Lord Ganesha in the city have

started to conduct environmentally friendly Ganesha Utsav celebrations this year. So it is our earnest desire to avoid pollution. Paint from Ganesha Idols could form a deadly cocktail with oil spill on the sea may cause environmental problems after Ganapati immersion on Anant Chaturdashi day. The oil paint contains carcinogenic heavy metals such as lead, mercury and chromium which have an adverse effect on marine life as well. Despite caution, people prefer POP idols instead of clay. It is time to have a broader outlook on this subject. This responsibility rests with each and every one of us. The civic body should have proper planning and the pick and choose method to make sure the festivity achieves a religious objective rather than making it a politicised one with maximum pollution level.

Jayanthi Ramaswamy | Mumbai

emerges a rare opportunity for a seminal rethink or even reinvent with greater imagination and resolve. While planners and social scientists devise the content of education in a time horizon, its quality is entirely determined by the calibre, training and upgrade of the teachers and their leadership, creativity and innovation. We seldom realise how teachers have helped and guided our value systems and attitudes. They would seed visions of the limitless achievements ahead as gurus, train us to meet failures to then rise even higher. This profession, from time immemorial, though respected stays hardly recognised and adequately compensated. They need to be now firmly placed on higher pedestals, sustained by training and incentives and given greater autonomy. It is they who shape the future in real sense of the word. Our education system and polity need to do much more. Our gurus must be zealously cherished.

R Narayanan | Navi Mumbai

### FOR THE LOVE OF FOOTBALL

Madam — Rarely do our politicians talk sense. It was heartwarming therefore, to hear the CM of UP, Yogi Adityanath, announce that a number of football stadia as well as a large number of football grounds will be prepared to give a boost to the "beautiful game". This is far better than sponsoring temples that cater only to a particular religious constituency. To quote Nelson Mandela, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination." Yogi's done well, in bending it like Beckham.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

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## FIRST COLUMN

### FINDING PEACE AMIDST THE CHAO

Embrace divine shelter to overcome life's struggles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

It may sound very insulting, but this is what most of us, if not almost all of us routinely do. Because it is so natural to do. We have a deep desire for something considered most dear. Or, we may not want to lose something considered crucial for our existence. So what do we do? We keep on thinking about it. Yes, we also do whatever we can to ensure it or should. What happens in most cases? We fall short because we are small, and helpless in the ultimate sense. God keeps control of Himself regarding the fruits of our actions. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 2.47) We have only been given the right to desire and do. (2.47) But we either don't give up trying by ourselves or with the help of others, if we choose to do that. Now worry sets in because we have set our hearts on it. And we hurt ourselves both in terms of mental health and physical health because they are so intertwined. Are we doomed? No, we are not, if we choose to do what we are expected to do, which is to approach God. That is why our scriptures, especially the Bhagavad-Geeta, persuade us to do that. I will cite some verses in this connection. The verse #18.62 goes like this, "In all respects take shelter of God only. By His mercy, you will achieve supreme peace." What does this mean? We will not suffer from mental problems, by which a quarter and more in the world are suffering. (9.22) Isn't what we want? You get started on this path and start becoming deserving. God will respond suitably. But our natures won't allow us to do what God wants us to do to qualify for His 'kripa' (grace). Even if we somehow curb our natures, our egos come in the way. For



Several developments in Bangladesh raise the question: Is that country set to become a fundamentalist Islamist state and a cradle and exporter of Islamist terrorism? As of now, none of what the students who led the Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement (ADSM) have said indicates that they support fundamentalist Islam or terrorism. It is, however, not clear what they stand for. A report in the *Dhaka Tribune* (dated August 16, 2024) quoted Nahid Islam, one of the coordinators of the ADSM and an advisor in the interim government, as saying, "The spirit of the movement was to create a new Bangladesh, one where no fascist or autocrat can return." The same reported quoted him as saying that structural reforms were needed to achieve this aim, and that would require time. One does not know what structural reforms they have in mind and the policies they intend to pursue. *The Tribune* report in question quotes Tahmid Chowdhury, another student leader, as saying that they were still working out their programme, which would be rooted in secularism and free speech. Reuters reported on August 16, 2024, that the students were contemplating forming their own party to carry their movement forward and bring a closure on the history of the last three decades when Bangladesh was governed either by the Awami League or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Not much has been heard about the matter since then. The question is whether the overwhelming majority of them share their leader's views. One needs to ask this as fundamentalist Islamist and terrorist organisations have been increasingly spreading their tentacles inside Bangladesh's colleges and universities. Consider the case of North South University (NSU), one of that country's best-known private universities. Professor Gias Uddin Ahsan, Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences, and acting Pro-Vice Chancellor, was arrested on July 16, 2016, along with two of his associates, for renting out his flat, and not informing the police about the fact of its being rented out and details of the tenants—which he was required to do. The flat was subsequently used by the

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views expressed are personal)

# Bangladesh: Terrorism redivivus?



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

## Some developments since the installation of the interim Government provides cause for concern



perpetrators of the terror attack at Holy Artisan Bakery restaurant in Dhaka on July 1, 2016. The University has suspended Professor Ahsan after his arrest. Earlier, it had dismissed four teachers for their links with the terrorist outfit, Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Nibras Islam, one of the six identified as those attacking the Holy Artisan Bakery and killed by the police in the encounter that followed, was one of its students. Abir Rahman, one of those who attacked a police post guarding Bangladesh's largest eid prayer congregation at Sholakia in Kishoreganj on July 7, 2016, and was killed, was a student of NSU. The attack, which was repelled, led to three deaths. Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, who, in 2012, was convicted on the charge of attempting to blow up the New York Federal Reserve Bank, and of coming to the United States for waging jihad, had also been a student of NSU. Besides, all the young men—Sadman Yasir Mamun, Faisal Bin Nayeem Dwip, Ehsan Reza Rumman, Maksudul Hasan Anik, Nayeem Irad and Nafiz Imtiaz—arrested for killing the blogger and Ganajagan Mancha activist, Ahmed Rajib Haider, in 2013, were its students. There has been large-scale irregular inundation of educational institutions by fundamentalist elements. A report by Ekramul Huq Bulbul and Masud Milad in the Bengali daily Pratham Alo of August 12, 2004, states, "The allegation has been levelled of the jama'atification of the Chittagong University by violating all rules. Most applicants were not appointed as teachers despite getting four first classes in their educational life. Yet there has been the unprecedented occurrence of appointment of the supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner in the present four-party coalition government headed by Begum Khaleda



THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THEM SHARE THEIR LEADER'S VIEWS. ONE NEEDS TO ASK THIS AS FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMIST AND TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY SPREADING THEIR TENTACLES INSIDE BANGLADESH'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) despite their being without a single first class." The report further stated that investigations by Pratham Alo also revealed that of the 122 teachers appointed during this period, 57 had been appointed by ignoring the recommendations of the Departmental Planning Committee and the number of posts advertised. Whether all this has caused a significant section of students to be influenced by militant fundamentalist Islam need to be seen, given the continued operations of terrorist organisations. A number of Bangladeshis had fought the Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan. The Soviet Union's defeat at the hands of the Mujahideen and withdrawal from the country in February, 1989, had boosted their morale as also that of militant Islamists the world over. Osama bin-Laden, who had been involved in the jihad and who harboured the vision of establishing sharia rule worldwide, helped the establishment of the Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HUJIB) in 1992. The formation of Jama'at-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), followed. Pressure from the United States and other Western countries following the large-scale violence unleashed by these organisations, compelled the Khaleda Zia government to act against them. More resolute action followed the ascent to power of the second Awami League-led government, with Sheikh Hasina as prime minister, in 2009. Nine Islamist terrorist groups were banned during her prime minister-ship. These included the JMB, Shahadat-e-al-Hikma, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Hujj-B, Ansarullah Bangla Team and the last-named's subsequent reincarnation, Ansar al-Islam. The list also included Jamaat

Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya formed in 2018. Another seven Islamic extremist groups were blacklisted during her regime. These were Ulama Anjuman E Al Bayyinat, Neo-JMB, Dawlatul Islam Bangladesh, Hezbut Tawheed, At-Tamkin, Tamiruddin-Bangladesh and Towhidi Trust. Particularly active among these was the Ansar al-Islam, which played a major role in the murder of the bloggers, which began with the killing of Ahmed Rajib Haider in Dhaka on February 15, 2013 and continued until 2015. The Neo-JMB, however, is believed to have been behind the attack on the Holy Artisan Bakery which killed 23 persons, including three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese, nine Italians and one Indian. The tough measures that followed, had kept Islamist terrorism more and less under control. Following Sheikh Hasina's ouster, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Hijb-ut) has been staging processions in different parts of Bangladesh and putting up posters articulating its ideology. On August 9, 2024, it held a rally in Dhaka demanding the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Bangladesh. Also, the statues of two police officers who died fighting the terrorists at the Holy Artisan Bakery, have been destroyed and a Hijb-ut Tahrir poster has been found at the site. On its part, the interim government has released Jashimuddin Rahmani, the chief of the Ansarullah Bangla Team, now Ansar al-Islam. Neither all this nor the very cordial meeting Muhammad Yunus has had with leaders of the Jama'at and Hefazat-e-Islam, of course, indicates that the interim government supports Islamist militancy. Nevertheless, skating on thin ice is better avoided.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views are personal)

# The United Nations' struggle for relevance in a changing global order

The United Nations faces unprecedented challenges that threaten its relevance in the modern world writes NAND KISHOR and AMAL CHANDRA

The United Nations (UN), a symbol of global cooperation since its founding in 1945, now finds itself at a pivotal moment. Established to promote international peace, security, and development, the organization faces growing pressure to reform in response to the ever-changing global landscape. However, despite widespread recognition of the need for restructuring, numerous obstacles hinder the reform process. Political, institutional, financial, legal, and socio-cultural barriers make consensus among member states difficult to achieve, thus stalling efforts to enhance the UN's relevance and effectiveness. Three critical areas demand attention—representation, effectiveness, and operational efficiency. Without

addressing these, meaningful reform remains elusive. One of the most significant barriers to UN reform is the veto power held by the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This power enables any of these nations to block resolutions, including those aimed at restructuring the UN. The P5's vested interest in maintaining their influential status has led to repeated failures to expand the Security Council to include new permanent members, such as India, which is the world's largest democracy. India's exclusion from permanent membership, despite its growing global influence, highlights a major flaw in the

UN's current structure. Similarly, other responsible powers, such as Japan and Germany, have long called for permanent seats on the Council. The reluctance of the P5 to share their privileged status stifles efforts to make the UN more representative of today's geopolitical realities. Another complicating factor is the principle of state sovereignty enshrined in the UN Charter. Many member states, particularly smaller or less powerful nations, are wary of reforms that they perceive as infringing on their sovereignty. These states fear that in a restructured UN, their voices might be drowned out by larger, more powerful countries. This divergence in priorities complicates efforts to build the broad consensus

necessary for substantial reform. While some states advocate for a more democratic and inclusive Security Council, others focus on regional issues or specific conflicts, making agreement difficult. The UN's effectiveness in addressing global challenges has been called into question, further complicating the reform debate. Public opinion and trust in the organization are crucial to its ability to implement meaningful changes. However, repeated failures to effectively address major crises, such as those in Afghanistan and Palestine, have eroded public confidence in the UN's capacity to respond to contemporary challenges. UN peacekeeping missions, a cornerstone of the organiza-



tion's efforts to maintain global peace, have also come under fire. Critics argue that these missions have often failed to prevent conflicts or protect civilians adequately. To enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, reforms must focus on improving the mandates, training, and resources available to peacekeepers. Additionally, addressing allegations of misconduct, including sexual

abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers, is essential to restoring the organization's credibility and ensuring accountability. These limitations highlight the urgent need for innovation and reform within the UN. Building and maintaining public trust is essential to securing the political and financial support necessary for any restructuring efforts. Efforts to improve the UN's operational efficiency, such as those initiated by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, have demonstrated the institutional challenges of reform. While some administrative changes have been implemented, resistance from within the organization and differing priorities among member states have limited the

scope of these reforms. The UN's extensive bureaucracy presents a major obstacle to meaningful change. Established procedures and norms are deeply ingrained, making it difficult to implement significant reforms. Bureaucratic inertia often leads to resistance from within the organization, as staff and officials may be reluctant to change familiar processes and structures. Moreover, the UN's broad mandate, which covers peace and security, development, and human rights, adds complexity to any reform effort. This wide scope can lead to overlapping functions and responsibilities among different UN bodies, resulting in inefficiencies. Reforming the UN also involves navigating a com-

plex web of international law. Any proposed changes must comply with existing legal frameworks and secure broad international support. This legal complexity adds another layer of difficulty, as reforms must be not only politically acceptable but also legally sound. While the need for reform is widely acknowledged, the path to achieving it remains fraught with challenges. Political dynamics, institutional inertia, financial limitations, and legal hurdles all contribute to the slow pace of change. (Dr Kishor is the HoD of Politics and International Studies, at Pondicherry University and Chandra is an author, political analyst and columnist. Views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



Maha govt gives nod to 4 mega semiconductor, EV projects

The Maharashtra government has given approval to four high technology mega projects, which entail a cumulative investment of Rs 1.17 lakh crore and with a potential of creating 29,000 jobs, in Marathwada, Vidarbha, Pune and Parvul near Mumbai. The decision was taken at a meeting of the cabinet sub committee of the industries department on Thursday evening, officials said. The projects would result in investment in sectors like semiconductors and electric vehicle manufacturing, a statement from the chief minister's office (CMO) said on Friday, adding it would help Maharashtra get the identity of a leader state in the EV sector. These projects would help develop a strong local supply chain and give major boost to technical innovation, research and development, CM Shinde said. "It would help micro-small and medium industry stakeholders and also enable the local labour force to get training and skill development opportunities, which would raise employability."



Vaishnav in Japan; talks held on pact in railways, IT

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav discussed further enhancing cooperation with Japan in the field of railways, innovation in the digital landscape and focusing on futuristic technological advancements during his visit to Tokyo. Vaishnav, who holds the portfolios of railways, information and broadcasting, and information technology and electronics, held productive discussions with Tetsuo Saito, Japan's minister of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism on enhancing India-Japan cooperation. Vaishnav said he discussed enhancing railway cooperation, promoting economic growth and deepening cultural ties with Saito. The meeting with Saito took place on Thursday. Met with Mr. Tadashi Maeda, MD & Chairman of Japan Bank for International Cooperation, to discuss progress under the India-Japan strategic partnership.



Valeo says new power electronics product

Mobility technology firm Valeo on Friday announced augmenting capacity with the launch of a new power electronics product manufacturing facility in Pune. With the new facility in place, the company's installed capacity of producing rooftop panels will go to 1,600 Kw from 900 Kw in the existing plant, the company said without disclosing investment amount. "This new facility in Pune is a key element of our strategic plan for deeper localisation and long-term competitiveness in electrification products. It will meet the growing demand from our customers for the on-board power supply 3-in-1 combination unit, comprising an on board charger, DC-DC converter, and power distribution unit," said Yann Kerandren, Valeo Power Asia Regional Operations Vice President. As the EV market in India expands, the company is prepared to deliver technology solutions that are both adaptable to the Indian market and cost-competitive, he stated. "Valeo Pune is committed to enhancing workforce diversity and sustainability."

Carbon fibre will be produced by India in 2025-26: Minister Giriraj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh on Friday expressed confidence that the niche carbon fibre -- which is used in aerospace, civil engineering and defence as an alternative to metal -- will be produced by India in 2025-26. Currently, India does not produce any carbon fibre and relies completely on imports from countries such as the US, France, Japan and Germany.

The European Union's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, a tax on embedded carbon imports, is expected to kick in from 2026.

The coming days belong to Technical textiles in every sector... I am fully confident that in 2025-26 the niche carbon fibre product will also be with India," Singh told reporters here.

The minister asserted that after the Narendra Modi-led government came to power, it has "balanced imports" in the hygiene sector.

"Earlier we used to import diapers. Thanks to PM Modi for bringing production-



Currently, India does not produce any carbon fibre and relies completely on imports from countries such as the US, France, Japan and Germany. The European Union's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, a tax on embedded carbon imports, is expected to kick in from 2026

linked incentive (PLI) scheme which has created excitement in the industry," Singh said. Earlier while addressing a technical textiles event organised by Ficci, the minister stated that the government is fully-dedicated in the development of the technical textiles industry of India and has taken various steps such as the launch of National Technical Textiles Mission, PLI Scheme for MMF Fabric, MMF Apparel and Technical Textiles, etc.

Highlighting the key initiatives taken under the National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) Singh stated that

156 research projects have been sanctioned including development of Carbon fibres and support to startups under different areas of technical textiles, etc.

He specifically highlighted the innovation carried out by North India Textile Research Association (NITRA) on the development of fibres from Milkweed which can be used in the cold-weather applications.

Talking on the export targets for technical textiles, Singh mentioned that he is confident of crossing the USD 10 billion target set for 2030. He emphasized on the

potential of Meditech, especially hygiene products as a major contributor in achieving this target.

The minister added that Agrotech will be another important sector in terms of generating employment and opening avenues for usage in daily life of the general public.

He displayed confidence in the ability of the local industry, government and stakeholders in the development of High Performance Fibres that have huge applications in different fields including aerospace, automobile, construction, etc.

Centre sanctions projects worth Rs 400 crore for Sikkim: CM Tamang

PNS ■ GANGTOK

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Friday said the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has sanctioned various projects worth Rs 400 crore for the Himalayan state.

Addressing a press conference here, Tamang thanked the visiting Union DoNER minister Jyotiraditya Scindia for sanctioning various projects for Sikkim which, he said will fast track development activities in the state.

"I am immensely grateful to Scindia for his visit to Sikkim and sanctioning several projects for the development of the state," the CM said.

Tamang said the new projects will boost infrastructure and speed up the development of the Himalayan state.

Addressing the press conference, Scindia said that the Union DoNER Ministry considered various projects forwarded to the ministry by the Sikkim government and sanctioned Rs 170 crore for setting up a new medical college in the state, Rs 150 crore for procurement of medical equipment for Namchi district hospital and Rs 6 crore for upgrading



The central government was committed to boost healthcare infrastructure in Sikkim so that the people could get the best medical facilities in their own state

Mangan district hospital. He said that the central government was committed to boost healthcare infrastructure in Sikkim so that the people could get the best medical facilities in their own state.

"The sanction of various projects will cater to the needs of the people in all parts of the state," the Union minister said.

The Union DoNER minister arrived in Gangtok on Thursday evening.

Earlier in the day, Scindia had a detailed discussion with the Sikkim chief minister on the issues related to the development of the state.

IHCL opens Ginger hotel in Srinagar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Hotels Company on Friday said it has opened its second Ginger hotel in Jammu and Kashmir.

Located at Barzulla, the 64-key Ginger Srinagar provides easy access to the airport and iconic attractions such as Dal Lake, Shalimar Bagh, Shankaracharya Temple, and Jama Masjid, the company said in a statement.

"The city's growing infrastructure, combined with its status as one of the country's top travel destinations, makes it a focal point for business and leisure travellers alike.



SEA WATER DESALINATION PLANT VA Tech WABAG bags Rs 2,700 cr order from Saudi

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Water treatment player VA Tech WABAG has secured an order from Saudi Water Authority worth USD 317 million (Rs 2,700 crore) for setting up a Mega Sea Water Desalination plant in Saudi Arabia, the company said on Friday.

The Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Commissioning (EPC) contract including design and supply of the 300 million litres per day mega desalination plant which would be developed on a green-field site in the west coast of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Water Authority, formally known as the Saline Water Conversion Corporation, is responsible for regulating and monitoring water sector business and



services to enhance water sustainability and achieve the objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

The project is expected to be completed in 30 months and the plant would operate Dual Media Filters followed by a two-pass Reverse Osmosis process and re-mineralisation to produce clean potable water.

The plant would be built with the state-

of-the-art desalination technologies, designed for superior energy efficiency and would produce stellar quality of water complying with the environmental regulations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "We are extremely honoured and proud to secure this mega order from prestigious customer Saudi Water Authority, which will contribute to the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030.

This mega order is a testament to our expertise and commitment to delivering high-quality, sustainable water solutions worldwide," company Head-Strategy and Business Growth - GCC, Rohan Mittal said in a company statement here.

WABAG said, globally, it has established 60 desalination plants in 17 countries, for various municipalities and industries.

Spicejet plans to raise over Rs 3,200 cr via debt, equity

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Cash-strapped domestic carrier Spicejet plans to raise over Rs 3,200 crore through various debt and equity instruments and capital infusion by the promoter, the airline said in a corporate presentation. The funds will be



utilised in fleet ungrounding, liability settlement, new fleet

induction and other general purposes, Spicejet said in the presentation. "Spicejet plans to raise Rs 2,500 crore through QIP and Rs 736 crore through Previous Warrants and promoter infusion," it said. The proposed fundraising is subject to shareholders' approval, it added.

NLC India aims to start mining of Machhakata coal block in Odisha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned NLC India Ltd is aiming to start the mining of Machhakata coal block in Odisha ahead of schedule.

Machhakata coal block is the second commercial coal block and the biggest among the NLCIL's mining projects.

NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) had emerged as the successful bidder for Machhakata (Revised) coal block in Angul district of Odisha under the commercial coal block e-auction held in July.

The Machhakata coal block, having reserves of 1.4 billion tonnes (BT), with average Grade of G10-G11, and capacity of 30 MTPA, is expected to



be one among the top five biggest mines in the country, NLCIL said in a statement.

"NLCIL aims to commence the mining ahead of schedule. This marks another milestone

towards realising NLCIL's Corporate Plan 2030," the statement added.

Machhakata Coal Block's vesting order was issued on Thursday.

The company had earlier said that it is committed to its capacity addition in line with its vision of achieving more than 100 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2030 from the present 50 MTPA.

NLC India's core business is mining and power generation.

Meanwhile, the coal ministry on Monday executed the Coal Mining Development and Production Agreements for three coal mines that were auctioned.

Sensex, Nifty tumble over 1 pc on weak global cues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty slumped over 1 per cent on Friday, tracking a weak trend in global markets and fresh foreign fund outflows.

Falling for the third day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,017.23 points or 1.24 per cent to settle at 81,183.93. During the day, it plunged 1,219.23 points or 1.48 per cent to 80,981.93.

The NSE Nifty dropped 292.95 points or 1.17 per cent to 24,852.15, its third day of decline.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, State Bank of India tanked over 4 per cent. NTPC, ICICI Bank, HCL Technologies, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank and ITC were the other major laggards.

Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, JSW Steel and Maruti were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were trading in the red. The US markets ended mostly in the negative territory on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 688.69 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.14 per cent to USD 72.79 a barrel.

Rupee rises 2 paise to settle at 83.95 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 2 paise to close at 83.95 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid a weak greenback in overseas markets.

However, negative domestic markets, rise in crude oil prices, and outflow of foreign capital capped sharp gains, forex traders said.

At the interbank currency market, the local unit opened at 83.97 and witnessed an intraday high of 83.91 against the American currency.

The unit, which traded in the range of 83.91-83.97, finally settled at 83.95 (provisional), registering a gain of 2 paise. It had closed at 83.97 on Tuesday.

"Indian rupee recovered today on weak US dollar. However, weak domestic markets capped sharp gains," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.

"We expect rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on

weak global equities and concerns over global economic growth," he said, adding that the USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.70 to Rs 84.20.

Traders may take cues from non-farm payrolls report and speeches by the US Federal Reserve's rate-setting panel members, he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.14 per cent to 100.96 points.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, gained 0.58 per cent to USD 73.11 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity markets, Sensex tanked 1,017.23 points to settle at 81,183.93, while Nifty slumped 292.95 points to 24,852.15.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 688.69 crore, according to exchange data.



PM urged to advise GST Council to abolish 18% GST on health insurance premiums

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to advise the GST Council, which is set to meet on September nine, to abolish the 18 per cent tax on health insurance premiums.

"Ensuring a healthy India is a duty of every elected representative, beyond party lines. Imposing 18 per cent GST on health insurance is a regressive move, making healthcare less accessible to the common man," the state Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said.

"I have appealed to Prime Minister @narendramodi to take immediate action, advising the GST council to exempt health insurance premiums



from GST. It's high time we prioritise the well-being of our citizens," he said in a post on X.

Rao said the GST on health insurance is in one of the highest brackets of tax-

ation at 18 per cent and has been so since 2017 despite several protests from all stakeholders including politicians and policy makers across the board.

"A GST so high on what is an essential service/necessity, especially in a post pandemic world, is draconian to say the least and definitely not what a welfare state should be doing," the Minister said in his letter to the Prime Minister.

A high rate of GST has a direct impact on the cost of premiums which means that health insurance is now more expensive, he said. The rising cost, while not discernible to the upper economic crisis, has a cataclysmic effect on economic weaker sections to whom even a marginal increase in the premium makes it inaccessible to purchase.

"So, in that circumstance, they choose to either forgo another necessity to afford the premiums or, more often than not, avoid getting health insurance at all, which leaves them and their family exposed to a medical emergency which may leave them in severe financial distress," the letter stated.

"While the rationale for such a high GST has never been explained, as the Health Minister in one of the states which is a pioneer in medical education and infrastructure, I see the positive impact of our cashless state health insurance scheme along with the added protection of purchased health insurance which acts as a buffer in case of larger emergencies. This two-step coverage system is essential to the well-being of our citizenry," Rao said.





## DILJIT DOSANJH STEPS INTO BATTLEFIELD OF BORDER 2

The eagerly awaited film *Border 2* is set to become even more thrilling with the addition of Diljit Dosanjh to the cast. Joining Sunny Deol and Varun Dhawan's star-studded lineup, Dosanjh's inclusion is expected to elevate the film's excitement and anticipation further.

*Border 2* is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, JP Dutta and Nidhi Dutta. The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar & T-Series in collaboration with JP Dutta's J.P. Films. With its impressive production team and talented cast, *Border 2* promises to be a grand cinematic experience. The film is scheduled for a

major release on January 23, 2026 and fans are eagerly looking forward to what this highly anticipated sequel has in store. With Diljit Dosanjh now on board, the buzz around *Border 2* intensifies, making it one of the most-awaited films!

# what's brewing?

## When Katy Perry turned down Billie Eilish collab

Katy Perry and Billie Eilish are both acclaimed artists who have achieved recognition in the music industry through distinct journeys. Although Perry became famous for her upbeat pop songs such as *Firework* and *I Kissed a Girl*, gaining worldwide recognition for her successful hits, Eilish rose to stardom with her thought-provoking music by releasing *OCEAN EYES* and setting records



with her album *When We All Fall Asleep*. However, were you aware of the occasion when Perry rejected a partnership with Eilish, describing the latter's music as "boring"? In a throwback TikTok video shared by 102.7 KIIS FM, the singer of *California Girls* informed her fans about the potential collaboration that didn't happen. She acknowledged receiving an email from someone who stated, "Hey, check out this new artist. I'd really like us to work with her because she was working with me for Unsub [Records]." However, at the time, Eilish was not a household name. Perry continued revealing, "It was a song called *Ocean Eyes* and it was just a blonde girl. And I was like, 'Meh, boring.'" The singer later confessed to a "major mistake" for turning down the offer and requested for the revelation to not be leaked online. Eilish's *Ocean Eyes* rose to fame on its own and catapulted her to great success. Her music has consistently reached the top of the charts, earning her 7 Grammy Awards, a Golden Globe and an Academy Award for Best Original Song for *No Time To Die*.

## Nicole makes key changes in *The Perfect Couple*

*The Perfect Couple*, Nicole Kidman's most recent series on Netflix, is a crime drama about a murder mystery that was based on Elin Hilderbrand's novel with the same name. Netflix has implemented notable modifications, including altering the name of a character that bore resemblance to one of Kidman's well-known characters. The show also deviates quite a bit from the book.

In the series, Eve Hewson portrays a character named Amelia; however, in the book it was based on, this character is named Celeste. During a fancy red carpet event on September 4, show creator Jenna Lamia mentioned that the alteration was made to avoid creating a character too similar to Kidman's portrayal of Celeste in *Big Little Lies*. Lamia mentioned that this was just one of numerous changes that Hilderbrand gave the go-ahead for.



According to reports, the show's development spanned five years, during which the initial drafts stayed loyal to the book, but as time passed, factors like director Suzanne Bier's vision and the casting choices influenced the unique qualities. Some amendments were minor, like renaming Celeste to Amelia to prevent any resemblance to Nicole Kidman's past role. However, readers of the book may notice some alterations were implemented. Hilderbrand supported the changes but made it clear that she valued the quality of a TV series over that of a book. She reassured book fans that the novel and the series would be separate entities and it wasn't necessary to read the book before watching the series to understand it. She told the outlet, "I said to Jenna right from the beginning, I do not feel precious about this. People can go and read the book later or before; it'll be a different experience because it is a little bit different; they can see how they changed it and I just wanted it to be excellent television."

## Grudge-bearing Alia as Satya in *Jigra*



Alia Bhatt-starring action thriller *Jigra*, one of the most anticipated Bollywood films, is set to premiere on October 11 to coincide with Dussehra. Vasan Bala directs the film, which is produced by Alia's Eternal Sunshine Productions and Dharma Productions. The first look poster for the movie was released on Thursday to start the countdown and now the producers have announced that the trailer will be released on September 8. The team revealed two new posters showcasing Alia. Meanwhile, the posters were also shared by Alia on her Instagram, with a caption that read, "Dum hai... Satya mein dum hai. #Jigra trailer is out on 8th September." Her caption further also hints us about her character to be as

Satya. Prior to that, Alia Bhatt released two posters of *Jigra* on her Instagram feed. The initial image shows the actress in a bomb jacket, holding weapons in her hands. In the distance, a blast is visible along with glowing debris soaring into the air. Alia appears troubled in the photo. "Kahaani bahut lambi hai aur bhai ke paas waqt bahut kam. *Jigra* in cinemas 11th October," she wrote in the caption. Alia Bhatt shares the lead role with Vedang Raina in *Jigra*. It is a story about a sister who is willing to go great lengths to defend her brother. This film marks a new genre for the actress who has won the National Award and is once again delivering a remarkable performance.

## Superboys of Malegaon brings a tale of dreams & friendship

Amazon MGM Studios, along with Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby, released a captivating trailer for their eagerly awaited Hindi original movie, *Superboys of Malegaon*. Set in the small town of Malegaon, Maharashtra, this movie draws from real-life events of Nasir Sheikh to deliver a powerful and uplifting story. An Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby production,

produced by Ritesh Sidhwani, Farhan Akhtar, Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti, *Superboys of Malegaon* is directed by Reema Kagti and written by Varun Grover. The movie features a highly talented ensemble cast, including Adarsh Gourav, Vineet Kumar Singh and Shashank Arora in the lead roles. Packed with lighthearted and heartwarming moments, the trailer pulls

you into the world of Nasir and his eclectic group of friends who are based in the small town of Malegaon, where dreams are big, hearts are full and anything feels possible. As you watch, you will wonder if Nasir's ambitious project will turn his dreams into reality, and if it will truly transform the lives of those around him. *Superboys of Malegaon* celebrates the essence of friendship,

filmmaking and perseverance and highlights the creativity and relentless spirit of those who dare to dream and overcome challenges to bring their vision to life. *Superboys of Malegaon* is set for an exclusive world premiere at the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on September 13, followed by a showcase at the BFI London Film Festival on October 10.



### FUN

#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



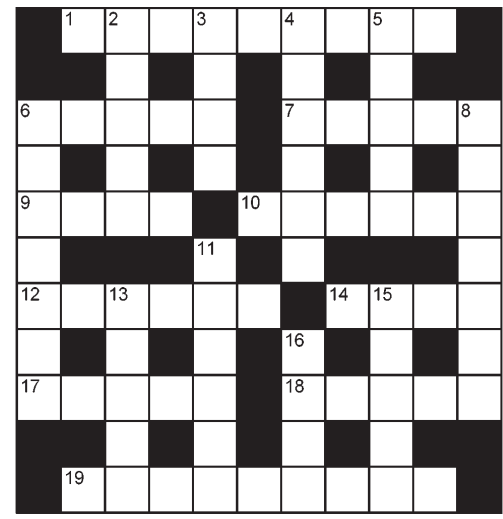
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

#### ACROSS

- A four-sided shape
- A month
- A number of people or things together
- Change direction
- A road in a town
- To tremble or shake a little
- Female horse
- Choose by votes
- A grown-up
- Put together from parts

#### DOWN

- Mistake
- Chatter
- These are longer in winter
- Baggy
- An old object
- Someone sick in hospital
- Middle
- Thoughts
- Make laugh
- A baby sheep



#### GINGER MEGGS



## 'COLLECTING CHANDAS FOR GANESH CHATURTHI WAS ONE OF MY BEST CHILDHOOD MEMORIES'

TEJAL SINHA

It's finally the season when many of us await welcoming Ganapati Bappa to our house, blessing us with prosperity and happiness for the rest of the year.

What better could it be for us to bring you a memory of how Hyderabad celebrates Ganesh Chaturthi over the years for our special segment of Hyderabad, where our guest Dr. Srikanth Goggi, who dons multiple hats, including that of being a celebrity psychologist, hypnotherapist, professor and corporate coach, has also been known as Srikanth Acharya in the world of Telugu cinema.

Hyderabad holds a special place in his heart ever since he's been here in the city. Born in Delhi and of course, his father being an Army officer, travelling around due to his postings was an obvious but important part of his life. However, being in Hyderabad, ever since he recalls him to be of a 5-year-old, the city has been his favourite. Why? "No matter where I go, I only find peace when I'm back in Hyderabad," he shares while in a chat with us. The last posting his dad, he recalls, had was at Golconda. So, his childhood memories were all around Secunderabad!

"The people of Hyderabad have been very friendly," he shares as he goes on to recall how Hyderabad was a less crowded place with not much traffic. "There was also a lot of place to play outside; there were playgrounds." But one memory that has always stayed special is none other than the celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi. "I remember, we used to go to houses to collect chanda (dona-

tion) for Ganapati. That was like the best day. We used to go to Dhoolpet, the biggest hub where they prepare the idols. Now, if you see, you find the idols everywhere. We used to organise these grand pujas and every street had their own Ganapati pandal. We'd then visit the Kharabada Ganasha, whose height just keeps increasing every year."

Another significance that the city holds for him is, "No matter the religion one belongs to, everyone

is one of the same, staying together. I remember, back then during my childhood, not everyone had a TV set in their house. So we all used to go to the neighbours house and watch the shows and films. Unlike these LCDs, there was this big television box. And again, my dad coming in his bullet with that 'dub dub dub' sound gets nostalgic. We had these hero cycles back then."

The legacy of food like the Irani samosa, chai and hotels has been something that was a must-visit every time his relatives came here. Then weekends were all about

Zoo Park, Salarjung Museum, Charminar, Qutub Shahi Tombs and Golconda forts. Getting on the running buses to reach the colleges was again something he can never forget!

On the professional front, he had always wanted to get into acting. But of course things would take time. So, he worked with renowned magician "Shaado," also known as the Indian Houdini. His growing fascination with human psychology led him to pursue studies in clinical psychology, hypnotherapy, NLP and peak performance coaching. He transformed into an experienced therapist and successful coaching consultant, providing services for celebrities, athletes, companies, NGOs, PSUs and individuals, enriching their lives. He has motivated, inspired and assisted countless individuals through his television talks, coaching, training and therapy. The first Firewalk specialist in Telangana and AP, he has appeared over 2500 times on TV, both live and recorded. His acting career began with the Telugu movie *Boy* (2019), under the

mentorship of Vinay Varma, a renowned theatre artist, actor and casting director. He has also acted in various Telugu and pan-India movies such as *DJ Tillu*, *Atharva*, *Tyson Naidu*, *Ismart Illalu*, *Wedding Dairies*, *Mr. Venkat Rao*, *Mannayi*, *Janaka Aiythe Yenaka* and *Pushpa 2 (The Rule)*.

"Vinay Varma played a major role in my acting career. I always wanted to play a psychologist and thanks to him, my debut role was that of a psychologist. At the very age of 14 years, I learned hypnosis. I used to perform these small mimics, little bits of magic. Eventually, from my 9th standard, I started doing stage shows, both on magic as well as hypnosis. Then, I developed interest in the field of psychology because I started reading books on personal development, self-improvement, memory training, meditation and these things. My father was instrumental in getting me books on hypnosis. He was my first guru who encouraged me. So that's how, once I became a clinical psychologist, I have started the institute on his name, GV Gopi

Vasdevacharya Institute of Psychology. I have done almost 10,000 plus shows all over India." He has also had the privilege to work with one of the associates of the renowned magician P.C. Sorcar.

"I did my postgraduate degree at Osmania University in clinical psychology. And I started practicing here in Hyderabad in the different centers and corporate hospitals." Going ahead, what's something that he likes and dislikes about the city? While the friendly people that the city has are something he loves about the city, on the other hand, the traffic is something that irks him much.

"Traffic is something that I've always witnessed here in the city since the beginning. That's something that has never changed. There are times people do not give place to ambulances as well."

But again, talking of well-being, "Hyderabad has got very good technology, infrastructure and highly qualified, dedicated professionals. People here are professional and not commercial. You do have black sheep in this profession as well. But infrastructure-wise, Hyderabad is very good. Here what I feel is this is a world-changing field, mental health. Those days, there were very few referrals to the psychiatrist and the clinical psychologist. There was not much awareness and a lot of stigma around it, which has now changed. Thanks to the media, you people are doing a fabulous job in bringing awareness, writing article and helping people to understand what actually the worth of mental health and well-being is."



Hailing from Delhi and making Hyderabad his home, both personally and professionally, Dr. Srikanth Goggi, aka Srikanth Acharya, dons multiple hats, including actor and psychologist. For our special segment of Hyderabad, he takes us through his memorable Ganesh Chaturthi days and his love for the city



## Penning spotlight with twisting path to stardom

AARTI SREENATH

Niren Bhatt's remarkable journey from a celebrated Gujarati playwright to a leading screenwriter in mainstream cinema is defined by versatility and innovation. Known for his work on hit films like *Munjiya*, *Bala*, *Made in China*, *Wrong Side Raju*, *Stree 2* and *Bhediya*, he has seamlessly transitioned from the world of theatre to the silver screen. His writing portfolio also includes the popular TV show *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah*, which played a pivotal role in establishing him as a prominent name in the industry. His ability to blend humour, social commentary and engaging narratives has made him a sought-after talent across multiple mediums, including television, OTT, and films. His love for storytelling began in childhood. "I started writing my first play when I was in standard three," he recalls. His passion for the craft continued throughout his school and

college years, where he was recognised with College Youth Festival Awards, State Awards and even National Awards for his work in theatre. However, his initial career path was far removed from writing. "I worked in the corporate world briefly, but I knew my heart wasn't in it. Writing was my true calling."

In 2007, he took a crucial step by relocating to Mumbai to seek out writing possibilities. It wasn't long before he found success with the immensely popular television show *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah*, which gave him the financial stability to focus on more creative projects. "That show was a turning point," he admits. "It gave me the freedom to experiment with other formats like films and music albums."

Balanced creativity with structure across different mediums has been one of his strengths. He believes that you need to understand the mediums very carefully. "Television and OTT platforms are more about character development, while cinema focuses on plot and visuals. Writing for each requires a different approach. With OTT, you get more freedom. A series allows you to explore characters in much greater depth—over 400 to 500 minutes compared to the 120 minutes you get in films."

His versatility is evident in his projects like *Bala* and *Made in China*, where he deftly blends humor with social messages. "Cinema is a medium to engage and entertain people. If you want to convey a social message, it should be subtle and woven into the story rather than preached directly," he notes.

Discussing the art of writing sequels, he further goes on to reflect on the challenges involved: "Writing a sequel is tricky because you need to understand what made the orig-

inal successful while also adding something fresh. For 3-2, I studied successful sequels and incorporated elements that stayed true to the essence of the original but enhanced the film."

Going ahead, working on films like *Stree* brought its own unique set of challenges, particularly in terms of the shooting conditions. "The first schedule was shot during the monsoons and we faced heavy rains and illnesses among the crew. The second schedule in winter was better, but the cold was brutal, especially during the shoot of the *Aaj Ki Raat* song."

When asked about his unique blend of comedy and horror in *Stree*, he explains, "Fear and humour complement each other well. When someone is scared, their reactions can be quite funny. It's all about creating situations where the two can intersect naturally."

Collaboration with actors like Rajkumar Rao, Shradha Kapoor and Varun Dhawan has been one of the highlights of his career. The dedication these actors show, he says, is incredible. For example: "During the shoot of *Bala*, we were filming in Delhi under sweltering heat and high pollution levels. Our actors had to endure the discomfort of wearing wigs and heavy costumes for long hours, yet they never complained. Varun shot in the freezing jungles of Arunachal Pradesh, dealing with leeches and other challenges, but his commitment never wavered."

For aspiring writers, he offers sound advice: "Draw inspiration from life, not just from films. The more experiences you have, the better

writer you'll become. Cinema reflects real life, so it's important to observe people, their behaviour and emotions. That's where the best stories come from. Immerse yourself in a variety of literature—novels, comics, Pulp novels, graphic novels and cultural texts. This exposure will enrich your creativity and storytelling abilities." He believes one needs to read to write better!

Looking ahead, he hints at exciting projects in the pipeline. "We're working on expanding the cinematic universe we've been building. One of the upcoming projects is a vampire-themed film, tentatively titled *Thama*. It will mostly feature Ayushmann Khurrana and will be a significant addition to our universe. There are many films and a couple of OTT shows also," he confirms.

Niren Bhatt's journey is one of creativity, resilience and a deep commitment to the art of storytelling. From the stage to the screen, his ability to adapt and innovate continues to captivate audiences and there's no doubt that his future projects will be just as compelling as his past work.



In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the popular screenwriter and lyricist Niren Bhatt discusses his formative journey, working on projects like *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah* and movies like *Stree* and *Bhediya*. He also discusses his prowess in the field!



## Navigating new Canadian student visa landscape

Canada has emerged as a top choice for international students seeking higher education abroad. The country offers a unique blend of academic excellence, cultural diversity, and personal growth opportunities. Students from around the world, including India, are drawn to Canada's renowned universities, welcoming cities, and exceptional quality of life. This combination of factors makes Canada an attractive destination for those looking to expand their horizons while pursuing academic goals. Moreover, compared to other popular study destinations, Canada provides a more affordable option for pursuing higher education.

### Recent changes in Canadian study permit regulations

To ensure a smooth transition for international students, it's crucial to stay informed about recent updates to study permit and post-graduate work permit requirements. The Canadian government has recently introduced a two-year cap on study permit approvals, targeting 360,000 new permits for 2024. This represents a 35% decrease from the previous year. Additionally, provincial and territorial caps will be implemented, such as a 50% reduction in Ontario.

### Understanding Canada student visa

For international students planning to pursue higher education in Canada, obtaining a Canada Student Visa is mandatory. This legal document, issued by the Canadian government, is essential for all foreign students who meet the eligibility requirements and provide the necessary documentation.

### Study permit: A gateway to Canadian education

A study permit, also referred to as a student visa, is a crucial document issued by Canadian immigration authorities. It grants international students permission to study in Canada and is required for enrollment in designated learning institutions (DLIs). These DLIs are educational institutions approved by provincial or territorial governments to accept international students.

### Eligibility criteria for Canada study permit

To be eligible for a Canada Student Visa, applicants must meet several requirements. First and foremost, students must be fully vaccinated with an approved vaccine, such as AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD or Bharat Biotech Covaxin. They must also have received acceptance from a designated learning institution. Financial capacity is another crucial factor. Applicants need to demonstrate sufficient funds to cover tuition fees, living expenses for themselves and any accompanying family members, and return transportation costs. Additionally, a police verification certificate showing a clean background and no criminal record is required. Health is also a consideration in the application process. Students must undergo a medical examination and provide a

certificate confirming their good health.

### Essential documents for Canada study visa application

Once accepted by a Canadian college, students should begin the visa application process. For a September intake, it's advisable to start the process around June. The required documents for a Canada Student Visa application include a valid passport, an acceptance letter from a designated learning institution, proof of sufficient funds, passport-sized photos, and medical examination results. Language proficiency is also a key component of the application. Students must provide English language proficiency exam scores, such as IELTS or TOEFL. A statement of purpose outlining study plans is another crucial document. For undergraduate or non-degree programs, a provincial attestation letter is necessary.

### Navigating Canadian visa application process

The application process for a Canada student visa involves several steps. First, applicants should check the current processing time on the Canadian consulate website. As of now, the processing time for Indian students is approximately six weeks. Applicants can choose from three application methods. The online method involves scanning documents, paying fees, and providing biometrics at a Visa Application Centre (VAC). The paper method requires downloading the application kit, following instructions, and submitting the required documents. This option is primarily for those with disabilities or non-national residents. The port of entry method allows in-person applications for Ukrainian nationals, US citizens/residents, or residents of Greenland, Saint-Pierre, or Miquelon. To assist with the application, students can complete the VFS Consent Form. There is a non-refundable processing fee, along with additional fees for family members if applicable. After submitting the application and supporting documents at the nearest VFS office, applicants receive a tracking number. If the application is approved, students must provide their passport to receive a Temporary Resident Visa and a Letter of Introduction.

### Embracing Canadian educational journey

Pursuing higher education in Canada offers a unique opportunity for personal and academic growth, cultural immersion, and independence. By understanding the eligibility criteria, required documents, and application process for a Canada Student Visa, international students can navigate the process with confidence. Canada's esteemed universities, welcoming cities, and high quality of life continue to make it a top destination for those seeking a world-class education in a diverse and inclusive environment.

(The author, Gaurav Batra, is the CEO and Founder of Infinite Group.)





## Neeraj Chopra qualifies for Diamond League season finale in Brussels

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's two-time Olympic medal-winning javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra has qualified for this month's season finale of the prestigious Diamond League after finishing fourth in the overall standings at the end of its 14 series meetings across the world. The season finale will be a two-day affair on September 13 and 14 in Brussels. Chopra accumulated 14 points from his two second-place finishes in the one-day meets held in Doha and Lausanne. He skipped the last series meet in Zurich on Thursday. The 26-year-old is two points adrift of Czechia's Jakob

Vadlech. Grenada's Anderson Peters and German star Julian Weber occupy the top two spots with 29 and 21 points respectively. Peters had pipped Weber in the Zurich meet. Chopra, who won gold in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and added a silver to his kitty in the Paris edition last month, has been struggling with his fitness this season. The Haryana-lad has talked about a groin injury troubling him since before the Olympic Games that has come in the way of his quest to hit the 90m mark. The Indian finished second in the Lausanne Diamond Leg, bested by Peters, who threw 90.61m. In Paris Olympics, Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem had

taken the gold with a monster throw of 92.97m. "First goal, go to the doctor and make my groin 100 per cent fit and also I will be technically better and try to throw far again," he had said last month about his plans for this year and the coming one. Chopra had won the Lausanne leg in 2022 and 2023 and finished second behind Vadlech in the winner-takes-all finale in Eugene, USA, last year. Each Diamond League season finale champion is awarded a prestigious "Diamond Trophy", USD 30,000 prize money and a wild card for the World Athletics Championships. The DL finale will mark the end of Chopra's season.

## India's fast bowling makes them difficult to beat in Australia: Marnus Labuschagne

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star batter Marnus Labuschagne reckons fast bowlers make India a "difficult" side to beat in Australian conditions as the hosts look to end their barren run in Border-Gavaskar Trophy which has lasted nearly a decade. India have won every bilateral Test series against Australia since losing 1-2 in an away affair in 2014-15. They have recorded identical 2-1 series wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21 Down Under to remain on top. "India's fast bowling is very good, which is really what brings them in Australian conditions and make them such a tough team to beat in Australian conditions," Labuschagne told Star Sports. The middle-order mainstay

termed the rivalry as 'tough' irrespective of where they are playing. "There is always high anticipation. To these two teams, it doesn't matter where we're playing, if it's in England, Australia, or India, it's always a tough contest," he said. Australia spinner Nathan Lyon termed Indian players as "superstars" while hoping to revive his on-field rivalry with India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin. "I've always said throughout my whole career (that) I want to compete against the best and you look through the whole Indian line-up, the whole squad, there's absolute superstars everywhere," he said. "I know Ashwin, we debuted around similar times and we've competed against each other in



a number of series. I have got nothing but respect for him. He is an absolute master in the craft of off-spin bowling and it's been an absolute privilege to play against him and learn off him," said Lyon. All-rounder Cameron Green reckoned the five-Test series

between India and Australia starting on November 22 at Perth could be a "preview" for the final of the World Test Championship next year. India lead the WTC table for 2023-25 cycle with 68.52 percentage points and 74 points, followed by Australia

with 62.50 percentage points and 90 points. The WTC final will be played at Lord's from June 11-15 next year and could feature both the current top two teams once again. India have featured in the summit clashes of the WTC on both occasions but have lost to New Zealand (2019-21) and Australia (2021-23). "Every single point is pretty crucial for the World Test Championship. Any way you can kind of (or) get an idea of (to) how to get one up on your opponent, we'll try and take," Green said. "If it is a bit of a preview for a World Test Championship final again, yeah, we've been trying to get as much information out of India and see how we can win it again," he added.

## Vikram Rathour, Rangana Herath added to New Zealand coaching staff

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Former India batting coach Vikram Rathour and Sri Lanka spin great Rangana Herath were on Friday added to New Zealand's coaching staff ahead of Tests against Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. New Zealand will play a one-off Test against Afghanistan before heading to Sri Lanka for a two-Test series. The one-off Test against the Afghans will be held at the Greater Noida Sports Complex Ground from September 9 to 13. The Kiwis are also due to play a three-Test series against India in October-November. While Herath has been appointed for Tests against Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as New Zealand's spin bowling coach, Rathour will be with the Kiwi side only for the contest against Afghanistan.



Rathour had a successful run as India's batting coach under head coach Rahul Dravid. His tenure ended after India's T20 World Cup win in June this year. The addition of Rathour and Herath

was announced by New Zealand Cricket on their website. "Sri Lankan spin maestro Rangana Herath has been appointed as spin-bowling coach for the three upcoming

Tests in Asia, replacing former Pakistan spinner and coach Saqlain Mushtaq who was originally announced to fill the temporary role before pulling out to take up a position with the Pakistan Cricket Board," New Zealand Cricket said in a statement. Head coach Gary Stead said, "We're really excited to introduce Rangana and Vikram into our Test group." "Both men are held in high regard in the world of cricket and I know our players are really looking forward to the opportunity to learn from them." Stead hoped Herath's expertise as a left-arm spinner will help New Zealand's Ajaz Patel, Mitchell Santner and Rachin Ravindra. "For our three left-arm orthodox spinners in particular, Ajaz, Mitch and Rachin, having the chance to work with Rangana across three Tests on the sub-continent will be hugely beneficial," he said.



## Gagan Narang lauds performance of Indian athletes at Paris Paralympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

London Games bronze medalist shooter and India's Chef de Mission at the Paris Olympics, Gagan Narang on Friday heaped praise on the country's para athletes for their performance in the ongoing Paralympics. The Indian Paralympic contingent has already bagged a record 25 medals in this edition of the quadrennial showpiece with 5 gold, 9 silver and 11 bronze and is currently placed at the 16th position in the medal tally. When asked about his analysis of the Paris Olympic Games, the former shooter said he hasn't done it yet. "I haven't done my analysis of the Paris Olympics yet, everybody has spoken about it. But the most important thing right now is that in the

Paralympics we are performing well, we are on the 16th position today. "A fantastic effort by our Paralympians. They surpassed the Tokyo Paralympics medal tally, looking forward for more medals," Narang told PTI Videos on the sidelines of the Media Photojournalist Trust's photo exhibition event at the Press Club of India. Narang also shared his thoughts on his love for photography and expressed his admiration for the photos he saw at the exhibition. "Fantastic exhibition indeed, photographers are lifeline of journalism. They give us a perspective and no AI (Artificial Intelligence) can replace them. I wish, pray and help the association to do this function every year. Fantastic effort and great pictures," he concluded.

## Kerala seeks football collaboration with Argentina

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Football-crazy Kerala is seeking collaboration with the Argentine Football Association (AFA), with a high-level delegation headed by State Sports Minister V Abdurahiman holding a meeting with its office-bearers in Madrid, Spain. In a Facebook post, Abdurahiman, who is currently in Madrid, said on Friday that the collaboration with AFA will be a huge investment for Kerala and expressed his desire to make this a reality as soon as possible. "The possibility of considering Kerala as a venue for international friendly matches



was discussed. As part of this, the association representatives expressed interest in visiting Kerala soon. AFA also expressed interest in setting up football academies in Kerala in collaboration with the state government," he said. According to the minister, the AFA said that the Argentine fan community in Kerala has always been warmly

welcomed. Commenting on their meeting, the AFA said: "Together with the delegation from the Government of Kerala, headed by V Abdurahiman, Minister of Sports, we had the opportunity to share initiatives and projects that will surely materialize in the short term." In recent years, the association has established itself as one of

the most important and popular sports brands in this strategic market through its global expansion strategy, it said in a statement. "In this context, our institution is working on developing sports and commercial projects in different parts of the country, with the aim of continuing to expand our brand and being closer to the fans of the Argentine National Team in India," it added. The AFA also thanked the Government of Kerala for "this important visit." Meanwhile, the Abdurahiman-led delegation also visited various sports development centres in Madrid and met with officials from the Spanish Higher Sports Council.



## Australia stunned by Bahrain in World Cup qualifying as Palestinians draw with South Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

Australia fell to a shock 1-0 loss to Bahrain at home in the opening game of the third round of Asian World Cup qualifying. Meanwhile, South Korea was held to 0-0 by the Palestinians in Seoul. Despite losing all six previous games against Australia, Bahrain won thanks to an own goal from Harry Souttar with a minute remaining on the Gold Coast. Abdulla Al-Khalasi's cross from the left side of the area hit the defender and flew past goalkeeper Mat Ryan. Australia dominated the game but was reduced to 10 men when Kusini Yengi was red-carded after 77 minutes for a reckless tackle. "It's not the way that we want to start our campaign, a loss at home, but we have to go away and improve," Australia winger Craig Goodwin said. "We have to look at the positives. This is the first game, there are nine games to go." Bahrain is second in Group C behind Japan, which thrashed China 7-0 in Saitama. First-half headers from midfielder Wataru Endo and winger Kaoru Mitoma put Japan in control by the break. Then Takumi Minamino scored twice in quick succession and Junya Ito, Daizen Maeda and Takefusa Kubo also found the target to make it a painful evening for China. Also in Group C, Saudi Arabia was held to a 1-1 draw by Indonesia in Jeddah. Ragnar Oratmangoen scored for Indonesia but Musab Al-Juwayr equalized before the break for Roberto Mancini's

team. Salem Al-Dawsari missed a late penalty. The 18 teams remaining in Asian qualification have been divided into three groups of six. The top two from each qualify automatically for the 2026 World Cup while the six teams that finish in third and fourth will advance to the fourth round where there are two more places on offer. South Korea hit missed out on the World Cup in 1982 and got off to a poor start in Group B due to the Palestinians. South Korea missed chance after chance - captain Son Heung-min hit the post - but could not find a way through a determined defense from a visitor that has never reached this stage before. The Palestinians almost snatched what would have been a stunning victory in added time. Through on goal, Wessam Abou Ali's shot was saved by Jo Hyun-woo. "It was a difficult match, but we were able to come away with a good result because we brought all the players that we could get our hands on," Palestinian coach Makram Daboub said. "I am extremely happy to bring joy to our fans in Palestine." Iraq is above Korea in Group B after a 1-0 win over Oman in Basra while Jordan drew 1-1 with Kuwait. Iran got off to a winning start in Group A, defeating Kyrgyzstan 1-0 thanks to a first half goal from Inter Milan striker Mehdi Taremi. Uzbekistan is level on three points after a 1-0 victory over North Korea. United Arab Emirates is top of the group with a 3-1 win at Asian champion Qatar.

## Indian Hockey can aim for gold in next Olympics: Sreejesh

PTI ■ PATNA

Riding high on the success of winning a bronze medal in Paris - ending a four-decade-long dry spell - the Indian hockey team now aims to build on this momentum with hopes of clinching gold at the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, ace goalkeeper P R Sreejesh said on Friday. The former national team captain, who announced his retirement after the Paris Olympics, told journalists in the Bihar capital that he saw the state as the future "sports hub". "I see many positive developments in Bihar, particularly at the sports complex in Rajgir, which now features an astro turf and will host the women's Asian Cup Trophy tournament later this year," Sreejesh remarked. He added, "I see no reason why Bihar cannot emerge as the country's next sports hub. I have met sports department officials



here and found many initiatives, like establishment of a sports university, quite impressive." Sreejesh, who has taken up a new assignment as the coach for the junior men's hockey team, said he had set his eyes on the next Asia Cup and revealed that he was drawing inspiration from former cricket team captain Rahul Dravid. After a successful playing career, Dravid, known as "The Wall" for his steadfast batting, has made significant contributions as head coach of the Indian cricket team, helping it to new heights.

Sreejesh broke into a wide grin that like his idol, his own skills earned him the sobriquet "The Great Wall of Indian Hockey". At 36, Sreejesh reminisced about his experiences at the Paris Olympics and expressed hope that the national team would "revive the old glory of Indian hockey" by aiming for gold in Los Angeles and performing well in tournaments leading up to the 2028 Games. "We have a very talented team. Krishan Pathak, who has succeeded me, is an excellent goalkeeper," Sreejesh said, highlighting the importance of managing pressure and taking time to unwind between games. A fan of Harry Potter, Sreejesh confessed that his love for fiction has provided him with a means of escape from the intense pressures of competitive sports, helping him navigate the challenges of his demanding career.

## Errani and Vavassori win US Open mixed doubles title in Young's final match before retiring

AP ■ NEW YORK

Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori won the U.S. Open mixed doubles title with a 7-6 (0), 7-5 victory Thursday over Taylor Townsend and Donald Young, who fell just short of a Grand Slam title in his final match before retiring. Errani, who won a career Grand Slam in women's doubles with fellow Italian Roberta Vinci, added her first career mixed doubles title to the Olympic gold medal in women's doubles she won last month with Jasmine Paolini.

"It's incredible for me this year. It's amazing," Errani said. Townsend and Young, who have been friends since they were kids, were given a wild card into the event for what was the 35-year-old Young's final tournament. The former top-ranked junior hadn't played much in recent years, having made the switch to pickleball. "Obviously wasn't the result we wanted," Young said, "but I can't think of a better spot, place to go out in, having watched that as a kid, and playing with someone I've known our whole life. It's pretty

cool for me." He and Townsend made their way through the draw, knocking off defending champions Anna Danilina and Harri Heliövarra in the quarterfinals. But Errani and Vavassori, the No. 3 seeds, dominated the tiebreaker and then won the match by breaking Townsend's serve. Errani hadn't played a mixed doubles event for eight years before partnering with Vavassori at Wimbledon. They were knocked out in the first round, then reached the quarterfinals at the Olympics before coming to New York.



# 35-CHINNA KATHA KADU: A GOOD FAMILY WATCH

SURESH KAVIRAYANI

Popular actor Rana Daggubati has always been on the forefront of supporting small films and once again, with the latest film *35-Chinna Katha Kadu*, he has once again done it. Lately, numerous small movies have been performing well at the box office and this particular film also had a successful release. In the upcoming days, there will be several major film releases, creating an opportunity for smaller films to shine. *35-Chinna Katha Kadu* is directed by Nanda Kishore Eemani, starring Rachakonda Vishwadev and Nivetha Thomas in the lead roles. Vivek Sagar composed the music.

## STORY

Prasad (played by Vishwadev Rachakonda), who works as a bus conductor, resides in Tirupathi with his wife Saraswathi (played by Nivetha Thomas), a housewife and their two sons Arun and Varun. The family is content except for their eldest son, Arun. He struggles in Math and constantly questions teachers about the concept of

zero having no value, stating that adding one before zero should not result in ten but instead remain as zero. This is how Arun sees things. Chanakya (played by Priyadarshi), Arun's mathematics teacher, becomes furious and refers to Arun as a Zero before demoting him from sixth grade to fifth grade. Arun must sit in fifth grade with his brother, Varun. Arun's suspension from school resulted from a single event. In order to remain in school, he must achieve a minimum of 35 marks in mathematics. Arun's mother, Saraswathi, who did not pass the 10th grade, chose to see it as a challenge. What followed and did Arun receive 35 marks? Did he successfully complete the math course? What Chanakya did in the end is the crux of the story.

## ANALYSIS

There are rare opportunities to watch quality films that are intellectually stimulating without relying on intense action, violence, or other excessive elements. This is a great movie and director Nanda Kishore Eemani deserves all the

credit. Learning is inherent in the process of education and ceasing to question indicates a lack of learning. It is the duty of the teacher to address the doubts of children when they have many. Only when you are able to achieve effective learning can you place all the blame on the children. The film began by focusing on a Brahmin family, depicting their day-to-day activities. The interactions between Prasad and Saraswathi depict their deep understanding and mutual love and respect for each other. The scenic setting in Tirupathi and the lovely atmosphere indicate that we are viewing a K Viswanath movie. The focus gradually shifts from the family to the school and children with the arrival of the math teacher, Chanakya Varma.

Arun inquired about his queries, which made Chanakya furious, leading him to instruct Arun to move to the back of the classroom. From this point on, the directors depict the children's friendship, their actions against the Chanakya teacher and their petty arguments. The pace of the storytelling slows down due to the numerous scenes, and it picks up some seriousness and emotional depth after Arun is suspended from school. Saraswathi saw it as a challenge when her tenth attempt at calling failed, so she made the decision to become her son's teacher. The interac-

tions between Saraswathi and Chanakya are very well portrayed and the director presented them in a meaningful manner with thought-provoking dialogues. Towards the conclusion, a specific scene becomes emotional as Prasad checks the marks while Arun pours water on the mirror. Though there are a few hiccups and the narration is also a bit slow, one should watch this film along with their kids. The dialogues are meaningful and well written. The cinematography and the ambience looks complete natural. The music is also good.

## PERFORMANCES

Nivetha Thomas is the one who shines the most in artistes performances. She is a skilled and established actress who once again portrayed the role of a mother. She handled her emotions and expression well, particularly the Tirupathi accent. For sure, this part will be unforgettable for her. Vishadev Rachakonda also receives a substantial role and he performs exceptionally in it. His acting comes across as extremely natural. This one is new for Priyadarshi; he defends his Chanakya Varma role more than his previous ones. Bhagya Raj, Gautami and Krishna Tej delivered strong performances. All children are outstanding, with Arun standing out the most.

## VERDICT

In conclusion, *35-Chinna Katha Kadu* is a recommended movie to watch. Director Nanda Kishore Eemano deserves praise for both creating a strong storyline and eliciting strong performances from all the actors. This film is devoid of action, comedy, cop out dialogues and massy songs; it's a pure and contemplative piece. You ought to watch with your children.

**Cast:** Vishwadev Rachakonda, Nivetha Thomas, Priyadarshi, Gautami, Bhagyaraj, Krishna Teja, Abhay and others

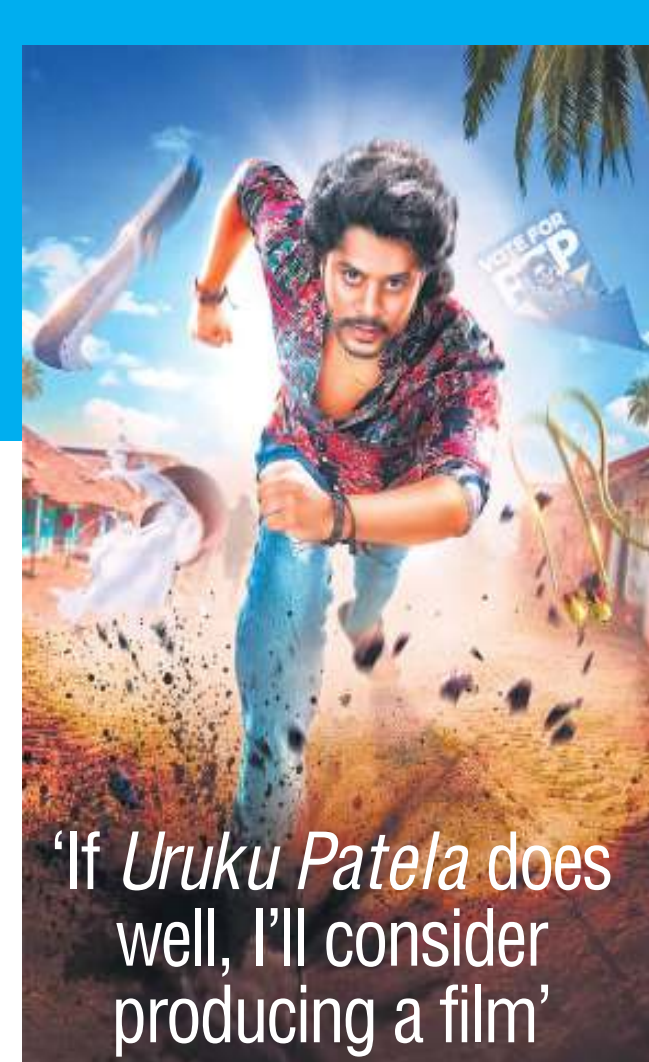
**Writer and Director:** Nanda Kishore Eemani

**Producer:** Sravan Yerabolu, Siddharth Rallapalli

**Music:** Vivek Sagar

**Cinematographer:** Niketh Bommi

**Rating:** 3/5



**'If Uruku Patela does well, I'll consider producing a film'**

PNSJ HYDERABAD

Actor Tejus Kancherla, who brought in a remarkable performance with *Hushaaru*, is all set to enrapture the hearts of the audience with the upcoming film *Uruku Patela*. Basically, after *Hushaaru*, which was released in 2018, Tejus did get opportunities and had heard many scripts; he was looking for a script that brings a fresh new story. However, when director Vivek Reddy presented the story of *Uruku Patela*, he was quite excited. "We developed the script together and now the movie is complete. The script was prepared, and we presented it to numerous producers. Even though everyone enjoyed the story, nobody was ready to allocate the required funds. In the end, my father caught wind of the story, enjoyed it and chose to bring the film to life." The film, with the tagline "Get Unrifified", is set in a Telangana backdrop with an accent that is easily understandable to everyone. "Since I was born and raised in Hyderabad, the accent wasn't an issue for me. The teaser and trailer provide a glimpse into the film's plot and tone. We aimed to give audiences a hint about what to expect, which is why we released these promotional materials," shares the *Uth Samayal Arayil* actor. While the trailer may imply the focus is on the heroine, the film itself provides a different perspective. The film's title,

*Uruku Patela*, is intended to be justified by the content and will keep you laughing from start to finish, affirms the lead actor.

The female lead, Khushboo Choudary, hails from Uttarakhand. "Upon watching her reel, I reached out to her and she attended workshops and performed as instructed. Filming went smoothly without any problems," shares the actor, adding, "If this film does well and proves profitable, I might consider producing future projects. However, I won't be handling both production and acting simultaneously, as it's quite challenging."

The film is directed by Vivek Reddy under the Lead Edge Pictures banner and produced by Kancherla Bala Bhanu. The music is composed by Praveen Lakkaraju, and cinematography is handled by Sunny Kurrapati. Meanwhile, he shares, "*Uruku Patela* is a film that the whole family can enjoy together. It's filled with humour. Inspired by various superstitions I read about during the lockdown, we crafted this story as a blend of thriller and comedy for complete entertainment." He further reveals, "I have a desire to direct in the future. I'm open to contributing to stories that come my way and love writing. If I find a role that excites me and seems fun, I'm open to doing special roles." The teaser and trailer have heightened expectations for the film, which will be released today as a Vinayaka Chavithi special.

## Aishwarya Lekshmi's first glimpse from Sai Durgha Tej's film

Sai Durgha (Dharam) Tej is taking his time with film projects because he is proceeding at a steady pace and being selective about the films he chooses. His upcoming project is with director Rohith KP and they are currently shooting. However, the creators decided to reveal the first look of actress Aishwarya Lekshmi as the character Vasantha from the movie

as a sneak peek. Following the hits of *Virupaksha* and *Bro*, Sai Durgha Tej is now taking his time to work on his upcoming project. Currently, he is presenting Rohith KP as the director of this movie. As per reports, the actor has slimmed down and unveiled a total transformation. Sai Durgha Teja gained a significant amount of weight after the accident, but

now he has gotten in shape and toned up for this film, according to the source. Aishwarya Lekshmi has appeared in numerous Malayalam and Tamil films in the past and she has also ventured into producing a Tamil film. She is a skilled actress and is currently starring as the main character alongside Sai Durgha Tej in this film.

Because it is focused on performance, they have brought in Aishwarya Lekshmi. For her birthday, the creators unveil her initial appearance. The filming of the movie is currently taking place on a huge set built in RFC, Hyderabad. Sai Durgha Tej plays a strong role in this intense, historical action movie.



## Nithiin, Shalini welcome their baby boy

Actor Nithiin had married his lady love, Shalini Kandukuri in 2020. The couple, who had announced their pregnancy ear-

lier, on Friday announced delivering a baby boy.

"We are delighted to share that actor Nithiin and his wife Shalini have been blessed with a baby boy. Both mother and baby are healthy and doing well," read the statement issued by the team. On the workfront, he is presently filming for *Thammudu*, directed by Sriram Venu, in the forests of Maredumilli in East Godavari district. It is anticipated that *Thammudu*, a film produced by Dil Raju, will be released in December of this year. He is aiming to release Venky Kudumula's *Robinhood* next year. The producers of the movie are Mythri Movie Makers and the leading lady is Sree Leela.



## Ram Pothineni and Harish Shankar's project on hold

Director Harish Shankar had previously announced his collaboration with Ram Pothineni during the promotional events for his film *Mr. Bachchan*. Shankar's project and Puri Jagannath's *Double iSmart*, starring Ram Pothineni, were both released simultaneously. Although there was a conflict, Shankar remained optimistic about the success of both films and teased his next collaboration with Pothineni.

Yet, new updates indicate that the movie involving Harish Shankar is presently delayed. Reports suggest that Shankar's film *Mr. Bachchan* was not successful commercially and likewise, *Double iSmart* did not do well in terms of box office performance. Therefore, Ram

Pothineni has chosen to postpone his partnership with Shankar.

According to reports, Ram Pothineni has decided to collaborate with a fresh director who has just experienced major accomplishments. This director, who had success and won awards with their last film, presented a story to Ram, who was impressed and gave the project the green light.

Ram Pothineni seems to have chosen to change directors because of Shankar's recent underwhelming movies and the continuing negative media coverage around the director. Therefore, Ram has chosen to proceed with the new director. A formal declaration about this upcoming partnership is anticipated to be announced shortly.



## It's official, Mokshagnya's entry confirmed

The wait is over! From the past few months, there have been reports about Nandamuri Balakrishna's son Mokshagnya's entry into the films. Nevertheless, it has now been confirmed and officially announced with the unveiling of Mokshagnya on his birthday. The director of the film is Prashanth Varma, with Sudhakar Cherukuri as the producer. Balakrishna's

younger daughter Tejeswini is also part of her brother's debut film by presenting it.

Continuing the legacy of the Nandamuri family, Nandamuri Mokshagnya, the grandson of Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao and son of Nandamuri Balakrishna, will make his much-awaited debut under the direction of Prashanth Varma, who is riding high on the success of *HanuMan*. The story of the film is based on an ancient legend from our mythology with an entertaining narrative, say the makers.

In the first look, Mokshagnya is looking handsome and stylish. With this, one can understand that he worked hard to get into the right shape.

There are many reports that, along with Singeetham Srinivasa Rao, a few other directors names come out for Mokshagnya's debut film, but now it all ends with the official announcement of director Prashanth Varma.

To celebrate Mokshagnya's birthday and build anticipation for his debut, the team has unveiled this, still showcasing him in a stylish and sophisticated avatar. The image high-

lights Mokshagnya's sleek and polished look. "This is a huge honour and also a colossal responsibility to launch Mokshagnya to cinema. I will always be grateful for the trust Balakrishna Garu has put in me and my story. This script is inspired by our Itihasas, which is a gold mine of wonderful tales that need to be told. This is also a part of PVCU and will take the universe to the next level," said director Prashanth Varma about the film.

Producer Sudhakar Cherukuri said he is very happy to launch Balakrishna's son.

Initially, there were reports about the differences between Nandamuri Balakrishna and Jr. NTR from the last few years. Now, the interesting thing is that Jr. NTR is the first to congratulate Mokshagnya on his entry into films and he also wished him on his birthday. "Congratulations on your debut into the world of cinema! May all the divine forces, along with Thatha garu, shower blessings upon you as you begin a new chapter in your life! Happy birthday Mokshu" (sic), said Jr. NTR on his social media. He also posted the first look picture of Mokshagnya.

## Rashmika's appearance at NGE office fuels *Sikandar* excitement

Earlier on Friday, Rashmika Mandanna was seen at the Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment (NGE) office, where she appeared poised and stylish in a white top tucked into jeans, complemented by sunglasses and white sneakers. Her visit comes in anticipation of her upcoming film *Sikandar*, as she had gone there for a look test for the film. Rashmika's appearance at the NGE office has heightened the excitement surrounding *Sikandar*. The film, which pairs her with Salman Khan, is already generating considerable buzz. Fans are eager to see how Rashmika's charm and acting prowess will blend with Salman's magnetic screen presence. Rashmika's growing popularity and her ability to connect with audiences across different regions make her a highly valuable addition to this high-profile project. *Sikandar* is one of the most awaited films of 2025, featuring Salman Khan in the lead role alongside Rashmika Mandanna. Directed by A.R. Murugadoss, the film is currently in production. Fans are eagerly looking forward to seeing this duo on screen as they bring this exciting project to life.

