

the pioneer

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Jaishankar says India supports Israel-Palestine ceasefire

BOOST PRODUCTION, CUT IMPORTS, TARGET \$100 BN EXPORTS



Prabhas enjoyed a lot after watching the trailer: SRI SIMHA




QUOTE OF THE DAY

The pioneer

Konda Laxman Babuji is synonymous with his sacrifice for Telangana. He even gave shelter to the TRS by setting up an office. The people of Telangana have seen resignations, elections and collections from 2001 to 2014. Those who came with empty hands and rubber slippers now have newspapers, houses, farmhouses in Gajwel, bungalows in Jubilee Hills and properties worth crores. The word sacrifice does not suit you KCR.

-Revanth Reddy, CM Telangana



DON'T MISS...

Heavy rain, floods hit normal life in...

The heavy floods due to incessant rains in the catchment areas under the influence of depression battered north AP districts including Alluri Sitarama Raju district as road connectivity was cut off to several villages and all canals and streams are overflowing. The flood water was overflowing on the Indurkpet-Ravilanka road and hundreds of vehicles were stranded on either side of the road. An ambulance which was taking a pregnant woman, Pushpavati, to hospital was stuck in the traffic. Road connectivity to over...

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Scientists identify antibody to...

Researchers have discovered an antibody that could counter all known variants of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and also distantly related ones that infect other animals. SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus causing COVID-19, uses its spike protein to invade and infect another individual, or the host. Antibodies, produced by the host in response, bind to the spike protein to block its action and prevent infection. The researchers, led by those at The University of Texas in Austin, US, isolated the antibody...

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Elon Musk may be world's first...

Elon Musk, the charismatic CEO of electric car maker Tesla and rocket manufacturer SpaceX, may become the world's first trillionaire by 2027, while Indian tycoon Gautam Adani may attain that status in the following year, and Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani may do so in 2033, according to an Informa Connect Academy report. For Musk, the richest in the world with USD 237 billion net worth, to become the world's first trillionaire needs to grow at an average annual growth rate of 110 per cent...

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Pant on course to become all-time...

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly believes Rishabh Pant is on course to become an all-time great in Test cricket but at the same time, the southpaw needs to raise his game in the shorter formats. Pant on Sunday returned to the Test side for the first time since his life-threatening car accident in December 2022. He is expected to start the first Test against Bangladesh beginning in Chennai on September 19. Since his return earlier this year following the accident, Pant has played T20s and ODIs...

-SPORTS

CM visits flood-hit areas for 9th day, inspects relief ops

SAYS MISDEEDS OF YSRCP BECOME MISFORTUNES FOR PEOPLE



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu visited flood-affected areas in Vijayawada for the ninth consecutive day on Monday. After conferring with senior officials at the Collectorate regarding the flood situation, the CM proceeded to inspect ongoing drain cleaning efforts, travelling from Bhavanipuram to Urmila Nagar via Sitara Centre.

During his visit, the CM engaged with local women at the Kabela centre, where they expressed their losses due to the flood and requested employment opportunities. The CM assured them of support and pledged to implement measures to create jobs.

He also visited the YSR flyover and assessed the situation there, before proceeding to Mango Market, Singh Nagar, Milk Project, Chitti Nagar, and Errakatta. At the Singh Nagar flyover, he spoke with affected residents and reviewed the relief mea-

asures provided by the government.

Later, the CM announced that efforts would be made to raise awareness about the Urban App. He promised to provide clothing from Apco and other companies to those who have lost everything and to support flood victims in every possible way. The CM condemned the previous government's actions, stating that their encroachments on the canal had obstructed the flow of water from Budameru Canal to Kolleru Lake, turning heavy rains and the ensuing disaster into a curse for the people.

The CM also questioned how large boats belonging to YSRCP leaders ended up in the river during the flood and why they were not properly anchored. He accused the YSRCP of disseminating false propaganda against the government daily while emphasising that the government remains focused on addressing the needs of the seven lakh flood victims.

- **EMPLOYMENT PROMISES:** The CM assured support and job creation for flood victims, addressing their requests for employment.
- **URBAN APP:** He announced plans to raise awareness about the Urban App and pledged to provide clothing and support to those affected.

1,700 teams formed to assess flood damage

Special app developed to register damage assessments, says I&PR Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Housing and I & PR Minister Kolu Parthasarathy has said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is being widely praised for his swift actions during the recent floods.

Speaking to the media on Monday, the Minister noted that Vijayawada has experienced unprecedented floods over the past nine days, something unseen since the construction of the Prakasam Barrage. The floods reached record levels, but the government has faced the crisis with courage. In response, IAS officers, senior officials, ministers, public representatives, authorities, party administrators, and secretariat staff are actively monitoring and working to address the situation, he added.

The Minister further explained that 1,700 enumeration teams have been formed to assess the flood damage. Each team, consisting of a Deputy Tehsildar, Revenue Inspector, Ward Assistant, and a police officer, will take part in the assessment process. Additionally, an IAS officer, a district-level officer, and a local public representative will oversee each secretariat. It is esti-



The floods reached record levels, but the government has faced the crisis with courage. In response, IAS officers, senior officials, ministers, public representatives, authorities, party administrators, and secretariat staff are actively monitoring and working to address the situation.

imated that 2,50,000 houses have been damaged.

Continued on Page 2

Deep depression headed towards Odisha coast

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A deep depression over the north-west and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal has been moving north-northwestward at a speed of 10 km/h over the past six hours, the Meteorological Centre reported on Monday.

As of 08:30 hours on Monday, the deep depression was centred approximately 50 km east-south-east of Puri (Odisha), 90 km southwest of Paradip (Odisha), 140 km east-northeast of Gopalpur (Odisha), 140 km south-southwest of Chandbali (Odisha), 260 km east-northeast of Kalingsapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), and 260 km south-southwest of Digha (West Bengal).

The Met Office stated that the deep depression is expected to continue moving northwest and cross the Odisha coast near Puri within the next three hours. It will then advance further inland across Odisha, maintaining its intensity as a deep depression until this evening, before weakening into a depression by midnight. The system is forecast to move west-northwest across Chhattisgarh over the next 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the southwest monsoon remains vigorous in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam but is weak in Rayalaseema. Consequently, heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected in isolated areas



of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 24 hours.

Thunderstorms, along with lightning and strong surface winds of 30-40 km/h, are anticipated in isolated locations in Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 24 hours. Strong surface winds within the same speed range are also expected in Rayalaseema over the next five days and in North and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh from 10 to 13 September.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely in many areas across North and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next seven days. Rainfall has been recorded in most parts of Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at a few locations in Rayalaseema over the past 24 hours, the report added.

BOATS ROW Two aides of YSRCP MLC Talasila held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada One Town Police arrested two boat owners, Ushadri and Komati Rammohan, on Monday, for their alleged involvement in the incident concerning the collision of sand boats at the Prakasam Barrage gates. It has come to light that both persons are followers of YSRCP MLC Talasila Raghuram.

Following a complaint from PVR Krishna Rao, the Executive Engineer of the Krishna Central (KC) Division of the Irrigation Circle in Vijayawada, the One Town Police registered five cases against the boat owners under Crime Nos. 171, 172, 173, 174, and 175. The charges include violations of IPC sections 125 and 326B (Rash and Negligent Acts) and Section 3 of the PDPP Act. Inspector Guruprakash, who led the investigation, arrested the boat owners. During interrogation, it was revealed that they had intentionally released their boats into the Krishna River while a significant amount of floodwater was flowing upstream of the Prakasam Barrage.

Ushadri and Komati Rammohan were subsequently presented before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Rajasekar, under the supervision of Additional Deputy Police Commissioner (ADCP) G Ramakrishna of the NTR Police Commissionerate. After two hours of arguments, the Magistrate ordered a 14-day remand for the accused boat owners.

Flood inflows to Budameru at Velagaleru Regulator dip



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Residents of Ajith Singh Nagar, Payakapuram, Prakash Nagar, Jakkampudi, Rajarajeswari Peta, Devi Nagar, Gunadala, and other areas in Vijayawada have received some welcome news: the flood inflow to the Budameru Regulator has receded as of Monday. The regulator, which was constructed across the Budameru Rivulet at Velagaleru to manage floodwater, has seen a decrease in water levels.

Heavy rains in the upper catchment area of the Budameru have subsided, and there has been no significant rainfall in Khammam, Telangana. As a result, the floodwater at the Velagaleru Regulator is receding, which is helping to dewater many areas of Vijayawada and allowing residents to return to their homes.

According to officials from the Water Resources Department, only a small quantity of floodwater remains at the regulator, and no further flood releases towards Vijayawada are expected. Instead, the remaining floodwater is being redirected into the Budameru Diversion Channel (BDC).



'Budameru bund raised by 0.3 m'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh has been monitoring the Budameru flood situation through drone surveillance, coordinating with Irrigation Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu. The leakages in the newly constructed bund on the Budameru canal were sealed using geo-membrane sheets on Monday, with officials completing the task by raising the bund's height by another 0.3 metres where breaches had occurred.

Minister Lokesh is regularly reviewing the flood surge affecting Budameru with the authorities. Seepage has been reduced from 500 cusecs to 200 cusecs in the breached area, thanks to urgent measures taken. Lokesh ordered officials to ensure that the seepage is stopped entirely. By evening, after applying the geo-membrane sheets to arrest the leakage, the issue was fully resolved.

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Govt to provide Aadhaar-style IDs to farmers

To begin registration across nation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major push towards digitising the agriculture sector, the government will soon begin registration of farmers across the country to provide them with a unique ID similar to Aadhaar, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi said on Monday.

Chaturvedi, speaking to PTI on the sidelines of an Outlook Agri-Tech Summit and Swaraj Awards, said the guidelines for the registration process will be issued soon, with the implementation set to begin in the first week of October. "Our target is to register five crore farmers by March next year," the

secretary said, noting that the initiative is part of the government's Rs 2,817-crore Digital Agriculture Mission approved by the Cabinet recently.

A pilot project was earlier conducted in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and 19 states have already onboarded the project, he said.

Once the farmers' registry is created, an "Aadhaar-like unique ID" will be provided to each registered farmer. Chaturvedi said the unique ID will help farmers access various agricultural schemes, including the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Kisan Credit Card programme, without much hassle.

Continued on Page 2

Floods render several villages inaccessible

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Due to flooding from the Budameru Rivulet, several villages in the NTR district's Vijayawada Rural Mandal are currently inaccessible from Vijayawada because of route closures. Residents have alleged that the government has not adequately addressed the issues faced by rural communities despite extensive flooding affecting paddy fields and major roads.

While the state government has concentrated on alleviating water stagnation in low-lying areas of Vijayawada City, minimal attention has been given to clearing floodwater from the main routes connecting Vijayawada to surrounding villages. As a result, villages along routes such as Nuzvid to Vijayawada, Vissannapet to Vijayawada, and Agiripalli to Vijayawada via



Budameru floodwater overflowing on KV Kandrika - Pathapadu - Payakapuram Road in Vijayawada on Monday.

Gannavaram are cut off from the city.

This disruption has caused significant problems for residents attempt-

ing to travel to and from Vijayawada. Additionally, routes connecting various places to Gudivada and Machilipatnam via Hanuman

Daily wage labourers are particularly hard hit, with their earnings of approximately ₹500 to ₹700 per day being largely consumed by travel costs. Although Budameru floodwaters have inundated main roads, vehicles such as tractors, jeeps, and large vans continue to pass.

ularly hard hit, with their earnings of approximately ₹500 to ₹700 per day being largely consumed by travel costs. Although Budameru floodwaters have inundated main roads, vehicles such as tractors, jeeps, and large vans continue to pass. Some auto-rickshaws have also resumed operations but charge high fares.

Residents are urging the authorities to reinstate RTC bus services on key routes to facilitate access to Vijayawada, Gudivada, Machilipatnam, Nuzvid, and other areas.

Notably, routes from Vijayawada to Vissannapeta via Nunna, Agiripalli, and Nuzvid, as well as from Hanuman Junction to Gudivada, remain closed. Rural areas such as Nunna, Pathapadu, KV Kandrika, and P Nainavaram are also cut off from Vijayawada City.

Continued on Page 2

New counterweights installed successfully

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Advisor of the Mechanical Wing in the Water Resources Department, K Kannayya Naidu, has announced the successful installation of new counterweights on gates 67, 69, and 70 of the Prakasam Barrage, despite challenges posed by the weather and public cooperation. He explained that the counterweights, designed with steel and later filled with metal and concrete, weigh approximately 17 tons and have now been successfully installed. Naidu expressed satisfaction with his involvement in the repairs of both the Prakasam Barrage and the Tungabhadra dam gates.

The counterweights were designed by Hyderabad-based Beckham Infra within two days and then transported by road to Vijayawada. Under the supervision of Advisor Kannayya Naidu, Water Resources Department (WRD) officials used large cranes to install the counterweights. The department worked diligently over five days to complete the installation of all three counterweights. Following a request from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Advisor Kannayya Naidu visited the Prakasam Barrage on 3rd September and found three counterweights damaged. He

WRD Mechanical Wing Advisor Kannayya Naidu says there's no danger to Prakasam Barrage



BNP leader and former Guntur ZP Chairman P Nagabhushanam and WRD engineers felicitate Advisor Kannayya Naidu at the Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Monday.

reassured the public that there is no threat to the safety of the barrage. After the successful installation of the new counterweights, WRD engineers and several local citizens honoured Kannayya Naidu and his team on Monday.

Former Guntur ZP Chairman and senior BNP leader P Nagabhushanam also attended the programme at the Prakasam Barrage. In a statement to the media, Kannayya Naidu expressed his satisfaction with the

repairs and confirmed that all three gates with damaged counterweights are now operational. He highlighted the replacement of the broken counterweight on gate no. 70, explaining that the department used a large crane to dismantle and replace it with a new one. Naidu credited the state government's support for the successful repairs and installation.

Kannayya Naidu also voiced concerns over the damage caused by sand boats, which he believes

led to a significant financial loss for the government. He speculated that the boats were intentionally released into the Krishna River during recent heavy floods, causing damage to the counterweights. He warned that those responsible for the damage would face consequences.

Emphasising the vital role of the Prakasam Barrage in sustaining the livelihoods of many people, Kannayya Naidu condemned the attempts to harm the structure. He reminded the public that the barrage provides irrigation water to approximately 13.07 lakh acres across various districts and warned that those who seek to damage it would experience scarcity in the future.

Meanwhile, in line with instructions from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Kannayya Naidu said he would prepare a detailed report on the Prakasam Barrage. He assured that the barrage, designed to discharge 11.90 lakh cusecs of floodwater, is secure but added that the Krishna River bunds need to be reinforced.

Pawan assures solution to Suddagadda stream issue

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj, K Pawan Kalyan, has pledged to address the issues arising from the Suddagadda stream and has instructed district authorities to relocate residents from low-lying areas to safer locations.

On Monday, Pawan Kalyan visited several flood-affected areas in the Pithapuram constituency, including the Jaganna colony at Gollaprolu and the flood-hit regions near the Yeleru rivulet. He interacted with the victims of the floods, listening to their concerns and grievances.

Speaking to the media, Pawan Kalyan mentioned that he has been in constant communication with the Kakinada district Collector, Shanmohan, to monitor the flood situation along the Yeleru rivulet. He also confirmed that efforts are underway to relocate people residing in flood-prone areas. "As the MLA of Pithapuram constituency, I will take steps to resolve the problem of the



Suddagadda stream's inundation. The previous YSRCP government made a grave mistake under the guise of the Jaganna colonies. We must rectify those errors in the coalition government. The land for the Jaganna colony was allocated in a low-lying area, ignoring the flood risks. The then YSRCP government allotted land to the poor in this vulnerable location," Pawan Kalyan criticised.

He further alleged that the YSRCP government had purchased land in these low-lying

those who had encroached upon the rivulet and constructed buildings.

"Before we call for an authority similar to the 'Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Monitoring and Protection', we must first engage with the encroachers to explain where they have purchased land and constructed buildings. Some individuals bought land along the Budameru rivulet without realising the flood risks," Pawan Kalyan remarked.

He emphasised the importance of raising awareness about the dangers of building structures in riverine areas.

Pawan Kalyan clarified that the recent deluge was caused by unexpected and incessant rainfall across the state. "It will take time for Vijayawada to recover from the flood damage. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is tirelessly working in the flood-affected areas to provide relief to the victims.

The government is extending all necessary assistance to the fullest extent," the Deputy Chief Minister affirmed.



4,20,079 MT sand available in 28 stock points: MK Meena

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Principal Secretary for the Department of Commercial Taxes, Excise, and Mines, Mukesh Kumar Meena, announced that as of Tuesday morning, 4,20,079 metric tonnes of free sand were available at 28 stock points. Meena reported that on Monday, 339 people applied for a total of 2,775 metric tonnes of free sand across the state. Of this, 2,139 metric tonnes were supplied to 163 pending applicants, while a total of 4,914 metric tonnes was distributed to 502 applicants.

Due to damage to roads in many areas, transportation issues have arisen, and consumers have been asked to cooperate. Meena noted that heavy rains and floods have depleted sand reserves, but assured that there will be no shortage once the rainy season ends. He explained that supply from various reaches has ceased, but once the rains subside and transportation conditions improve, sand availability will be restored to normal.

Efforts underway to prevent seepage from BDC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To address seepage and leakage issues in the Budameru Diversion Channel (BDC) at Shantinagar in Kondapalli, NTR district, officials from the Water Resources Department (WRD) have deployed Geo Textile Sheets within the channel and placed sand-filled bags on top of these sheets. The operation, carried out by Megha Engineering, involved the company's mechanical engineers entering the BDC using boats and wearing oxygen cylinders.

The installation of the Geo Textile Sheets commenced on Monday as WRD officials tackled three breaches in the BDC. The Army Engineering Task Force Wing assisted, and by Sunday, the authorities had successfully diverted floodwaters from Budameru into the BDC, halting the flow towards Vijayawada City. Despite closing the breach-



Megha Engineering experts at work to prevent floodwater leakage from the BDC at Shantinagar in Kondapalli of NTR district, on Monday.

es, WRD officials remained concerned about potential seepage and leakage. They sought further help from Megha Engineering to control the situation. The company's staff began working to prevent any floodwater leakage from the BDC bund.

To expedite the process, WRD officials supplied a large quantity of sand to Megha Engineering. After filling the sandbags, the engineering

team entered the BDC in boats and positioned the sandbags on the Geo Textile Sheets within the channel.

Meanwhile, WRD officials have accelerated the work to raise the BDC bund to prevent future flood increases. Additionally, Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramaiah and Human Resources Minister Nara Lokesh have been regularly inquiring about the progress of the BDC works.

'TDP spreading false claims on boats issue'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP spokesperson Pothina Mahesh has accused the TDP coalition government, led by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, of spreading false claims that boats involved in incidents at the Prakasam Barrage gates during the floods were owned by YSRCP supporters. He suggested that this was a deliberate attempt to deflect attention from their mishandling of the flood situation.

Speaking to the media in Vijayawada on Monday, Mahesh questioned the idea that a few boats could have any impact on a flood carrying over 10 lakh cusecs of water and criticised the TDP for making such claims. He clarified that the boats in question were owned by a private individual, Ushaadri, with no connection to YSRCP. Mahesh alleged that the police had arrested Komati Rammoohan and Ushaadri and were pressuring them to falsely state they were YSRCP supporters.

Sribharat lauds VPA for making Vizag Port Indian maritime hub

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

MP M Sribharat commended the Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA) for their efforts to position the port as a leading Indian maritime hub by 2027. However, he emphasised the importance of achieving this goal while maintaining a strong commitment to environmental stewardship. During a meeting on Monday, Sribharat stated, "Our progress must be sustainable and prioritise the health and well-being of our community."

The meeting delved into critical issues such as pollution mitigation, the SL Canal's challenges, and the expansion of the fishing harbour. Sribharat voiced his profound concern regarding the adverse effects of pollution on the health of residents, urging the port authorities to adopt more stringent measures to address this pressing concern.

The port's pollution control initiatives have come under scrutiny from local communities. Sribharat's call for more decisive



action signals a renewed commitment to sustainability. "The port's development should not be solely focused on industrial growth but should also prioritize the welfare of the people," he reiterated.

The review also encompassed plans for a cruise terminal aimed at bolstering tourism. Sribharat highlighted the necessity of optimizing the utilization of port spaces, aligning with Visakhapatnam's broader vision of becoming a prominent commercial and tourist hub.

Visakhapatnam TDP Parliamentary President Gandi Babji, VPA Chairperson Dr M. Angamuthu, Deputy Chairman Durgesh Kumar Dubey, and other port officials attended the meeting and expressed their unwavering support for Sribharat's call to action.

As Visakhapatnam races towards its ambitious 2027 target, Sribharat's leadership will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in ensuring that the port's growth is not only prosperous but also environmentally responsible.

1,700 teams formed to assess flood...

Continued from Page 1

A special app has been developed to register damage assessments, the Minister said and assured that if residents are not present at home, assessments will be carried out later, ensuring no one is left out. All individuals who have lost belongings will have their details recorded in the app. The government is committed to providing compensation to all those

affected by the floods, he stated. The Minister expressed concern for agricultural and horticultural farmers, who have suffered significant losses. However, he reassured them that the government stands with every farmer, and there is no need for concern.

Minister Parthasarathy also mentioned the risk of viral fevers due to the ongoing rains, noting that the government had anticipated this and

launched sanitation programmes with 4,000 to 5,000 personnel. Around 100 to 120 fire engines and pumps are being used to clean roads and affected homes.

He criticised the previous YSRCP government for neglecting canal repairs and failing to allocate funds for maintenance. He claimed that breaches in the canals and illegal encroachments, which were ignored,

Govt to...

Continued from Page 1

The data gathered will also aid the government in policy planning and targeted extension services. "Presently, farmers have to go through verification every time they apply for any agri schemes. It not only involves cost but some face harassment.

To address this issue, we are going to create a farmers' registry," he said. The secretary said the current government data is limited to farm land parcels and crop details provided by states, but lacks individual farmer-wise information.

The new registry aims to bridge this gap. Chaturvedi urged progressive farmers, scientists and companies to spread awareness about the farmers' registration process and encourage participation. Camps will be organised across the country for the registration drive.

The government is also working on several other technological interventions, including a Kisan AI-based chatbox system, to improve services and support for farmers, the official added.

Rahul Gandhi's attitude undermines Indian women: BJP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Congress party leader and leader of the opposition in Parliament, Rahul Gandhi, has been accused of undermining the pride of Indian women abroad, along with his associate Sam Pitroda in Texas, USA, by Lanka Dinakar, AP BJP Chief Spokesperson. In a statement released on Monday, Dinakar challenged Gandhi to explain how many "Lakshmi Deedis" emerged during the UPA government, compared to the more than 1 crore achieved under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's NDA government over the past ten years.

India, UAE ink four key pacts to expand ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the United Arab Emirates on Monday inked four major pacts that will facilitate crude oil storage, long-term supply of LNG and cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan focusing on boosting overall strategic ties.

In their discussions, the two leaders underscored the need to explore new areas of untapped potential, particularly in nuclear energy, critical minerals, green hydrogen, artificial intelligence and cutting-edge technologies, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

An agreement for the long-term supply of one million metric tonnes of LNG (lique-

ment over the past ten years. Dinakar further demanded that Gandhi clarify how many property documents for livable houses were registered in the name of women during the UPA government, as opposed to more than 30% of the 4 crore houses completed under the PM Awas Yojana during Modi's NDA government.

Additionally, Dinakar asked Gandhi to account for the amount of money transferred under direct benefit transfers without corruption during the Congress-led UPA government, in contrast to the more than ₹39 lakh crore transferred through 53 crore Jan Dhan accounts, including 30 crore accounts held by women, in the last ten years under Modi's NDA government.

Dinakar also highlighted that the Union Budget for 2024-25 prioritises infrastructure for the women workforce at their workplaces under the Narendra Modi-led NDA government.

He questioned whether such an approach was evident during the Congress-led UPA government.

Finally, Dinakar questioned why Rahul Gandhi feared the RSS, suggesting that only anti-

nationals fear the RSS, which serves the nation with a nationalist approach and the spirit of the slogan "Bharat Mata ki Ji". He noted that the RSS respects and prioritises women in the true sense of Indian heritage and culture through inclusive employment.

Dinakar concluded by accusing the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi of respecting Sonia Gandhi as a woman while failing to empower other women in the country and urged Gandhi to cease undermining the pride and self-respect of Indian women abroad.

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'Budameru bund...

Continued from Page 1

In anticipation of further flooding, work to raise the canal bund's height from 5.7 metres by an additional 0.3 metres was completed in areas where breaches were identified.

Lokesh is continuously monitoring the progress of work at Budameru through drone footage, while also overseeing relief measures and damage assessment for the flood-affected victims.

He has instructed officials to conduct a thorough assessment of damages in coordination with other departments. A total of 36 public representatives have been appointed to oversee the damage assessment. Lokesh is supervising both the relief efforts for the victims and the swift completion of the damage evaluation.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH PANCHAYATI RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
MIT No. 14 to 21/2024-25 dt: 03.09.2024 of the Superintending Engineer, PR Circle, Srikulam. Tenders are invited for 8 works with an estimated cost of Rs.2913.00 Lakhs under PMSY II Batch-I - 2023-24 & RCLPWE Grants in PR Circle, Srikulam. Prospective bidders may download the bids on e-platform after 17.09.2024. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <https://prmgstenders.gov.in/miicgopapp> (Tender cum Auction)
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Panchayati Raj, Srikulam.

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COLLISION OF BOATS WITH BARRAGE GATES

Min hints at sabotage, probe on

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources, Nimmala Ramanaidu, has announced that an investigation is underway into an incident involving five sand boats colliding with the gates of the Prakasam Barrage. He has warned that the government will take strict legal action against those responsible for damaging the barrage.

Speaking at a press conference at the NTR District Collectorate in Vijayawada on Monday, Minister Ramanaidu stated that the State government is probing the possibility of sabotage in the incident. The boats involved reportedly belong to followers of leaders from the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). The Minister noted that no precautionary measures were taken to properly anchor the boats, raising suspicions about foul play.

Minister Ramanaidu revealed that officials from the Water Resources Department (WRD) have complained to the police. "There are many doubts regarding a potential conspiracy behind the collision of the



boats with the barrage gates," he said. He assured that both the state government and the police were thoroughly investigating the matter, and the truth would soon come to light.

Highlighting the significance of the Prakasam Barrage, Ramanaidu expressed concern over the possible attempt to sabotage such a vital structure, which plays a crucial role in providing food grains to the people of the state. According

to the Minister, three of the boats involved are owned by Ushadri and Komati Rammohan, the latter being a follower and relative of YSRCP MLC Talasila Raghuram. Ramanaidu further alleged that former YSRCP MP Nandigam Suresh and others had formed a syndicate for dredging operations in the Krishna River. He pointed out that each of the boats involved in the incident was valued

between ₹40 lakh and ₹50 lakh. However, neither the owners nor the operators had taken adequate precautions to secure the boats.

"Three boats were tied to each other merely with a plastic rope. We suspect a conspiracy behind these boats drifting and hitting the barrage gates," he said. The Minister detailed how each boat, weighing 40 to 50 tonnes, drifted towards the barrage and struck gates 67, 69, and 70. The counterweight of gate 69 was broken by the impact, he added.

Fortunately, according to the Minister, the collision only damaged the counterweight and did not affect the main structure or the gates of the bar-

rage. "It is unimaginable what could have happened had the boats struck the main structure," he remarked. He also raised concerns about the fate of the five districts that rely on the Prakasam Barrage.

Of the five boats, one sank between the gates while three have been identified. Efforts are going on to locate the remaining boat, the Minister said. All the boats were painted in YSRCP colours, further fuelling suspicions of deliberate sabotage. Minister Ramanaidu emphasised that the police investigation would shed more light on the incident, and assured that strict action would be taken against those found responsible.



Meghadri Gedda safe: Collector

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As heavy rains lash the port city, Visakhapatnam District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has reassured residents of the Meghadri Gedda Reservoir catchment area that the situation is under control. Accompanied by Visakhapatnam West MLA PVGR Naidu (Ganababu), the Collector inspected the reservoir and visited affected areas.

Speaking to the media, the Collector provided an update on the reservoir's status. "The Meghadri Gedda Reservoir's full capacity is 61 feet, and the water level is currently at 57.4 feet. There has been no recent rainfall in the catchment area, and the situation is well under control," he said.

He emphasised that the authorities are prepared to act if

there are any changes in the water level. "We are ready to release water through four of the reservoir's six gates if necessary. All departments are closely monitoring the situation," he added. He also noted that the reservoir water would be used for drinking in the coming days.

During their visit, the Collector and MLA Ganababu visited a rehabilitation centre set up in Gopalapatnam to assist those affected by the continuous rains. Offering reassurance to the residents, the Collector said, "We are here to support you in every way possible. There is no need to worry, as all necessary arrangements have been made for your safety and well-being."

MLA Ganababu echoed the Collector's message, assuring the public that their concerns

were being addressed. "Our focus is on ensuring the safety of every resident. We will provide all possible assistance during this time," he said.

In light of the increased water flow in the Meghadri Gedda Reservoir due to the rains, the Collector issued a public advisory urging residents to avoid swimming in the reservoir. "Given the current conditions, the water flow is strong and unsafe for activities such as swimming. We request everyone to stay away from the reservoir for their safety," he cautioned.

The inspection and visit were also attended by Gopalapatnam Tehsiladar and officials from the Revenue, Irrigation, and Police Departments, ensuring a coordinated effort to manage the situation and safeguard residents.

Enumeration of rain, flood losses in city begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government commenced the enumeration of losses incurred and damages caused by the recent floods and heavy rains in NTR District on Monday. The enumeration is set to be carried out over three days across the district.

As per the directive from the state government, NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has formed 1,700 enumeration teams to visit 2,32,000 houses in the district to assess the losses. In addition to residential properties, the teams will also estimate losses incurred by business establishments and traders.

According to Dr G Srijana, the State government is using a special app to record the losses. Necessary precautions have been taken to ensure that there are no lapses in the enumeration process. The teams consist of officials from the revenue department and staff from the secretariats, she added.

Furthermore, she explained that each team is led by a Deputy Tehsiladar and comprises a Revenue Inspector, ward secretary, volunteer, and police officer. Loss assessment in each ward will be monitored by an IAS officer. The teams will also conduct random checks as

part of the enumeration, she noted.

Meanwhile, Dr Srijana requested flood victims to be present at their houses or shops when the enumeration teams visit. Property owners must provide details of the losses they have incurred to the visiting teams. In case any house owner or flood victim is not present at the time of enumeration, they are required to contact their local secretariat. Upon notification, the enumeration team will revisit the premises, she added.

Show-cause notice to VRO

Collector Dr G Srijana issued a show cause notice to VRO P Vijaya Lakshmi of the 259th Ward Secretariat for negligence during flood relief efforts in Ajith Singh Nagar, Vijayawada on Monday. VRO Vijaya Lakshmi allegedly behaved rudely with the public and has been asked to explain.

Dr Srijana further emphasised that the state government is making serious efforts to prevent floods in the city and is expediting flood relief measures. She also warned that all officials must act responsibly and that strict action will be taken against any official found neglecting their duties.

VRO loses cool, slaps flood victim over relief material

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Village Revenue Officer (VRO) in Vijayawada has been criticised after a video showing her physically assaulting a flood victim for questioning the distribution of relief materials went viral on social media. The incident involved Vijayalakshmi, a VRO at the 259th Ward Secretariat, who was filmed attacking a man for inquiring about the lack of flood relief supplies and drinking water.

The video shows the VRO losing her temper and slapping the man in front of others in the area, sparking controversy. The victim and other residents have called for action against the VRO for her aggressive behav-



our. Residents have reported severe problems due to the floods over the past week, including a lack of drinking water and food. They expressed frustration that, rather than addressing their concerns about the delayed relief materials, the VRO reacted violently. Locals are voicing their anger over her conduct and are demanding accountability for such officials.

Collector inspects Janjhavati project

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

District Collector A Shyam Prasad conducted a thorough inspection of the Janjhavati Medium Irrigation Project in Komarada Mandal on Monday, amid concerns over heavy rainfall in the region. During his visit, the Collector assessed the water flow and levels at the project, examined the construction of the Purnapadu-Labesu bridge, and inspected the sand reach at Kallikota.

Addressing the media after the inspection, Collector Shyam Prasad stated, "Given the impending heavy rainfall, we are closely monitoring the water levels at Janjhavati. To ensure the safety of the infrastructure, precautionary measures have been taken, includ-



ing closing the rubber dam." Engineering officials briefed the Collector on the project's progress, citing delays due to inter-state issues with Odisha. They explained that a rubber dam had been installed to bridge the gap in the river, and once the weather improved, it would be raised to facilitate

irrigation through the canals. The Collector also inquired about the spillway works and the Janjhavati River, which flows for four kilometres before merging with the Nagavali River.

During his inspection of the Purnapadu-Labesu bridge, the Collector expressed his

concern over the project's pace. "Seven slabs have been completed, and I expect the remaining work to be expedited once the rainy season subsides," he said. He added that the Chief Minister had promised to complete the bridge to improve connectivity between the two villages.

The Collector instructed officials to widen the village roads and approach roads once the bridge is completed. He also emphasised the need to prioritise the well-being of residents, especially pregnant women, during the rainy season. Accompanied by RDO K. Hemalatha and other officials, the Collector concluded his inspection by visiting the sand reaches at Kallikota to discuss the impact of the monsoon on sand management.

Tribals stage protest seeking immediate road construction

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Veerabhadrapeta, a remote tribal village under the Chintalapudi Panchayat in Devarapalli mandal, has long endured the absence of proper road infrastructure, a challenge that becomes life-threatening during the monsoon season. Despite years of pleas, the government has yet to address this critical issue, leaving the villagers increasingly frustrated and vulnerable.

In a recent protest, the villagers gathered in a desperate call for action, demanding the construction of a road that could save lives and connect them to essential services. "We have been asking for basic infrastructure for years. Our lives are at stake, and the authorities must act now," said Lakshmi, a tribal woman from Veerabhadrapeta. Her plea echoes the sentiments of a community grappling with the consequences of governmental inaction.

The gravity of the situation was highlighted last September when three young children—Gammella Praveen, Sukuri Chinnari, and Gammella Kavya



—died within a week. Due to impassable roads caused by heavy rains, the children were unable to get medical help in time. "We lost our children not because of illness but because we couldn't get them to the hospital. How many more must suffer before we are heard?" said Suresh, a village elder, reflecting on the emotional toll the incident has taken on the community.

The villagers are demanding the construction of at least one kilometre of gravel road from Veerabhadrapeta junction to the Chintalapudi main road, a stretch that would also benefit

nearby villages like Solubongupati and Chinaburaga. "This road is our lifeline. It will ease the burden of those living in these remote areas," explained Ramu, another village resident, emphasizing the urgent need for action.

As the monsoon season continues, the villagers remain determined in their push for change, hoping the government will finally take notice before more preventable tragedies occur. The question that haunts the community now is: how long will they have to wait before their voices are heard and their lives protected?

Varun Group offers 50% cut on 2-wheeler servicing charges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Zonal president of the Transport Department Employees' Union, M Rajubabu, expressed his sadness over the impact of the flood on many families in Vijayawada City, noting the damage to properties and the need for repairs to vehicles, including two-wheelers. He appealed to automobile sector companies to come forward and extend their support to the victims.

Rajubabu visited the Varun Group and met with Executive Director PV Satyanarayana at the Benz Circle showroom on Monday. During this visit, Rajubabu highlighted that many families' vehicles had been affected by the floods and requested free servicing for the two-wheelers from Varun Group.

He acknowledged the efforts of various individuals and organisations in assisting flood victims, including the AP JAC leaders who announced a donation of Rs 120 crore as a one-day basic pay donation for relief operations.

GVMC evacuates residents amid heavy rainfall

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the wake of persistent heavy rainfall, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has initiated precautionary measures to ensure the safety of residents in vulnerable areas. According to GVMC Additional Commissioner DV Ramanamurthy, 45 individuals have been relocated to rehabilitation centres due to the recent downpour.

"The continuous rainfall on Sunday resulted in the collapse of a protective wall on a hill slope near Ramakrishna Nagar," Ramanamurthy stated. "As a result, 38 people from the area have been temporarily sheltered at the Gopalapatnam Mandal Praja Parishad School and the Zone-1 Tagarapuvulasa Public Library." In addition to Ramakrishna Nagar, the GVMC has also relocated residents from Jaibhim Nagar. A total of 27 individuals from eight families have been moved to rehabilitation centres, where they are being provided with essential amenities.

To anticipate potential emergencies, the GVMC has established 80 resettlement centres across the city. "Our teams are con-



ducting regular counselling sessions at these centres to support the relocated residents," Ramanamurthy explained. "We are also prioritizing the removal of sewage from canals and Errigedda to prevent any further issues."

The GVMC officials and zonal commissioners are actively monitoring hill slopes and low-lying areas to keep residents informed about the situation. "Given the forecast of continued rainfall, we urge residents to remain vigilant and report any concerns to GVMC officials," Ramanamurthy advised. "This will enable us to arrange shelter in the rehabilitation centres before emergencies arise." For immediate assistance, residents can contact the GVMC toll-free number 1800 4250 0009.

GVMC implements home delivery initiative for flood-hit

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a swift response to the flooding, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has initiated a comprehensive home delivery programme to ensure essential commodities reach those impacted by the disaster. GVMC Commissioner Dr P Sampath Kumar announced the initiative, emphasizing the government's commitment to providing timely relief to flood victims. "With the collaborative efforts of the National Disaster Response Force, police, and secretariat secretaries, we are ensuring that essential supplies are delivered directly to the

homes of those affected," he stated.

The distribution commenced on Monday in Vijayawada's 64th Ward, Kandrika, under the supervision of the State Women and Child Welfare Department Managing Director, Venugopal Reddy. Local legislators, including Peddapuram MLA N Chinaraajappa, personally distributed supplies to flood-affected families in areas such as SC Bose Nagar, Prajashakti Nagar, and Maduranagar.

"Our primary objective is to provide the necessary support to all victims during this difficult time," MLA Chinaraajappa affirmed. "The



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home delivery initiative is one of the key measures we have implemented to ensure their well-being."

Commissioner Dr Sampath Kumar further detailed the ongoing efforts to restore normalcy in the affected areas. "We have identified damaged power poles and are working diligently with the concerned power department officials to repair them," he added. Legislators have instructed authorities to conduct thorough inspections of the affected areas and ensure that all essential services, including food, water, and electricity, are promptly restored to meet the needs of the flood victims.

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Heavy rain, floods hit normal life in ASR dist



PNS ■ PADERU

The heavy floods due to incessant rains in the catchment areas under the influence of depression battered north AP districts including Alluri Sitarama Raju district as road connectivity was cut off to several villages and all canals and streams are overflowing. The flood water was overflowing on the Indurkpet-Ravilanka road and hundreds of vehicles were stranded on either side of the road. An ambulance which was taking a pregnant woman, Pushpavati, to hospital was stuck in the

traffic. Road connectivity to over 22 villages was cut off as flood water overflowed on the road. The Kotaratla Agriculture Cooperative bank was marooned in the flood water in the Anakapalli district while several residential colonies were inundated. The Yeluru canal was overflowing and the canal developed a breach at 82th Kilometer at Vemulawada village in Narsipatnam mandal. However, the farmers plugged the breach into dumping sand bags. The Sileru project is in spate with heavy inflows. The

authorities lifted four crest gates of the Sileru project to release 13,000 cusecs of water downstream. Incessant rains occurred in ASR, Anakapalli and Manyam districts under the influence of depression. Several residential colonies including the Jaganna colony in Nakkapalli mandal in the Anakapalli district were inundated by three feet of water. The Kalyanaloa reservoir in Ravikamatham mandal in Chodavaram constituency in Anakapalli district has swollen and the authorities lifted four gates to release flood water

downstream the Varaha rivulet. The Konam reservoir is also receiving heavy inflow. The authorities lifted four crest gates of Pedderu reservoir to release water downstream consequently paddy and sugarcane crops in over two thousand acres submerged in the flood water. The vehicular traffic on the Bhimili-Narsipatnam was suspended as flood water overflowed on the road at three places. The culvert was washed away at Vijayaramajupet in Butchayapeta mandal as the Tacheru rivulet was swollen with heavy inflows.

Govt failed in flood management: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

Former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy has strongly criticised the State government for its failure to manage the recent flood crisis and accused Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of using diversionary tactics to conceal the government's inefficiency. Speaking to the media in Nellore on Monday, the former minister highlighted the government's shortcomings in both precautionary measures and relief efforts, noting that the focus had shifted to blaming previous govern-



ments and harassing opposition leaders with baseless cases. He condemned Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, questioning why his so-called

"real-time governance" failed to anticipate the recent flash floods on the Krishna River. He demanded an explanation for the government's inability to create a flood cushion despite alerts from the Irrigation Department. He further alleged that the Chief Minister was neglecting the flood-affected people and instead sought refuge in the collectorate to avoid the embarrassment of his illegal property being flooded, rather than focusing on evacuating the public.

Kakani stated that the Chief Minister was resorting to

diversionary politics to cover up his failures in flood relief operations. He pointed out that instead of focusing on helping flood victims, the government was more interested in blaming previous administrations and targeting YSRCPC leaders with cases. He added that the floods had damaged lakhs of acres of crops and urged the government to provide immediate relief to farmers. Additionally, he criticised a section of the media for covering up Chandrababu's failures while exaggerating his minor efforts during the floods.

Farmers bear brunt of floods: Union Minister

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM



Union Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries Bhupatiraju Srinivasa Varma has lamented that the farmers have bore the brunt of the flood as they lost crops.

The Union Minister's flood damaged the Kodavali road and caused potholes. Talking to the media on the occasion, he said that the Union Agriculture Minister visited the flood-ravaged areas and announced interim relief to the farmers.

He extolled Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for his efforts to provide relief to the flood-affected people in Vijayawada. He said that the Kodavali road was so badly damaged that people could not go on foot on the road. He instructed the municipal commissioner to take steps to reconstruct the damaged road after the flood water had receded.

The Union Minister alleged that the roads were constructed without maintaining quality during the YSRCPC regime, which is why many roads were damaged in the rains.

'Efforts on to restore power supply in flood-hit areas'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar has made it clear that efforts are being made to restore power supply in the flood-affected areas including in the Jakkampudi colony and restoration works will be completed by Monday night.

The Energy Minister, accompanied by Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy, visited some of the flood-hit areas at Jakkampudi colony, Chittinagar and Sitara Centre. The flood victims took to the notice of the Energy Minister that the power supply is yet to be restored in some of the colonies. The Minister saw the power restoration works and inquired with the engineers. He said that due to the inundation of colonies, the power supply was disconnected. He assured the flood victims that power would be restored to over 1000 houses by the night. He told them that the works are being carried out on war footing to supply power in the flood-hit areas.



Ministers promise all help to flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ministers Gottipati Ravi Kumar and Dr Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy have assured flood victims that the government will provide all possible support. Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar and Social Welfare Minister Dr Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy toured the flood-affected areas of Jakkampudi Colony, Chitti Nagar, and Sitara Centre on Monday. Wading through knee-deep water, both ministers visited the homes of victims and inquired about their difficulties.

The victims highlighted issues such as electricity and water supply. Minister Ravi Kumar explained that elec-

tricity had been suspended as a precautionary measure due to the floodwater, but efforts are underway to restore power to every block in Jakkampudi Colony. Officials informed the ministers that electricity would be fully restored by Monday night.

Ministers Ravi Kumar and Dr Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy also inquired about the provision of food, drinking water, and milk to the flood victims, assuring them of their support. Ravi Kumar noted that Vijayawada had never experienced such severe flooding before. The ministers stated that the state government would provide compensation and support to every family affected by the flood.

Officials told to expedite removal of hyacinth from Upputeru drain



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has directed the officials concerned to expedite the removal of hyacinth from the Upputeru.

The Collector, SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi, MLAs Kanumuri Raghurama Krishnam Raju and Kamineni Srinivas inspected the removal of hyacinth creepers from the Upputeru drain. The Collector said that the water of Kolleru Lake merges the sea only through Upputeru. She said that in the conflu-

ence area at Kolleru-Upputeru, water flow is inhibited by the hyacinth creeper. The Collector directed the officials to complete the work of removing the hyacinth from the lower part of the Upputeru Railway Bridge and R&B Bridge as soon as possible.

The flood water is entering the agriculture fields at Siddapuram and Chinnaillipadu villages in the border zone of Akiiveedu as the water level in Kolleru Lake is gradually increasing and the officials alerted the people living in the low-lying areas at Upputeru villages.

The MLAs told the officials that the hyacinth creepers should be removed from the Upputeru drain on war footing so that the flood water flows freely. The removal of hyacinth creeper from the Upputeru drain has been carried out for the last week, the officials told the MLAs.

Collector Nagarani appreciated Irrigation Assistant Engineer Venkateswara Rao for swift action for the removal of the hyacinth creeper from the Upputeru drain. Joint Collector T Rahul Kumar Reddy, district Irrigation Officer P Subramanyeswara Rao and AE Venkateswara Rao were among those who accompanied them.

Later, Collector Nagarani conducted a surprise inspection of the medical camp at Chinamallipadu village. She directed the doctors to shift pregnant women and postnatal women to the government hospital if needed. She directed the doctors to keep ready medicines, especially anti-venom injections as snake bites might take place in the flood-hit areas. DMHO Dr D Maheswara Rao and Pedakapavara Medical Officer Dr.Rajasekhar were accompanied by the Collector.

16 injured as RTC bus plunges into canal



PNS ■ PADERU

Sixteen persons were injured, six of them seriously, when an APSRTC bus plunged into an agriculture canal at Bornagudem village in Rajavommangi mandal in Alluri Sitarama Raju district on the night of Sunday. Police said that the ill-fated RTC bus, which had 25 passengers, was going to Narsipatnam from

Rajahmendravaram. The bus driver lost steering control, ramming a tree and later plunging into an irrigation canal.

The passersby extricated the passengers from the bus. As many as 16 passengers were injured, six of them seriously, in the mishap and they were admitted to the GGH in Rajahmundry and Narsipatnam.

2 sarees for 63 lakh women of SHGs every year: CM

IIHT to be named after Konda Laxman Bapuji

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a move aimed at helping women as well as the weaving community, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced that instead of Bathukamma sarees the 63 lakh women of Self-Help Groups across Telangana will receive two sarees each annually.

The CM made the announcement during the inauguration of the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) in Hyderabad on Monday, marking a major step in the government's efforts to empower weavers. The IIHT would be named after Konda Laxman Bapuji.

Speaking about the Bathukamma saree distribution of the BRS, the CM said that they lacked quality and the dues were never paid to weavers. Konda Laxman Bapuji is synonymous with his sacrifice for Telangana. He even gave shelter to the TRS by setting up an office. The people of Telangana have seen resignations, elections and collections



"In the last 10 years, nothing was done to set up an institute like this in Telangana," Revanth said. His government, he explained, took up the matter with the Centre soon after coming to power. "I appealed to the Prime Minister, and I am happy to announce that the Centre approved the institute," he added. The IIHT will provide educational opportunities for students in the state who are interested in learning handloom technology. The CM said the institute would be established as a part of Telangana's Skill University next year.

He also directed authorities to speed up construction to ensure that the institute becomes operational as soon as possible. The CM said the government will waive loans of Rs 30 crore taken by weavers. The Chief Minister also highlighted the need for elections to the Cooperative Unions, or Samakya Sanghalu, and directed officials to prepare an action plan for elections soon.



Union Minister Pemmasani distributes flood relief kits

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, Union Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications, and Dhulipalla Narendra Kumar, MLA, Ponnuru constituency distributed around 400 relief kits on Monday at Sundaraiha Colony, Peddakakani, Guntur district. Indus Towers, one of India's leading telecom infrastructure providers, continues its commitment to supporting communities affected by natural disasters. In collaboration with local authorities, Indus Towers has distributed 1000 relief kits to flood-affected residents/ families in the Krishna and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh over two days.

Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, said, "I take this opportunity to thank the State

government under the leadership of CM Chandrababu Naidu and MLA Dhulipalla committed to extend all possible support to the farmers & people affected in these floods. At the same time, I thank Indus Towers Ltd and their employees led by Sh Dilip Kumar Ganta (Circle CEO of AP) for volunteering and supporting flood relief works in the state. Indus Towers is the largest Tower company in India and we wish to construct more towers."

The residents have recently returned home from flood relief shelters and considering that each relief kit contained essential items including sarees, towels, bedsheets, and dhotis, providing much-needed support to the affected families, the company has distributed them.

18 injured in bus accident on Kailasagiri Ghat Road

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A tourist bus lost control while descending the Kailasagiri Ghat road on Monday, leading to injuries to 18 individuals. The bus, which was transporting tourists from the scenic spot, collided with a rock on the steep descent. City Commissioner of Police Dr. Sankha Brata Bagchi immediately arrived at the scene and oversaw the transfer of the injured to King George Hospital (KGH) for immediate medical attention.

Dr. Bagchi confirmed that there were no fatalities and that all the injured are currently in stable condition. He emphasised the priority was to ensure the victims received timely medical care. The Commissioner also instructed the medical staff at KGH to provide high-quality treatment. A senior doctor from KGH confirmed that the focus is on the recovery of the injured.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the accident. While no casualties were reported, the incident highlights concerns about safety on ghat roads leading to Kailasagiri.

New ticket-checking office opens at Bhimavaram railway station

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager V Rambabu inaugurated the new ticket-checking office for station staff in Bhimavaram railway station here on Monday.

He also interacted with passengers, railway staff, and vendors, soliciting feedback and suggestions to improve services and facilities. Speaking on the occasion, he emphasised important amenities, like ticketing, enquiry services, and help desks for ensuring smooth functioning & hassle-free travel for passengers. He also directed officials to expedite ongoing works and initiate new projects to further enhance the amenities and services offered at the stations.

In a bid to enhance passenger experience and ensure optimal facilities, the Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager along with the Commercial Team conducted an extensive inspection of Bhimavaram Town here on Monday. The inspection aimed to identify areas for improvement, enhance passenger comfort and convenience, proper functioning of all passenger amenities and ensure compliance with safety and security protocols.

The Sr. DCM commenced the inspection along with the commercial team at



Bhimavaram Town Station. He examined the cleanliness maintenance of platforms, toilets, waiting halls, passenger amenities, Infrastructure and facilities, such as lighting, signage, water supply, and the catering stalls on platforms including food quality, quantity, expiry dates on food items and availability of water bottles. He also inspected ongoing Amrit Bharat Station redevelopment works at Bhimavaram Town. In the aftermath, Rambabu, Sr. DCM inspected Bhimavaram Junction Railway Station. The Sr.DCM inspected Passenger Amenities, Booking office, Parcel Office, Goods Shed, Loading platforms, traffic facilities and labour facilities at the good Shed. He interacted with staff and exhorted them to strive for excellence in their duties and work towards enhancing customer satisfaction on all levels. The inspection was part of the Vijayawada Division, SCR's ongoing efforts to improve the quality of services and facilities provided to passengers.

ACROSS THE STATES



World Bank experts praise Kerala's education reforms

In a significant boost to Kerala's efforts to revamp its higher education system, a team of World Bank experts on Monday met with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, praising the state's reforms and expressing interest in a collaborative initiative to draw international students to the state. The World Bank experts, including Nina Arnhold (Global Lead for Tertiary Education), Denis Nikolaev (Senior Education Specialist), and Ambarish Ambuj (Consultant, Education, South Asia Region), met the CM at his office here to discuss a potential partnership, according to an official release. The project seeks to attract foreign students to Kerala and improve the overall higher education system, with a focus on sustainability and social justice. "The World Bank representatives were impressed by the reforms taking place in the higher education sector."



CSL launches two anti-submarine vessels of Navy

The Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) here on Monday launched two anti-submarine warfare shallow water crafts which were manufactured here for the Indian Navy. The two ships are part of the series of eight anti-submarine warfare shallow water crafts which are under construction in CSL. After the ceremonial puja, the ships were launched in the presence of the chief guest and Southern Naval Command Chief, Vice Admiral V Srinivas. The Chairman and Managing Director of CSL, the Directors of CSL, senior officials of the Indian Navy and CSL, among others were present during the occasion. A contract for building eight vessels was signed between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the CSL on April 30, 2019. "The Mahe Class of Ships will replace the in-service Abhay class ASW Corvettes of the Indian Navy and are designed to undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) and Mine Laying Operations including subsurface surveillance," the CSL said in a release.



Man ends life after killing wife, daughter

A 31-year-old man allegedly killed his wife and his 3-year-old daughter before dying by suicide in a remote village in South Tripura district, police said on Monday. The incident happened at Nabarampara within the jurisdiction of the Baikhora police station of the district, a police officer said. Biranta Tripura and his family members were not spotted in and around their hut by neighbours for a few days. This led the villagers to become suspicious and inform the police. "After receiving the information, a police team went to the village and recovered three decomposed bodies. The bodies of the woman and child bore injury marks from a sharp weapon," the Assistant Inspector General (AIG), Law & Order, Ananta Das, said. It appeared that Biranta Tripura killed his wife Sahima Tripura (24), and daughter Elisha Tripura (3) with a sharp weapon, and then ended his life, he said.

RAMESHWARAM CAFE BLAST CASE

NIA chargesheets 4, says BJP Bengaluru office first target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a charge sheet filed before a court in Bengaluru, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) named Mussavir Hussain Shazib, Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taaha, Maaz Muneer Ahmed and Muzammil Shareef, as accused. All of them were arrested earlier and are currently in judicial custody in the case, a statement issued by the NIA said.

Taaha and Shazib were funded by their handler through cryptocurrencies, which Taaha converted to cash with the help of various Telegram-based peer-to-peer or P2P platforms, it said. The funds were used by the accused to perpetrate various acts of violence in Bengaluru, investigations further revealed.



Jaishankar says India supports Israel-Palestine ceasefire

PNS ■ RIYADH

Describing the current situation in Gaza as India's "foremost concern", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said that New Delhi supports a ceasefire "as soon as possible" in the region, where Israel and Hamas are engaged in conflict since last 11 months. Jaishankar made the remarks while speaking at the first India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministerial Meeting for Strategic Dialogue in the Saudi capital. "The current situation in Gaza is now understandably our foremost concern. India's position in this regard has been principled and consistent. While we condemn acts of terrorism and hostage taking, we are deeply pained by the continuing death of innocent civilians," he said. Jaishankar said that any response must take into account the principles of humanitarian law. "We support a ceasefire as soon as possible," he added.

On the larger issue, India has consistently stood for a resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution, he said. He added that India has also contributed to the building of Palestinian institutions and capacities. "Where the humanitarian situation is concerned, we have provided relief and increased our support to UNRWA," he added. The GCC is an influential grouping, comprising the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The total volume of India's trade with GCC countries stood at USD 184.46 billion in the financial year 2022-23. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday held a series of meetings with his counterparts from the Gulf countries during which he reviewed the progress in the bilateral relations and discussed ways to further deepen them.

Jaishankar arrived in the Saudi capital Sunday on the first leg of his three-nation tour to attend the first India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers' meeting. The GCC is an influential grouping, comprising the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The total volume of India's trade with GCC countries stood at USD 184.46 billion in the financial year 2022-23. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday held a series of meetings with his counterparts from the Gulf countries during which he reviewed the progress in the bilateral relations and discussed ways to further deepen them.

She also praised the UAE leadership for ensuring the welfare, particularly the special care taken during the difficult times of the Covid pandemic, of more than 35 lakh Indian citizens in the West Asian country. Murmu was also happy to note the high rate of participation and contribution of women in all aspects of Emirati society, a statement issued by the President's office said. She said, "Both our countries have demonstrated that historic yet forward-looking bilateral relationship has been transformed over the past decade", steered by the visionary leadership of both countries. Murmu said she was pleased to be welcoming the third generation of UAE leadership to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, continuing a long tradition of high-level engagement that is in tune with India's comprehensive strategic partnership with the UAE.

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India, UAE can deliver more effective results: Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the United Arab Emirates have demonstrated that "women-led development" can deliver more effective results for overall socio-economic development, President Droupadi Murmu said on Monday.

Her assertion came during a meeting she had with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan who had called on the President at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

women-led development can deliver more effective results for overall socio-economic development".

The President expressed satisfaction that during the Crown Prince's visit, "We have further expanded this partnership through several agreements in new areas of cooperation".

Murmu said people-to-people ties form the bedrock of this relationship, with more than 35 lakh Indian citizens residing in the UAE.

The President said, "Our



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IAF helicopter makes emergency landing on paddy field near Chennai

PNS ■ CHENNAI

A training helicopter of the IAF made an emergency landing on a paddy field near Porpandal near here due to a technical snag, police said on Monday.

The helicopter, being flown by two persons, suddenly malfunctioned when it neared Porpandal area in the Salavakkam police station limits. As a result, the pilot had to make an emergency landing on a paddy field, the official said.

Shortly thereafter, another helicopter was flown to provide technical assistance to the grounded chopper. After the repairs were attended, both the helicopters returned to the base, the official said.



Rajasthan: In a first, Vice Chiefs of all armed forces fly in LCA Tejas in Jodhpur

PNS ■ JODHPUR

The Vice Chiefs of all three armed forces flew in the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, for the first time during a multilateral exercise here on Monday, an official statement said.

Jodhpur Air Force Station is hosting the second phase of the multilateral exercise "Tarang Shakti" from August 29 to September 15.

Vice Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal A.P. Singh, Vice Admiral Krishna

Swaminathan, and Vice Chief of Army Lieutenant General N.S. Raja Subramani arrived at Jodhpur Airbase and boarded the Tejas fighter jets for the flight. During the event, Air Marshal A.P. Singh of the Air Force flew the single-seater LCA Tejas fighter jet, while the Navy and Army Vice Chiefs flew in the twin-seater trainer version of the LCA.

Air Force of eight nations including India are participating with their assets and 16 other nations are witnessing the exercise as observer countries.

According to the defence spokesperson Col Amitabh Sharma, this exercise, which is the largest multinational exercise hosted by IAF, aims at strengthening interoperability between the participating forces.

A defence expo will also be organised from September 12 to 14, wherein India will showcase its indigenously manufactured weapons and aircraft to explore the global potential of defence exports by promoting Indian manufactured assets among friendly nations.

No headway in alliance talks with Congress

AAP names 20 candidates for Haryana polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ending the suspense over an alliance with the Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) decided on Monday to go solo in the Haryana Assembly polls as it released its first list of 20 candidates.

The decision came amid alliance talks between the AAP and the Congress that dragged on and in view of the nomination window for the polls closing on September 12.

The 90-member Haryana Assembly is scheduled to go to polls on October 5. The AAP has fielded candidates from Naraingarh, Assandh, Samalkha, Uchana Kalan, Dabwali,

Meham, Rohtak, Bahadurgarh, Badli, Beri, Mahendragarh and Badshahpur. The Congress has already announced its candidates from these seats. On the issue of an alliance with the Congress, AAP's Haryana president Sushil Gupta said, "I want to say it very clearly that we have been preparing for all the 90 seats since day one. There is not much time left for the polls, the last date for filing nominations is September 12. So the wait is over."

He asserted that the AAP is in a position to provide a strong alternative in Haryana, adding that the party's second list of candidates will also be released soon.

NE highly susceptible to wildlife crimes, gateway for trafficking: Official

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Northeast India is highly vulnerable to wildlife crimes and serves as a major gateway for trafficking animals and their body parts, Wildlife Crime Control Board (WCCB) deputy director Arvind Kumar Chaurasia said here on Monday.

Speaking at the 35th Foundation Day of the biodiversity group 'Aaranyak', Chaurasia emphasised that wildlife crimes should not be viewed in isolation but rather in connection with other illicit activities such as drug trafficking, arms dealing, human trafficking, and money laundering.

"Wildlife crimes are a threat to national security as sales and proceeds of wildlife trafficking is often used to fund

terror, militancy and other related activities", he said.

He noted that such connections have been observed in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as some northeastern states.

"The Northeast is a mega biodiversity hotspot and with porous land borders with

neighbouring countries, the region is both a source and a transit route for illegal wildlife trade", he said.

Wildlife from other parts of the country is often trafficked through the Northeast

to neighbouring countries such as China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, while exotic animals from these countries are smuggled into various Indian states, Chaurasia said.

Chaurasia explained that the illegal wildlife trade involves a complex supply chain, where the value of wildlife or body parts increases significantly at each stage, with the highest level seeing up to a 600 per cent increase compared to the initial poacher.

"The region is very sensitive for both inward and outward supply of wildlife specimens illegally. The entire supply chain is very well-oiled with the ground-level poacher being just one of the many players which include handlers, dealers and retailers", he said.

Scientists identify antibody to counter all COVID-19 variants

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers have discovered an antibody that could counter all known variants of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and also distantly related ones that infect other animals.

SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus causing COVID-19, uses its spike protein to invade and infect another individual, or the host. Antibodies, produced by the host in response,

bind to the spike protein to block its action and prevent infection.

The researchers, led by those at The University of Texas in Austin, US, isolated the antibody 'SC27' from the plasma donated by four patients. These patients had breakthrough infections, which occur when a vaccinated individual gets infected.

The research has been published in the journal Cell Reports Medicine.



Over the more than four years since the first case of COVID-19 emerged, SARS-CoV-2 has evolved to acquire certain characteristics which make the virus resistant to vaccines and treatments.

The authors said the 'SC27' antibody recognised all these various characteristics of the spike

proteins across COVID-19 variants.

"One goal of this research, and vaccinology in general, is to work toward a universal vaccine that can generate antibodies and create an immune response with broad protection to a rapidly mutating virus," said one of the lead authors William Voss, a PhD graduate in cell and molecular biology at The University of Texas.

Stalin, Pradhan trade charges over National Education Policy

PNS ■ CHENNAI/NEW DELHI

Chief Minister M K Stalin on Monday slammed the BJP-led union government alleging it has denied funds to best performing Tamil Nadu under a Central school education scheme, Samagra Shiksha, for refusing to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accused Stalin of trying to pit states against each other to make a point about non-implementation of the NEP. Tamil Nadu's main opposition party, AIADMK, blamed CM Stalin and the Centre over the issue.

In a post on 'X', Stalin said: "Denying funds to the best-performing states for refusing to bow to the #NEP, while generously rewarding those who are not delivering on the objectives - Is this how the Union BJP Government plans to promote quality education and equity? I leave it to the wisdom of our nation and our people to decide!"

Furthermore, the chief minister tagged a report on Monday in a national English daily that provided data on 'Centre withholding funds' under the Samagra Shiksha scheme to at least five Opposition-ruled states including Tamil Nadu



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India's bravehearts

India's stellar performance at the Paris Paralympics is a testament to resilience, grit, and the unyielding spirit of Indian para athletes

Former President APJ Abdul Kalam once remarked, "dreams are not what you see in sleep; dreams are those that keep you awake until they're fulfilled." The Indian squad for the Paris Paralympics has embodied this very spirit. With unwavering determination, they've shown that no dream is too big when fueled by the indomitable human will. The performance of Indian para-athletes has once again proved that sons and daughters of India have the mettle to take on the world against all odds. With the largest-ever contingent of 84 athletes, India soared to unprecedented heights, making the world sit up and take notice of the nation's sporting prowess. Their extraordinary performances went far beyond mere medal counts—they embodied the true spirit of sportsmanship and perseverance, transcending physical limitations to achieve the impossible. India's medal tally in Paris showcased a remarkable blend of talent and hard work. Winning medals across various disciplines, including athletics, archery, and badminton,



these athletes brought pride to the nation, igniting inspiration for future generations. Archery sensation Sheetal Devi, competing without hands, captured the world's attention with her sheer determination and skill, clinching a historic gold in the women's compound archery event.

Track and field athletes, always a strong suit for India, delivered breathtaking performances. The likes of Sumit Antil, who made a world record in javelin throw and Avani Lekhara, a champion rifle shooter who overcame spinal injuries to once again stand atop the podium, proved that India's strength in adaptive sports is only growing stronger. What stands out in the Indian con-

tingent's performance is the remarkable spirit they embody. Every Paralympian carries a story of personal struggle and perseverance, but in Paris, these stories converged into one—a collective tale of breaking barriers. From training under adverse conditions to overcoming the societal stigma, these athletes have shown the world that true strength lies not in physical abilities but in mental tenacity. Athletes like Nishad Kumar in high jump, who continued to train despite financial constraints, and Bhavina Patel, a table tennis champion who overcame her polio-induced limitations, are emblematic of the fighting spirit that permeates the Indian contingent. The success in Paris is also a reflection of the increased support and recognition that para-athletes are finally receiving. Government initiatives, corporate sponsorships, and a growing awareness of inclusivity in sports have played a key role in fostering an environment where differently-abled athletes can thrive. But the success in Paris isn't just about winning medals—it's about breaking the boundaries of what para-sports can be in India. The inspiring stories of athletes like Mariyappan Thangavelu, Devendra Jhaharia, and others resonate with the idea that disability is not a limitation. They have sparked a national conversation about inclusion, diversity, and the importance of creating opportunities for all.

PICTALK



Army jawans perform stunts during the closing ceremony of 'Know Your Army' programme in Ranchi

The onion price and poll dynamics



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Soaring onion prices are causing concern for both consumers and politicians alike, with historical evidence showing that onion price can sway electoral outcomes

Kya pyaj rulayega — Would the onion bring tears? — is the common refrain in poll-bound states of Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra. and many a time it has hit not only the common man but even the political masters.

The rise in Indian onion prices is feared to spurt international prices and food bills. Could the prices come down to wipe off tears? Maybe not. Its support prices have increased manifold. The Centre is procuring onion at a price 74 per cent higher than last year in Maharashtra, the highest onion-growing state.

Last year, onion was procured at Rs 16.93 per kg. This year it is being procured at Rs 29.5 per kg through direct benefit transfer (DBT) to eliminate middlemen. The centre is not taking any chances. It is selling through NAFED outlets, mobile vans and others at Rs 35. For how long it could be sustained? Even at Rs 16.93 per kg procurement, national prices rarely came down below Rs 30 a kg. Onion prices hover around Rs 60 and 70 a kg. The overall national prices are unlikely to come down as the Maharashtra government is investing Rs 1500 crore to buy onion from the state to keep its farmers and traders happy to secure a political future. The government imposed a ban on onion exports in December 2023 to curb rising retail onion prices, ahead of the Lok Sabha election. It led to a fall in onion prices by approximately 40 per cent from Rs. 42.2 a kg in December 2023 to Rs. 24.5 kg in March 2024. On 23rd March 2024, the ban was extended indefinitely Lok Sabha election. Prices lowered.

The declining onion prices continued to create uproar among the farmers and traders. The government lifted the ban with the third phase of polling on May 4 to six countries - Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. Historically, high onion prices have led to discontent among consumers, whereas lower onion prices have upset a large voting bloc of farmers,



making the onion market a crucial topic for the government, especially around elections.

India is one of the largest producers and consumers of onions and fluctuations in onion prices have large-scale socio-economic impacts on the domestic and international markets.

In 2023-24 yield came down by 15 percent to around 25.47 million tonnes (MT), compared to the previous year's production of about 30.21 MT, according to an official release. The production may further fall this year. Traders fear that despite the lifting of the ban with 40 per cent export duties Indian onion remains highly-priced at \$ 770 per MT (Rs 64 a kg). The Egyptian onion is sold at \$ 387 per MT, almost half of the Indian price making it uncompetitive. Countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and China compete with India in the Asian onion export market.

The onion has been a political game-changer since the 1980 general elections when rising onion prices contributed to the return of Indira Gandhi to power wiping out the Janata Party.

Again because of high onion prices in 1998, the BJP lost to the Congress despite having changed its chief minister a few months before. In the 2024 Lok Sabha 2024 elections, the BJP has significant losses in



INDIA IS ONE OF THE LARGEST PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS OF ONIONS AND FLUCTUATIONS IN ONION PRICES HAVE LARGE-SCALE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Maharashtra's onion-growing belt. Except for one seat, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has been completely trounced in this crucial agricultural region. Out of the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies where the majority of onion farmers are concentrated, 12 have been won by the opposing INDIA bloc.

This is a stark contrast to the 2019 parliamentary elections, where NDA — comprising BJP and formerly united Shiv Sena — won 11 out of these 13 seats, with BJP alone securing seven. Since the extension of the export ban, there has been simmering anger among onion cultivators of Nasik, which has the largest Asian onion market at Lasangaon. The export ban led to significant financial losses for farmers, who struggled to recover their cultivation costs as wholesale prices nosedived. Other major constituencies with significant onion grower populations, such as Dhule, Ahmednagar, Nandurbar, Baramati, Beed, Latur, Maval, Shirur, Solapur, Shirdi and Osmanabad, also saw NDA's influence wane. The government has also decided to fill in the state emergency reserves with 500,000 tonnes of onions for the 2024-25 period.

This initiative aims to mitigate future price volatility and protect farmers from sudden market fluctuations. It is also planning to increase

27 per cent onion acreage during the kharif season for onion in addition to the rabi crop. According to food analyst Mintec Analytics of the UK, the BJP has historically invested more in manufacturing and infrastructural development than in agricultural growth.

Agricultural exports reached \$ 48.9 billion in 2023-24, a decline of 8 per cent from \$ 53.2 billion in FY 2022-23. The export value in FY 2023-24 is significantly short of the ambitious target of \$ 60 billion set by the BJP government.

Also, the agri-exports during the last 10 years grew by 1.9 per cent since 2014 against the annual average growth rate of 20 during 2004-14.

The onion is a staple vegetable for the poor, indispensable to many Indian cuisines and recipes, from spicy curries to tangy relishes. "In Maharashtra, if there are no vegetables or you can't afford to buy vegetables, people eat 'kanda bhakari' (onion with bread)," says a food historian Dr Mohseena Mukadam.

It is more than butter for politicians, whose success depends on how they can handle the onion. The cheers and tears of impending state elections are closely linked with onion.

(The author is a senior journalist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FRESH VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR

Madam — Manipur is back on the boil given to fresh ethnic conflagrations that erupted between Kuki and Meitei groups have disrupted peace and paralysed normal lives.

The recent rocket attack in Moirang village and brutal murder of six Meitei people after that by the suspected Kuki militants is a desperate attempt to derail the peace process initiated under the auspices of Home Minister Amit Shah who has been closely monitoring the law and order situation in the state with priority. Its been more than a year but the violence and hatred against each other still persist and so is the remedy of this conflict.

The Centre and State government' must find a possible and pragmatic solution to this problem with the stakeholders without any delay but first they need to ensure the safety of the Kuki politicians including people who have lost trust on Biren Singh's BJP regime.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

KERALA AT THE FOREFRONT

Madam — What makes southern states a crown jewel of India than their northern counterparts is their will to take technology, growth, generate employment opportunities, to newer levels. Now, the southern most state of India Kerala is in for a major overhaul in terms of attracting foreign capital and industry which few years ago had seen a major setback.

Kerala where literacy rate is high is slowly marching forward for a conducive industrial environment in terms of attracting world class industries. The recent announcement by the Ministry of trade and commerce awarding top slot in ease of doing business reforms, has put Kerala on the world industrial pedestal. Surprisingly it has overtaken Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat while Tamil Nadu, India's most industrialised state does not even figure in the list. In the sphere of Citizen centric reforms

Water woes of rural India



Residents of rural areas often face more health problems compared to those in urban areas, primarily due to the government's greater focus on urban development and well-being facilities. One of the major causes of poor health in rural regions is the

lack of access to clean drinking water. Millions of rural inhabitants are still forced to rely on contaminated water sources.

The PM Har Ghar Jal Scheme, launched in 2019, is still in progress, having achieved over 50% coverage across all states and Union Territories in terms of tap water connections. Notably, 100% coverage has been achieved in 11 states, including Punjab, Gujarat, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, among others.

However, the bigger issue lies in the lack of timely maintenance and repairs. Water systems often remain clogged for months or even years, which continues to create difficulties. The government should expedite the completion of this scheme and also ensure proper maintenance. This will prevent the wastage of funds and ensure that the benefits last longer.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

like paying taxes, obtaining permits and business centric reforms like employment exchange, public distribution system, single window clearance, etc, Kerala has shown remarkable growth. From 28th to 15th and now earning the rare distinction of leading the country's economic bandwagon, this is indeed a significant milestone that sets precedence for other states to follow suit.

However modern day challenges like low job growth, less incentive for private sector to grow, high migration rate of its educated people are areas that need attention. Nonetheless, high literacy rate, life expectancy, credible human right records etc has raised its stature to a developed state. To realise 21st century M.D.G's, the stage is already set. However, there is room for improvement in every sector.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

NEERAJ PROVES HIS EXCELLENCE

Madam — Neeraj Chopra, a Javelin Juggernaut, has once again proved it. The Olympic champion has secured his

spot in the Diamond League final, the pinnacle of track and field competition. It's where the best of the best come together to battle for supremacy. And Neeraj, with his consistent brilliance, has earned his place among them. Every throw he makes is going towards the success.

This qualification marks a significant milestone for Chopra and Indian athletics. Beyond his athletic prowess, Chopra has become a symbol of inspiration for countless young athletes in India. His steadfast determination and dedication have not only propelled him to the top of the global javelin rankings but also motivated a generation to pursue their dreams in sports. As he heads to Brussels, the nation is eagerly awaiting his performance, hoping for another golden moment. Neeraj is one of the sports icon with a 'never say die' spirit. Wishing him all the best!

Anansha Godani | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Freedom for all: Breaking gender stereotypes

For decades, Indian households have upheld certain gender roles—men return to a home-cooked meal while women cook after returning home from work

My wife came across a feed on her social media, "Men come back home to a cooked meal; women come home to cook a meal. It is not the women who need freedom; it is the men who should have the freedom." The first half of the statement is something that we observe in almost all Indian households. It was the second part that I could not comprehend till I introspected. I was born in 1959, a few years after India gained independence. I was the firstborn in my generation. During those days, and even now in many parts of the country, young couples are blessed by family and friends to have a male first-born. My mother told me that my paternal aunt went to the terrace to announce my birth to the locality by banging a steel plate with a spoon, "A son is born." I was a cherished and much-loved child, and then an adult.



was not expected to enter the kitchen except to fetch a glass of water, and certainly not for cooking. My mother would insist on reheating the cooked food in case my wife had to go out for some work, till she could not do it any longer due to her medical condition. I was not alone in my generation to receive special treatment.

A friend would be served freshly made bread by his wife, however late he returned from the office, or however tired the lady was after a hectic day spent in the kitchen or running after the children. Almost all my friends from that era were pampered first by their

mothers, aunts, sisters, and even females from the extended family, and then by their wives and daughters. Many of us, from relatively better social milieu, have raised our children to question the age-old customs.

More women are going out for work. Men are also raised to help with household chores. Young couples make efforts to take care of each other. There is no gender bias. A friend's son-in-law loves cooking, especially preparing masala tea. It is almost a ritual for him to prepare tea whenever he and the daughter visit the parents. The maid and a few others were scandalized at this blatant display of deviation from the traditional, till they had tasted the special tea.

The change is slow, and only in certain sections of society. Women in many families are still expected to learn the art of looking after the household, husbands, and children, even after a tiring day at work. They are made to feel guilty for leaving their newborn child at home to resume

work.

Men still do not enter the kitchen, and more often are not permitted to enter the kitchen, even if they have an interest or an inherent desire to help the wife. Men need the freedom to make their choices without being judged by people. They also need the freedom to break the shackles of gender biases. Certain gender-specific roles and responsibilities were assigned based on the requirements of the times. Many of these may no longer be relevant.

It is for us to adapt to changing times, and we can. We have reached where we are because of the ability of humans to change. Welsh writer and critic Stephen Bayley expresses it well, "The assumption must be that those who can see value only in tradition, or versions of it, deny man's ability to adapt to changing circumstances."

(The writer is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator and strategy consultant and conducts workshops on creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

REST IS ESSENTIAL FOR A BALANCED LIFE

True relaxation extends far beyond sleep. It is a must for rejuvenation



RACHNA LAKHPATI

In today's fast-paced world, many individuals believe that rest is limited to getting a good night's sleep. That is completely incorrect. Genuine relaxation is complex. Researchers highlight the importance of six different types of rest in maintaining overall well-being. By embracing each form of rest, individuals can achieve a more balanced and energised life. Our minds are constantly bombarded with information from various sources such as work, social media, and daily responsibilities.

With this ongoing situation, the mind will eventually succumb to fatigue and stress. To find peace of mind, it is important to detach oneself from an overwhelming fixation on the thoughts in one's head. Meditation, deep breathing exercises, or even taking quiet walks are some of the simple practices that can assist in clearing the mind and enhancing cognitive clarity. Taking regular breaks can have a positive impact on your mental well-being, boost your creativity, and improve your ability to make decisions. Additionally, it involves allowing your body sufficient time to recuperate from physical exertion. Naturally, getting sufficient rest is crucial, and it complements well with gentle physical activities, stretching, or even methods to alleviate muscle strain. Physical rest can be achieved through various methods, including sleeping, engaging in yoga exercises, or taking warm baths.

It's important to prioritise injury prevention, muscle recovery, and maintaining energy levels throughout the day. We often overlook a crucial aspect: our emotional boundaries. We strive to ensure the satisfac-



tion of those in our vicinity. Emotional rest involves acknowledging and honestly addressing your emotions. It's important to listen to your body and prioritise self-care when you're feeling exhausted and on the verge of emotional exhaustion. Discussing your thoughts with close friends or a therapist can play a crucial role in finding emotional solace. This type of rest is essential for preventing emotional overwhelm and enables you to genuinely respond to any challenges that come your way. Interacting with others is essential, although it can be quite tiring. Emphasising the importance of quality over quantity, social rest involves stepping away from large gatherings and focussing on personal well-being.

Spending time alone or with a few close friends can help you maintain a strong connection with your true self. This is about creating an environment that encourages solitude or meaningful conversations, rather than the shallow interactions that often occur in crowded places. Finding moments of spiritual rest allows us to re-establish a deep connection with the essence of life and the things that bring us fulfilment. For some individuals, this may have a religious connotation, while for others, it is more focused on nature, meditation, and mindfulness.

Experiencing spiritual rest doesn't always require a specific routine or ritual. It's more about feeling a profound connection to something larger than oneself, which can bring about a profound sense of tranquility and harmony. In our modern society, it is rare for anyone to avoid the overwhelming amount of information and stimuli that bombard us through screens and notifications. Creating a peaceful environment for relaxation includes stepping away from electronic devices, dimming the lights, and enjoying some peace.

Reclaim moments of tranquility to rejuvenate your senses: indulge in a good book, immerse yourself in nature, or bask in the blissful absence of sound. Rest is incredibly important to minimise strain on the eyes, ears, and nervous system. Discovering the harmony among these six forms of rest will enable you to rejuvenate yourself comprehensively, leading a life that is both balanced and satisfying.

(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)

A roadmap for boosting India's agri-export



A S MITTAL

By incorporating cutting-edge food processing technologies and establishing globally recognised quality standards India can push its agri-exports substantially



In a bid to give impetus to strengthen the supply chain from farm to fork, foster collaboration among global and Indian food sector stakeholders, and support food processing units near farm gates to ensure better profits for farmers and reduce post-harvest losses, The Ministry of Food Processing Industries is taking the lead by hosting 'World Food India' from September 19-22 in New Delhi. In addition, the Union Budget for 2024-25 has allocated Rs 1.52 lakh crore to prioritise agricultural sector development. This funding will focus on climate resilience, productivity, innovation, and processed food exports.

This is crucial as agricultural product exports saw an 8% decline to \$48.9 billion in 2023-24 from \$53.2 billion in 2022-23. The average annual growth rate of agri-exports was just 2% during 2014-23. Notably, five products — rice, wheat, meat, spices, sugar and tea/coffee — account for over 50 per cent of total agricultural exports and sometimes face restrictions to match the domestic demands and supplies to control inflation. Only 25 per cent of our agri-exports are processed or value-added, a figure that has remained virtually unchanged over the last decade.

This is significant due to a need for more tech-based operational size and production capacity and for meeting international standards to tap the global market. However, the success of global giants like Nestle (Switzerland), with an annual turnover of \$111 billion in the processed food and beverages sector, shows us what is possible with technology and research. Notable Indian firms in domestic processed agriculture, such as AMUL, with a turnover of \$9 billion, are far behind in operational size, production capacity, and meeting international standards. Still, they can achieve similar success with the proper support and approach.

The Global exports of processed agricultural products are nearing \$1 trillion, with Germany (\$63 billion) at the top, the US (\$58 billion), the Netherlands (\$57 bil-



IN 2020, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED AN AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND OF INR 1 TRILLION TO PROVIDE MEDIUM-TO-LONG-TERM DEBT FINANCING FOR ESTABLISHING COLD CHAINS AND POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AT FARM GATES AND AGGREGATION POINTS

lion), China (\$53 billion), and France (\$50 billion). Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand are also major exporters of processed agricultural products. While, India's value-added exports increased by \$6.5 billion over the last five years since the agro-export policy was introduced to boost value-added agriculture exports, taking the total to \$15 billion, it only marginally improved our global rank from 21 to 17.

This can be surely improved. The Economic Survey 2023-24, reveals that the annual output of fruits and vegetables in India is the world's second-largest at a substantial 300 million tonnes after China, yet the processing levels at 4.5 per cent for fruits, 2.7 per cent for vegetables, 21.1 per cent for milk, 34.2 per cent for meat, and 15.4 per cent for fisheries, compared to 25-30 per cent in China and 60-80 per cent in Western countries.

This deficiency in processing capacity leads to a substantial amount of produce going to waste in India. Estimates of post-harvest losses in the country vary from 18% to 25% across the entire supply chain, though they are thought to be much higher, at up to 45%, for fruit and vegetables. NITI Aayog estimated annual post-harvest losses of close to Rs 90,000 crore. To improve this situation, it is suggested to focus on proper sorting and grading near the farm gate and enhance processing capacity. Incentivizing Farmers: It's crucial to repurpose agricultural incentives to motivate farmers to reduce losses and waste on and near farms.

In 2020, the central government announced an agriculture infrastructure fund of INR 1 trillion to provide medium-to-long-term debt financing for establishing cold chains and post-harvest man-

agement infrastructure at farm gates and aggregation points. Tamil Nadu's recent unveiling of its food processing policy is a promising step toward reducing wastage and increasing the value of farm produce.

The policy encourages Farmer's Producers Organisations (FPOs) and the food processing industry to access financial support from central schemes.

However, it's important to note that Punjab has yet to make a similar move, despite the success of neighbouring states like Haryana with their dedicated Agribusiness and Food Processing Policy. Revisit the PLI Scheme: The Production Linked Incentive Scheme for the Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) will be Rs 10,900 crore (\$1.25 billion) from 2021-22 to 2026-27, precisely to attract large globally competitive firms to produce in and export from India. This scheme aims to expand processing capacity, grow strong Indian brands, increase global market presence, create jobs, and boost farmer incomes. As of May 2024, 90% of the PLISFPI funds still need to be utilised. The government has disbursed only Rs 1,073 crore among 158 SME beneficiaries, using only 10% of the funds over half of the timeline expired.

This underutilisation highlights the need for more focused policy intervention. To achieve the twin objectives of the PLI scheme—global competitiveness and increased exports—these SMEs must form joint ventures with globally established 'anchor' firms. Over the past decade, India has attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worth Rs 50 billion, with 100% FDI being permissible. The Way Forward: Food processing is considered India's sunrise industry and plays a crucial role in the transformation to ben-

efit farmers effectively, a multi-pronged approach combining MSP, value addition and industry integration is essential for agricultural development due to its strategic importance in providing food security.

As the world's most populous country, we exert significant environmental pressure on Earth, resulting in ecological issues such as soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, and water depletion. Within the broader food systems, waste reduction stands out as one of the leading climate change mitigation solutions, contributing to reduced emissions throughout the food supply chain from farm to fork. By incorporating cutting-edge food processing technologies, establishing globally recognized quality standards, and opening up access to international markets, this focused strategy to attract anchor global firms will help achieve our goals. Apple serves as a prime example of the success of this targeted approach in the electronics sector; it manufactures 14 per cent of the world's i-Phones in India. Electronics exports, mainly intelligent mobile phones, have surged from under \$3 billion in 2020 to \$15.6 billion in 2023 and have led to the creation of over one lakh jobs. This same model should be replicated across various industries. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries should roll out a time-bound outreach program to attract anchor global firms and facilitate their partnerships with Farmer's Producers Organisations (FPOs) and SMEs.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council; Views expressed are personal)

Ravenshaw University renaming: A step toward decolonising India's education system

While the move may appear symbolic, it reflects the Govt's broader aim to reclaim India's intellectual heritage by dismantling British-era frameworks

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's proposal to rename Ravenshaw University in Odisha has sparked a much broader discussion about India's educational system. Though the suggestion might seem symbolic on the surface, it indicates a larger governmental intent: reclaiming India's educational heritage and aligning it with Bharat's civilisational knowledge. The renaming is part of a wider effort to challenge the enduring influence of British-established institutions and the colonial educational framework that has shaped the country for over a century. The proposal is not without complexity. While a name change may grab headlines, the true challenge lies in the com-



PADMALOCHAN DASH

prehensive realignment of India's education system—a goal that can only be achieved through the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The success of this shift hinges on integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern educational practices, ensuring that India's rich intellectual heritage takes its rightful place at the core of the system.

Colonial Legacy in India's Education: India's education system continues to carry the imprint of its colonial past. British institutions like Ravenshaw University were not designed to foster intellectual growth or cultural preservation but to serve the Empire's administrative needs. The British created educational institutions to produce clerks and bureaucrats who could operate within the colonial system. Unfortunately, this utilitarian approach to education persisted even after India gained independence. The leaders of the newly formed nation failed to envision an alternative model that could replace the colonial framework with a system aligned with India's civilisational goals. As a result, the Indian educa-

tion system has remained tethered to its colonial roots, prioritizing skills for a global market over intellectual, spiritual, or scientific growth. This narrow focus undermines India's holistic knowledge traditions, reducing them to exercises in skill development rather than the broader pursuit of knowledge and self-reliance. The debate over renaming Ravenshaw University, therefore, becomes symbolic of a larger struggle: breaking free from the colonial mindset that continues to shape India's educational and intellectual landscape. **The British Model: A Tool for Control:** The British education system in India was never intended to develop the intellect or spirit of the Indian people. Instead, it was designed to



produce a workforce literate in English and skilled enough to support the colonial administration. Lord Macaulay's infamous education reforms focused on turning India's vast and diverse traditional knowledge systems into utilitarian skills that could be exploited for colonial profit. As a result, India's once-thriving intellectual and cultural traditions were marginalized, forced into obscurity to serve the needs of the British Empire.

Even decades after independence, the colonial model remains entrenched. India's education system continues to prioritize skill development over fostering creativity, innovation, and intellectual growth. While skill development is undoubtedly important, the singular focus on it raises concerns about the broader vision and purpose of India's educational objectives.

Moving Beyond Skill-Building: To truly break free from its colonial past, India must shift its focus from mere skill-building to fostering holistic individual growth. Education should nurture creativity, intellectual curiosity, and the inherent potential of every individual, paving the way for self-reliance. A system that prioritizes intellectual

vibrancy over skill production will help India reclaim its rightful place as a leader in global thought and innovation. The British colonial mindset has left a lasting impact on Indian society, one that is deeply embedded in the psyche of its educational institutions. The British aimed not only to advance their economic interests but to reshape the very thought processes of the Indian population. Their goal was to replace India's ancient knowledge systems with Western paradigms, thus weakening the cultural and intellectual foundation of the nation. In this context, renaming institutions like Ravenshaw University becomes a step toward decolonizing the Indian mind.

A Forgotten Imperative:

Decolonizing Indian Minds The question arises: has India taken sufficient steps to decolonize its education system? The colonial indoctrination of Indian minds has lasted for generations, and its effects are still visible today. If India is serious about reclaiming its intellectual sovereignty, what concrete steps are being taken to dismantle the remnants of this colonial education system? The ultimate goal should be to create an educational framework that aligns with India's civilisational values and promotes intellectual independence. (The author is an ICSSR-Post Doctoral Fellow, School of National Security Studies, Central University of Gujarat. The views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



SBF keen to set up office in Bengaluru

The Singapore Business Federation (SBF) on Monday expressed interest in setting up its office in Bengaluru during a meeting with Karnataka Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil, officials said. The high-level delegation, led by Praseon Mukherjee, Vice Chairman of SBF, assured the minister that they could create a "Singapore in Bengaluru" if the state government extended its cooperation, they said. The delegation emphasised that SBF has the necessary expertise and investment potential to make this vision a reality, officials said. Responding positively to the SBF leaders' proposal, Patil said that the government would provide all the required infrastructure, including land, water, power, and connectivity. "We will stay in continuous touch with SBF to facilitate their investment in the state," he said. The minister also invited the entrepreneurs associated with SBF to participate in Karnataka's flagship event, 'Global Investors Meet', scheduled to be held from February 12-14, 2025.



Raft Cosmic EV to Invest Rs 50 crore in Bengal

Raft Cosmic EV, a subsidiary of a Kolkata-based group, plans to invest Rs 50 crore to establish a new manufacturing plant for electric scooters at Domjur in West Bengal's Howrah district with an annual capacity of 12,000 two-wheelers. The Kolkata-based Cosmic Birla Group, which previously focused on manufacturing components for electric two-wheelers, entered the complete electric e-scooters segment in 2023 by acquiring Raft Motors in Maharashtra for Rs 40 crore. "While we are currently selling e-scooters from our Maharashtra plant acquired in 2023, our new EV plant in Domjur will be operational by October," said Aditya Vikram Birla, Chairman and Managing Director of the Cosmic Birla Group. "The new plant will feature two manufacturing lines with a combined capacity of 12,000 e-bikes per year," he said.



Oben Electric plans to launch 4 new models

Bengaluru-based electric bike maker Oben Electric is looking to launch four new e-two-wheeler models over the next six months to cater to the diverse customers' needs as well as tap more than two-thirds of the electric motorcycle market that remains untapped. The models will be launched at different price points, ranging between Rs 60,000 and Rs 1,50,000, the company said on Monday. This strategic move is aimed at offering affordable, high-performance EV solutions tailored to diverse consumer preferences across segments, the company said. "Oben Electric is gearing up for its next phase of growth. As part of this, the company plans to launch four new electric two-wheelers over the next six months, with prices starting as low as Rs 60,000 and going up to Rs 1,50,000," the two-wheeler maker said. With the electric vehicle market primed for rapid expansion, Oben Electric aims to tap into the significant potential of the two-wheeler sector, catering to an untapped 70 per cent of the motorcycle market, it said.

GOYAL TO AUTO COMPONENT MAKERS

Boost production, cut imports, target \$100 bn exports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday asked Indian auto component makers to explore ways to cut reliance on imports and boost local manufacturing to make the country a net exporter of these products.

The minister also urged these companies to target USD 100 billion in exports by 2030. Addressing the auto component industry here, he expressed his concern over the continued reliance on foreign suppliers and encouraged domestic manufacturers to enhance local production capabilities.

"Many of our component manufacturers still import, I do not know whether (due to) any compulsion or voluntarily, their needs of inputs from Korea, Japan, Taiwan and one of the neighbours."

"I do not understand why even two or three levels down, we cannot plan to become indigenous suppliers and man-



ufacturers so that we can then start supplying those components to other countries," Goyal said.

With the huge Indian market and global opportunities, the industry can increase the exports to USD 100 billion by 2030 from USD 21.5 billion at present, he added.

The minister added that the government is developing 20 smart industrial cities with the complete ecosystem that an industry requires and the component sector can explore opportunities in these indus-

trial townships.

The auto component makers can take a full township and develop it to suit "yourself and your collaborators", he added.

"I would urge some of you to examine and see if you want me to dedicate one or two (of the townships) to your industry, I am happy to do that. I have offered it to Singapore, for example, that we (India) will create a Singapore for you in India. We can have restaurants, hotels, schools and colleges for them (in the city)," he

said.

Further, talking about free trade agreements, Goyal said in so many FTA discussions and negotiations, the commerce ministry has to struggle with the Indian industry to try and get them on board, to try and make them understand the benefits of these pacts and open markets.

These agreements also benefit Indian industry as the pacts bring modern technologies, and improve efficiencies.

"But very often many sectors are not able to understand that easily, some did not understand ever, but I must acknowledge that the auto component manufacturer is one sector that has been really bold when it comes to world competition from anywhere in the world and has been proactive in all FTA negotiations," he noted.

He also asked the auto sector to formulate a roadmap to reach on top from the third-largest auto market in the world at present.

India fine tuning FTAs to suit domestic industry: Prasada

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is revising FTAs with South Korea, Malaysia and various other ASEAN countries to benefit the domestic industries, Union Minister of State for Ministry of Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said on Monday.

At the 64th annual session of ACMA (Automotive Component Manufacturers Association) here, he noted that the free trade agreements (FTAs) with the UK and the European Union are being spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"It will play a great role for the auto components industry," the minister said. He further said: "We are also revising and reworking our FTAs with Korea, with Malaysia, with ASEAN countries, which will be fine-tuned to the demands of our industry."

Gold slumps Rs 700; silver plummets Rs 2,000

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices slumped Rs 700 to Rs 73,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid a decline in precious metal rates in the global markets.

The yellow metal had closed at Rs 74,200 per 10 grams in the previous close on Friday.

Tracking gold, silver prices also plummeted Rs 2,000 to Rs 83,800 per kilogram on Monday on subdued off-take from industrial units and coin makers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

In the previous session, the silver metal had finished at Rs 85,800 per kg. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also plunged Rs 500 to Rs 73,350 per 10 grams from Rs 73,850 in the previous close.

Domestically, traders attributed the decrease in prices of the yellow metal to lacklustre demand from local jewellers amid weak trend overseas. Globally, Comex gold is trading at 0.07 per cent lower at USD 2,522.90 per ounce.

"Gold moved lower on Monday as mixed US jobs data increased doubts about the size of the Federal Reserve's upcoming interest rate cuts," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities, at HDFC Securities, said.

According to Manav Modi, Senior Analyst, Commodity Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, gold price eased towards the end of last week, retreating from a record level after a mixed jobs data and comments from a few Fed officials casting doubts on an interest rate cut in the next meeting.

India needs Rs 30 lakh cr investment for 500 GW renewables

PNS ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union New & Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said as much as Rs 30 lakh crore is required to meet the target of 500 GW by 2030.

He also announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 4th RE-INVEST 2024, a global summit for renewables.

The fourth edition of the Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST) 2024 is scheduled from September 16 to 18 at Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre in Gandhinagar, Joshi told reporters in a curtain raiser press conference here.

He said that India requires Rs 30 lakh crore investment to meet the ambitious target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030.

Earlier three RE-INVEST conferences were organised, including one in virtual mode and two in Delhi, he added.

This is the first RE-INVEST to be held in

Gujarat.

"We thought that Gujarat is the right place to organise the conference to achieve the 500 GW renewable energy target by 2030," he said, citing the example of Vibrant Gujarat.

He also informed that India presently has 203GW of renewable energy capacity.

The minister stated that there will be a session on startups.

The 4th edition of RE-INVEST will explore the future of renewable energy by delving into key trends, emerging technologies, and policy frameworks that are shaping the global renewable energy landscape.

This prestigious event will feature approximately 40 sessions, including a Chief Ministerial Plenary, a CEO Roundtable and technical sessions.

RE-Invest is recognised globally as a leading platform for bringing together key stakeholders in the renewable energy sector, including government officials, industry leaders, investors, researchers and policymakers.



UAE's Adnoc to supply LNG to IOC for 15 years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) will supply one million tonne per annum of liquefied natural gas to Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) - the third LNG supply deal signed with the UAE firm, the company said Monday.

Adnoc will supply 1 million tonne of LNG from its Ruwais NG project for 15 years, the Abu Dhabi media office said.

This is the third LNG supply deal between Adnoc and Indian state-owned firms in just over a year. In July last year, Adnoc Gas signed an agreement with IOC for export of up to 1.2 million tonne per annum of LNG "valued in the range of USD 7 billion to USD 9 billion over its 14-year term".



Separately, state-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd signed a deal with Adnoc Gas to buy 0.5 million tonne of LNG annually for 10 years starting 2026.

The latest LNG supply deal was signed during the visit of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India.

Long-term LNG contracts play an important role in bal-

ancing out the inherent volatility of the spot LNG market and thus make it an affordable and reliable LNG supply.

Adnoc Gas is the national oil and gas company of the Abu Dhabi government and is the oldest supplier of natural gas from the Middle East.

Adnoc also signed an agreement with Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves (ISPRL) for exploring the UAE firm's participation in additional opportunities for crude storage in India and the renewal of their storage and management agreement on mutually acceptable terms and conditions.

This MoU builds on Adnoc's existing involvement in crude storage at the Mangalore Cavern of ISPRL since 2018.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The civil aviation ministry is looking at the issues being faced by SpiceJet and address them as the efforts are aimed at having a balance that will allow operations of more airlines amid the high demand in the Indian market, Union minister K Rammoohan Naidu said on Monday.

The airline is grappling with multiple issues, including financial and legal woes. On August 29, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) decided to place cri-



sis-hit SpiceJet under enhanced surveillance that will entail increased spot checks and night surveillance to ensure the safety of the airline's operations. "We are looking at SpiceJet... with the demand we have, we need more airlines to operate. So we are trying to have a balance and address the

problems and (ensure the) airline runs properly," the minister said. He was responding to a question about concerns regarding the budget carrier.

To a query about air ticket prices, the minister said fares are market-driven and it is being monitored by the ministry. In case there is a steep rise in airfares, then the ministry will make suggestions to the airlines.

He was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a conference organised by industry Ficci in the national capital.

Govt notifies deal threshold value under competition law

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Monday notified the provisions related to the deal value threshold under the competition law, wherein companies will be compulsorily required to seek the Competition Commission's approval for mergers and acquisitions beyond certain thresholds.

Besides, the clearance of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) will be needed if the target company has substantial business operations in India, according to notifications issued by the corporate affairs ministry.

The latest move will help the fair trade regulator to keep tab on mergers and acquisitions. Vaibhav Choukse, Partner, Competition Law at JSA, said introduction of an additional deal value criterion for assessing whether an M&A deal requires mandatory approval from CCI.

Cement industry to witness further consolidation: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian cement industry, which is witnessing aggressive acquisitions by two of its leading players - Adani group's Ambuja Cement and Aditya Birla's UltraTech, will have further consolidation in the near-to-medium term, according to a report.

In the report, rating agency Ind-Ra said that the aggressive medium-term capacity targets of leading players are unlikely to be fully achieved organically and the industry is likely to witness an increase in the competitive intensity.

This will also lead to some pricing pressure due to which the gap between leading and small players could continue to widen given the wider presence and better cost efficiencies for large players, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said.

"Ind-Ra expects the cement

sector to witness further consolidation in the near-to-medium term, given the aggressive medium-term capacity targets of leading players that are unlikely to be fully achieved organically," the report said.

The rating agency said it also expects demand to pick up in the second half of FY 2024-25 and would have an overall volume growth of 5-7 per cent for the fiscal.

The growth would be led by a continued infrastructure push by the government in the Budget where it announced a

Capex (capital expenditure) of Rs 11 lakh crore and growing housing demand, supported by a recovery from the rural market, better monsoon and moderating inflation. Moreover, the cement companies would also witness an expansion of margins helped by the benign input costs cushion in H2 (October-March), it said.

ADANI IN 2028, AMBANI IN 2033: REPORT

Elon Musk may be world's first trillionaire by 2027

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Elon Musk, the charismatic CEO of electric car maker Tesla and rocket manufacturer SpaceX, may become the world's first trillionaire by 2027, while Indian tycoon Gautam Adani may attain that status in the following year, and Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani may do so in 2033, according to an Informa Connect Academy report.

For Musk, the richest in the world with USD 237 billion net worth, to become the world's first trillionaire needs to grow at an average annual growth rate of 110 per cent, the report said.

Adani, who is ranked 13th



on the world billionaire index with a wealth of just under USD 100 billion, may become the second trillionaire (net worth equal to at least one trillion US dollars) if his ports-to-power conglomerate was to continue growing at the current 123 per cent average annual rate, it

added. Rival Ambani, now ranked Asia's richest with a net worth of USD 111 billion, may achieve the same status in 2033, according to the report.

His oil-to-telecom-and-retail conglomerate is slated to hit trillion-dollar market cap sta-

tus in 2035. Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd is the only Indian company projected to hit that mark.

The companies that will hit the trillion-dollar market cap mark include Taiwan's semiconductor maker TSMC, which has a market cap of USD 893.7 billion now and is expected to achieve that status in 2025.

It will be closely followed by Berkshire Hathaway, pharmaceutical Eli Lilly, technology company Broadcom and electric automobile firm Tesla.

The report said, "No one in the world has claimed trillionaire status - at least not yet. However, there are some likely candidates. The following are

multi-billionaires who will probably become trillionaires sooner or later".

After Elon Musk and Gautam Adani, NVIDIA founder Jensen Huang, Indonesian mogul Prajogo Pangestu, French businessman Bernard Arnault, and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg come next as prospective trillionaires.

Currently, there are only a handful of companies that have crossed the USD 1 trillion in valuation. This includes Microsoft, Nvidia, Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Saudi Aramco, and Meta. The most recent case is that of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway in late August.



AKSHAY, PRIYADARSHAN'S HORROR COMEDY TITLED BHOOTH BANGLA

Akshay Kumar and Priyadarshan are teaming up again after a gap of 14 years since their last movie, *Khatta Meetha* (2010). The exciting announcement was made on Monday, Akshay's 57th birthday. Akshay's initial appearance in *Bhooth Bangla* was revealed in a moving image promoting the film, showcasing him and a mysterious black cat in front of a seemingly spooky mansion. Surprisingly, it was not the cat but Akshay who consumed milk from a bowl.

In his caption on Instagram, the actor wrote about the film that's backed by Ektaa R Kapoor, "Thank you for your love on my birthday, year after year! Celebrating this year with the first look of *Bhooth Bangla*! I'm beyond excited to join forces with Priyadarshan again after 14 years. This dream collaboration has been a long time coming... can't wait to share this incredible journey with you all. Stay tuned for the magic!"

Priyadarshan and Akshay, known for iconic films such as *Hera Pheri*, *Garam Masala*, *Bhagam Bhag*, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* and *De Dana Dan*, are now preparing for *Bhooth Bangla*, a horror-comedy slated for release in 2025, with filming about to commence. Little information is currently available about the upcoming horror comedy, but it is anticipated to incorporate elements of black magic.

Lisa makes her debut as composer on Call Me Bae

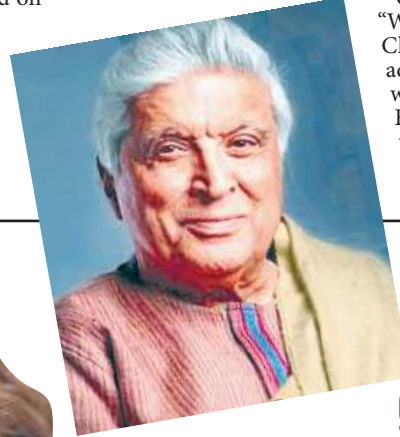
In a delightful turn of events, Lisa Mishra, known for her melodious voice and chart-topping hits, made her acting debut in the series *Call Me Bae*. Adding a special touch to this milestone, Lisa will also lend her voice to two songs and also be marking her debut as a composer in the series, making it a double celebration for the versatile artist. The makers of *Call Me Bae* were quick to recognise Lisa's dual talents, leading them to incorporate her singing into the series. Given her established career as a musician, they felt it was only fitting to have her voice featured in the show as a tribute to her musical journey. The decision to include songs sung by Lisa not only enhances the series' appeal but also serves as a unique souvenir, marking her crossover from music to acting. Her first song with *Ruuh and Joh*, titled *Yaara Tere Bin*, was released this week. Lisa Mishra expressed her excitement, saying, "*Call Me Bae* is a dream project for me, not just because it marks my acting debut but also because I got to sing for it. It's rare to find such an opportunity where you can showcase both your passions in one project. I'm grateful to the makers for believing in my talent and allowing me to be a part of this journey in such a special way. This is my debut as a composer, making it even more special and my song with *Ruuh and Joh* has been extra special. The first song is currently out and to see the response to it has been special".



Ashley Tisdale welcomes her second child

Ashley Tisdale and her spouse Christopher French had a second child, who is a baby girl. The actress shared the positive update on Sunday via a post on social media. Ashley posted a black-and-white close-up photo showing herself, husband Christopher French and their 3-year-old daughter, Jupiter, holding hands with their newborn. In a post, Tisdale shared that their new baby girl, Emerson Clover French, arrived on Friday, September 6. "Emerson Clover French, all

three of us are obsessed with you. She landed 9.6.24," the actress captioned the post. Ashley Tisdale announced her second pregnancy in March of this year. She posted a picture on Instagram wearing a white button-down shirt that was unbuttoned to show her pregnant belly. The accompanying pictures showed Ashley Tisdale with Christopher French and their three-year-old daughter, Jupiter. Captioning the photo, Ashley wrote, "We can't wait to meet you." Christopher French also shared an adorable post where he thanked his wife Ashley Tisdale "another baby French." In response, Ashley affectionately commented, "I love you. Juju is just too cute; we had to have another."



'Madhuri & Sridevi didn't get strong roles, unlike Madhubala or Nargis'

Javed Akhtar believes that Madhuri Dixit and the late Sridevi are just as talented as veteran actresses Nargis or Nutan. During a conversation, the experienced songwriter and scriptwriter discussed the influence of the evolving hero portrayal on storytelling in movies. He also mentioned that actresses like Madhuri Dixit and Sridevi did not receive roles as impactful as the late iconic actresses Meena Kumari or Nargis did. Javed, who has been busy promoting his new docuseries *Angry Young Men*, said, "Look at these girls, Madhuri and Sridevi. They were not less talented than Meena Kumari, Nargis and Madhubala. Sorry. They were as talented as these great actresses. But did they get a good role in their whole career? Larger-than-life Meena Kumari had *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* (1962) and *Pakeezah* (1972); Nargis had *Mother India* (1957); Nutan had *Bandini* (1963) and *Sujata* (1959)." Javed reflected about how in the Golden Age of Hindi cinema, female characters had equal importance to male characters and were given complex roles, which changed in later years for female actors. He further said, "Which memorable role did filmmakers offer Sridevi or Madhuri? Not because they were against Sridevi or Madhuri, you did not have great roles. And great roles were not given, as when Meena Kumari was around, the 1962 film *Main Chup Rahungi* was the virtue. Now *Main Chup Rahungi* is not the virtue. Then what is the virtue? People are not clear. When in the 70s, a young man stood up against the establishment that was the virtue. Is it a virtue today to go to jail? You don't know, you will find that kind of attitude suicidal."

Mariah Carey is 'back at work'

Mariah Carey has returned to work after losing her mother and sister recently. The singer, aged 55, posted a video on Instagram on Sunday, showing herself practicing for her upcoming performances in China and Brazil. In the video, Carey sang a slow rendition of her song *It's Like That* from 2005 and then informed her followers that she would meet them in the Asian nation mentioned earlier. She captioned the post by stating that she was "back at work" and thanked fans for their valuable support during a challenging period. "It's been a couple of rough weeks, but I appreciate everyone's love and support so much, and I can't wait to see my fans in China and Brazil," she wrote, before signing off the message with "Love you!" alongside three red heart emojis. Carey verified on August 27 that her mother, Patricia and sister, Alison, had passed away. She informed the publication that she lost two family members over the weekend.



GIUSEPPE TORNATORE ANNOUNCES MAIDEN VISIT TO INDIA

The Film Heritage Foundation, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Mumbai, Axis Bank and Education Partner IED Istituto Europeo di Design are proud to present a first-of-its-kind Italian film festival titled *Cinema Italian Style: Celebrating Tornatore and the Masters of Italian Cinema*.

The cultural extravaganza will be conducted from September 27-29, 2024, in Mumbai at Regal Cinema. The 68-year-old cinema legend will present the FHF Lifetime Achievement Award for Cinema Projection and will not only helm an interactive masterclass for budding film students but also deliver an

exclusive sit-down fireside chat for film aficionados and the Indian film fraternity. To celebrate Giuseppe Tornatore's inaugural visit to India, the festival will include a mini-Tornatore retrospective and will include screenings of his cult classics such as *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), *Malèna* (2000).

The three-day festival programme is a cinephile's feast that will showcase restored films of great Italian masters, including Luchino Visconti's *Senso* (1954), Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), Vittorio de Sica's *Marriage Italian Style* (1964) and Sergio Leone's *Once Upon A Time in America* (1984).

Meanwhile, Giuseppe Tornatore states, "I am so happy to be coming to India for the first time. I have known about the amazing work of the Film Heritage Foundation in preserving and restoring India's cinematic heritage and I am so pleased," a festival of Italian film heritage in Mumbai that will include

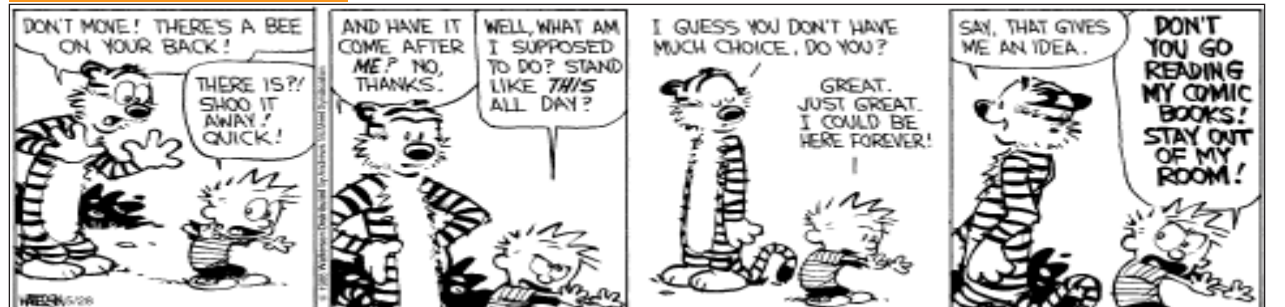
some of my films. I was delighted to hear that my film *Cinema Paradiso* is known and loved in India and I am honoured that my films will be presented alongside the films of great Italian masters like Vittorio de Sica, Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini and Sergei Leone."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



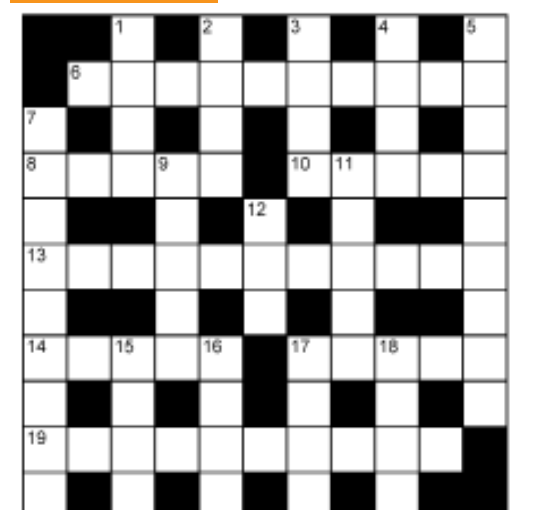
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- 6 Speed up
- 8 Elephant tusk material
- 10 Leather belt
- 13 Performer
- 14 Keep your money in this
- 17 Large group of singers
- 19 Avalanches

DOWN

- 11 The upper part of your leg
- 12 Pig pen
- 15 Ladder step
- 16 Compass direction
- 17 Small bed for a baby
- 18 Finished



Vijayawada

the pioneer

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Tuesday
September 10, 2024

Reviving melodies of the south with Agam

Renowned for their dynamic shows and heartfelt interpretations, Agam's music seamlessly combines the depth of Carnatic heritage with the vitality and passion for music. The lead vocalist of the band, Harish Sivaramakrishnan, speaks to *The Pioneer* about their music and being an inspiration to many budding musicians



(rhythm guitar) and Yadhunandan (drummer).

The band is influenced by both traditional Carnatic music and progressive rock groups like Dream Theater. The design of their logo is influenced by the traditional art form Theyyam from North Kerala. The band takes its name from the Malayalam/Tamil term 'Agam' which refers to the 'heart, soul, or inner soul'.

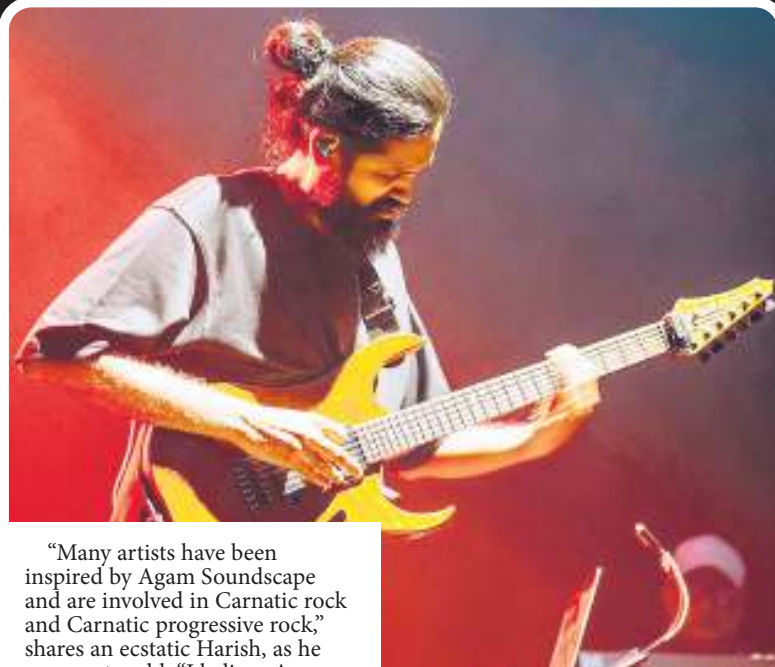
Agam is all set to mesmerise its Hyderabad audience on September 21 at Odeum by Prism. Led by Harish Sivaramakrishnan, the vocalist speaks to *The Pioneer* in an exclusive chat as we discuss the troupe, their music and a lot more.

Since its inception 17 years ago, the Indian music independence scene has significantly expanded and improved, with an increasing number of artists joining the same.

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

A amalgamating the sounds of Carnatic music with progressive rock, the Agam band has created a niche for themselves, so much so that their music is very much beyond labels and still enjoys a great fanbase.

The band, which was formed in 2003, comprises Harish Sivaramakrishnan (vocals), Swamy Seetharaman (keyboards and lyricist), T Praveen Kumar (lead guitar), Aditya Kasyap (bass guitar and backing vocals), Sivakumar Nagarajan (ethnic percussions), Jagadish Natarajan



"Many artists have been inspired by Agam Soundscape and are involved in Carnatic rock and Carnatic progressive rock," shares an ecstatic Harish, as he goes on to add, "I believe Agam complements this scenery perfectly, blending tradition with a modern twist, which is adored by audiences. And I think this is a space that we will continue to explore and expand."

Rangapura Vihaara, Dhanashree Thillana, Swans of Saraswati, Koothu over Coffee, Malhar Jam, Saagara Shayana Vibho and Rudra, among other mesmerising songs, are to their credit. Agam has gained popularity nationwide among music enthusiasts for its distinctive mix of metal, Carnatic classical and progressive rock genres.

The band members have known each other for longer than they have known Agam. "We're friends first and that comes through in our music as well as live performances. Many of us are also dualists, where we have a full-time job as well as a music

career. So you will find us doing many things apart from our work and Agam."

How if you wondered? Harish is an evangelist for design that moves the world forward. Aditya and Swamy, in their leisure time, advise many companies and start-ups on how they can grow faster and Jagadish records for Tamil movies.

Giving us an exclusive revelation, the lead vocalist shares, "We are super excited about our third studio album. We are in the process of recording, mixing and mastering it. This is going to be the Agam you know and also the Agam you are not aware of. We want to push the boundaries and this one's going to be super exciting. So watch out for the 3rd album from us this year."

Many fans first discovered Agam through their perfor-

mance of the now-iconic track *Malhar Jam* on *Coke Studio*. Harish considers how instrumental the platform was for Agam's early career. *Coke Studio* provided them with an excellent advantage from the beginning. The band participated in the second season, which provided them with the opportunity to connect with viewers across India. For artists like Agam who work independently, it was difficult to promote their music, making *Coke Studio's* platform very important.

"A big thumbs up to musicians who look up to us and want to pursue a music career," shares Harish with great regards. "A lot of us in the band have a full-time job and also play and compose and *Aaragam*. We actively also advocate and are evangelists for people who think that they can be dualists in life where they have a stereotypical career and also a career in music. Whatever your view or passion is, completely go for it and take inspiration from us. We're with you!"

Harish believes that Agam as a band, "Our job is to make each live performance super engaging for the audience. They are there to listen to the songs they love and also take back a piece of Carnatic music with them. Our preparation is intense for these shows, where we think through what facet of Carnatic music we want the audience to learn, explore and join us with. We prepare for that before each live show where we think through either a new raagam or a new set of things that the audience can sing with us. Therefore, it is something that we give a lot of time to in the journey of making Carnatic music accessible simple and, you know, more contemporary for our audiences."



COOKING UP CHANGE

PNS/HYDERABAD

With a career spanning over five decades, Chef Davinder Kumar has become a prominent figure in the Indian culinary world, seamlessly blending respect for tradition with innovative approaches to cooking. As President of the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF), he has played a crucial role in nurturing emerging chefs and elevating Indian cuisine on the global stage. His transition from a commerce student to one of India's most esteemed chefs reflects his relentless drive, creativity and steadfast dedication to his craft. Currently serving as Vice President of F&B and Executive Chef at Hotel Le Meridien, Chef Kumar founded the annual Chef Awards more than two decades ago. As he prepares for the 21st Chef Awards, scheduled for October 17, 2024, he reflects on the origins of this prestigious event. When Chef Kumar launched the awards, his objective was clear: to honour culinary excellence and highlight India's exceptional homegrown talent.

Chef Davinder explains, "The whole objective of introducing these awards is to recognise the talent and skills of participants and to honour chefs for their contribution to hospitality. We aim to honour chefs by creating a platform where they can showcase their knowledge, skills and unique styles and be rewarded based on a

As the 21st Chef Awards approach this October, Chef Davinder Kumar, President of the Indian Culinary Forum and the driving force behind the event, speaks to *The Pioneer* about the awards' evolution, current culinary trends and the pivotal role of sustainability in the kitchen

strict and transparent set of criteria. That's why our awards are designed to be straightforward and merit-based. We don't hand out awards lightly—our process is rigorous, ensuring that only those who truly excel are recognised. These awards are by chefs, for chefs, reflecting the high standards of our industry."

Since their inception in 2004, the Chef

Awards have seen significant growth in recognition, acceptance and participation. "We have continuously evolved the awards over the years," Kumar notes. "Initially, the focus was solely on recognising chefs, but in 2012, we introduced the Knowledge Summit to emphasise education. I believe the enduring success of these awards over 21 years speaks volumes about their significance and impact on the industry."

Transitioning from studying commerce to becoming a leading chef, especially in a time when foreign chefs largely dominated Indian kitchens, posed considerable challenges. When asked about these hurdles, Kumar reflects, "One major challenge was the lack of societal recognition for this profession. It wasn't widely seen as a legitimate career path. Another challenge was acquiring professional skills from seasoned masters. These mentors, although highly skilled, often lacked formal education and were quite protective of their craft, making the learning process challenging." This scarcity of local expertise motivated him to travel abroad, specifically to France, to master the art of French cooking.

Today, Indian cuisine has moved from the periphery of global gastronomy into the heart of the culinary mainstream. No longer defined solely by its hallmark curries, biryanis, or tandoori staples, the vibrant and diverse flavours of India are now recognised as a treasure trove of inspiration for chefs worldwide. Kumar, a Golden Hat Award recipient, highlights current trends: "There is a growing appreciation for traditional and lesser-known regional cuisines,

such as those from Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, which are finally receiving the attention they deserve."

In recent years, technology has also had a profound impact on the culinary world and with the rise of AI, its influence is expected to reshape the future of cooking in unprecedented ways. Chef Kumar is keenly aware of this evolution, observing how modern kitchens are becoming more reliant on technological advancements to streamline processes, enhance precision and maintain consistency.

The 12th Knowledge Summit, held alongside the Chef Awards, will focus on "Culinarians in the AI Era—Tiptoeing the Fine Line." Chef Kumar sheds light on this evolving topic: "For instance, AI tools like ChatGPT can now compose recipes tailored to specific dietary needs, such as for diabetic patients, by utilising vast data sets on ingredients and nutrition. Additionally, AI has the potential to revolutionise kitchen management by optimising workflows, reducing food wastage and enhancing the overall dining experience."

Additionally, Chef Davinder Kumar has always been passionate about minimising food waste, especially focusing on the often-overlooked scraps generated during food preparation. In his book, *Second Meals*, he has shared recipes that use vegetable scraps, promoting sustainable and creative cooking. Excited, we ask him, "How do you incorporate sustainability into your day-to-day cooking practices and what changes would you like to see in the industry regarding waste reduction?"

He responds, "Having been in the industry for so many years, we've refined food to such an extent—there's been so much innovation, so much creativity. But over the years, we've often overlooked the issue of food waste. It's something I'm quite passionate about. On one hand, we see the sheer volume of food waste and on the other, we see hunger—an urgent, persistent issue that requires our attention. As chefs, we are in a unique position to make an impact and I thought, Why not contribute in a meaningful way?"

Chef Kumar started noticing that a lot of what we consider "food scraps" are full of nutrition. Take beans and seeds, for example—the germ, the stalks. Let's look at a pear. You peel it, discard the skin and often throw away the core. But these so-called scraps are highly nutritious. Yet we continue to discard them.

"Cooking with scraps can turn waste into culinary treasures. For instance, a chutney made from coriander roots, which would normally be discarded, can surprise with its depth of flavour. Similarly, those same roots can be transformed into vibrant pesto. Even peels, often overlooked, can serve a purpose—detox water infused with mint and coriander roots or orange peels adds a refreshing, nutrient-packed twist. Instead of tossing these kitchen scraps, they can become key ingredients in dishes that are both sustainable and delicious," shares Chef Kumar.

Kumar, who has travelled extensively, underscores the importance of travel for chefs: "Travel exposes chefs to diverse culinary traditions, techniques and ingredients, offering inspiration and broadening their palates." Describing his visit to Kashmir, he shares, "Encountering traditional dishes like the aromatic *Kashmiri Pulao* and the creamy *Gushtaba* offered profound insights into Kashmiri cooking, showcasing India's diverse and rich culinary experiences."

'We've challenged misconceptions that sci-fi doesn't work in India'

Guneet Monga Kapoor, the acclaimed producer known for her groundbreaking work in Indian cinema, has once again pushed the boundaries with ZEE5's original series *Gyaarah Gyaarah*. As a visionary who brought home an Oscar for *The Elephant Whisperers*, Guneet's foray into the sci-fi genre marks a significant milestone in her illustrious career.

The show, an intense crime-investigation series that skillfully weaves together elements of the past, present and future, has captivated audiences, pushing the boundaries of Indian entertainment. With over 50 crore+ watch minutes, *Gyaarah Gyaarah* has claimed the top spot on ZEE5 and proved that Indian audiences are ready to embrace complex, time-bending stories.



When asked about the challenges of tackling sci-fi genre in *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, Guneet Monga Kapoor shared, "Making a sci-fi and playing with past, present and future has been one of the most interesting concepts to explore in cinema. However, to make it resonate with mass audiences in India was a huge challenge. It was the brilliance of director Umesh Bist, along with writers Puja Banerjee and Sujoy Shekhar, that brought this vision to life. Even when we were making *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, I used to be so excited about the cliffhangers at the end of each episode and I would eagerly anticipate the twists and turns. The meticulous editing, masterful direction, and stellar performances have culminated in a project that we're immensely proud of—truly a feather in our cap."

She further emphasised the significance of the show's success, stating, "There's long been a misconception that sci-fi doesn't resonate with Indian audiences. While *Mr India* broke ground years ago, for *Gyaarah Gyaarah* to achieve such widespread acclaim is a monumental achievement."

Set in Uttarakhnd, *Gyaarah Gyaarah* spans three timelines: 1990, 2001 and 2016. The series follows Yug Arya, a 2016 police inspector who connects with Shaurya Anthwal from the 1990s through a mysterious walkie-talkie at 11:11 PM nightly. Together, they solve cold cases across decades, creating a gripping experience brought to life by stellar performances from Raghav Juyal, Kritika Kamra and Dhairya Karwa.

India beating Australia in last two Test tours Down Under has made rivalry more intense: Khawaja

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India beating Australia in the last two Test series in the latter's backyard has made the rivalry between the two teams more intense, feels senior batter Usman Khawaja ahead of the five-match battle beginning November 22.

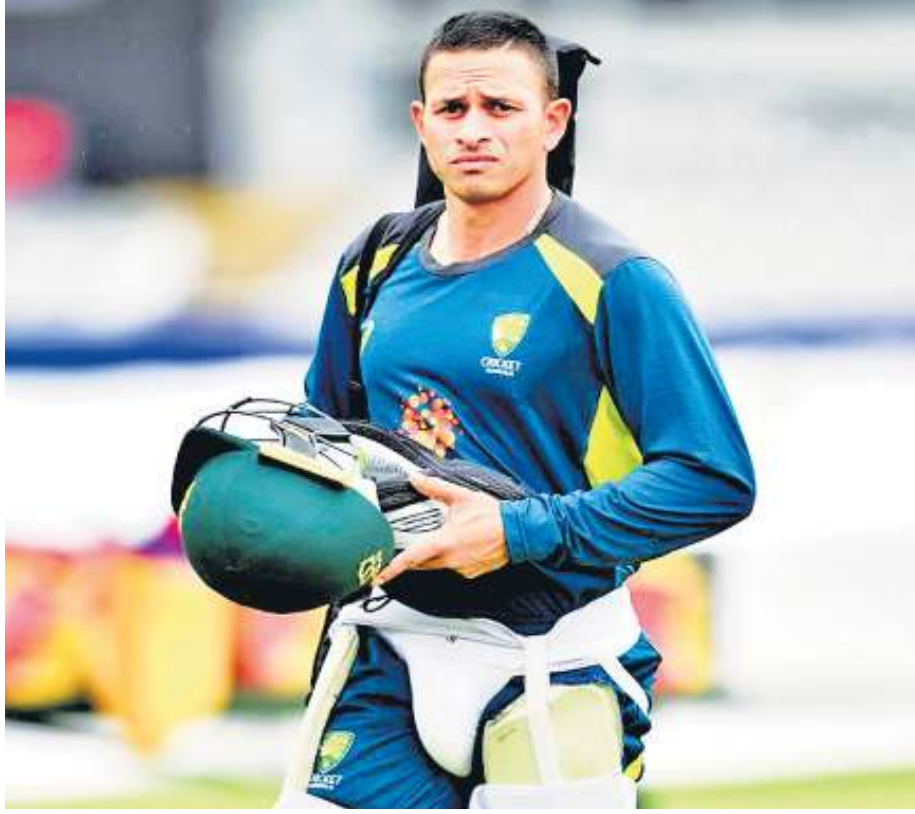
India had beaten Australia on their last two tours of Australia (2018-19 and 2020-21) with an identical 2-1 margin.

In fact, India have won all the last four series of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, taking into account their home wins in 2016-17 and 2022-23 -- both also 2-1 results in a four-match contest.

"For Indians it's always been the case to beat Australia. And more recently, you know, since the rise of India and IPL and everything else that happened, it's the same way with Australia against India," Khawaja said.

"And particularly since India's beaten Australia in Australia the last two times they've come out of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. It just means a little bit more," he told Star Sports.

The 37-year-old left-handed opener said that the rivalry between the two teams is huge. "We're world number one, world number two teams really over the last two years. We were there at the last World Test Championship together.



The rivalry has always been huge," said Khawaja who has 5451 runs from 71 Tests after making debut in 2011. "I take it as a sign of respect and I know it that Indians love beating Australia in any sort of form of cricket. And the

tradition that Australia has had over so many years as being one of the dominating teams in world cricket has staked that reputation."

The first Test begins in Perth on November 22 while fifth and the last will be played in

Sydney from January 3.

Another senior player Mitchell Marsh talked about "great friendships" complementing intense rivalry with Indian players.

"If you look at recent history, we've won stuff, they've won

stuff. And I think that when it's back and forth like that, it builds that rivalry within yourselves. There's great friendships in the Indian team with our team, so there's no hatred. But it's a great on field rivalry, both teams want to win.

"And Australia versus India, it's another opportunity to grow the game of cricket. Not that cricket needs growing in India, but worldwide. People tune into these big series," said all-rounder Marsh, who has been vice-captain of the team and currently skipper of the T20 side.

Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood admitted that it's always a great challenge playing against India, especially since they are so used to the conditions Down Under.

"Their top order, no matter who's playing, is unbelievable, their top six or seven. I played them in my debut series, obviously, and we got the win, that might have been the last time. A lot of the same players are still playing, I think I got Virat that game.

"So a lot of our players, I guess, haven't beaten India in a Test series. The guys were playing, such as Travis Head, Cameron Green, guys like that. So, yeah, huge summer for us coming up and hopefully get that trophy back."



Pant on course to become all-time great in Tests

Needs to improve in shorter formats: Ganguly

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Former India captain Sourav Pant is on course to become an all-time great in Test cricket but at the same time, the southpaw needs to raise his game in the shorter formats.

Pant on Sunday returned to the Test side for the first time since his life-threatening car accident in December 2022. He is expected to start the first Test against Bangladesh beginning in Chennai on September 19.

Since his return earlier this year following the accident, Pant has played T20s and ODIs and has done well.

"I consider Rishabh Pant one of India's best Test batsmen. I'm not surprised that he's back in the side, and he will continue to play for India in Tests," Ganguly said at a promotional event here.

"He will be an all-time great in Tests if he keeps performing like this. For me, he needs to get better in the shorter formats. With the talent he has, I'm sure with time, he will become one of the best."

Indian selectors have opted to give Mohammed Shami more time to recover from an ankle surgery and have named uncapped left-arm pacer Yash Dayal and Akash Deep in the squad. Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj are the two frontline pacers.

"I know Mohammed Shami is missing because of injury, but he will be back very soon since India is going to Australia. It's still a very good attack," Ganguly said.

"In India, you will see a lot more spin. In Chennai, you will see a lot more bounce. Ashwin, Jadeja, Axar, and Kuldeep are the four best spinners in the world at the moment -- it won't be easy. When you play in India, spinners have a lot more say in the game. But India are a very good team."

"I am looking forward to their tour to Australia; that, for me, will be the real test for the squad. Then, when they tour England in July, these are the two most important tours, to be honest. I think the pace bowling department, with Bumrah and Siraj, and once Shami comes back, will be strong."

He also hailed Bengal pacer Akash Deep and said he's one to watch out for.

"Akash Deep is an outstanding young fast bowler. He runs in, bowls quick, and will bowl for long periods. I've seen him play for Bengal, taking wickets. He will be as quick as Siraj and Shami, hitting 140s. He is one to watch out for," he added.

TOUGH CHALLENGE VERSUS BANGLADESH: Having conquered Pakistan, Bangladesh's next assignment will be a two-Test series in India. Ganguly said Rohit Sharma and Co will be a different "kettle of fish".

"Going to Pakistan and beating them is never easy, so congratulations to the (Bangladesh) players. But India will be a different kettle of fish; India, whether at home or away, are a fantastic side

with a very strong batting unit. "I don't see Bangladesh winning; India will win the series. But India must expect good and tough cricket from Bangladesh because they are coming into the series with a lot of confidence after beating Pakistan in Pakistan," he added.

GENUINE DEARTH OF TALENT IN PAKISTAN: With Pakistan hitting a new low with a Test series loss to Bangladesh, Ganguly feels there is a "genuine dearth of talent" in the country and they are far from the glory days when players like Javed Miandad, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, formed the backbone of the team.

"I see a genuine dearth of talent in the country. Every time we think of Pakistan, we remember Miandad, Wasim, Waqar, Saeed Anwar, Mohammad Yousuf, and Younis Khan.

"That's the memory of Pakistan for us, but that doesn't win matches in the modern generation of cricket. Every generation has to produce outstanding players to win, and when I look at Pakistan in world cricket -- I saw them in the West Indies World Cup, in India during the World Cup, and now after the Bangladesh series loss -- there is a dearth of talent in that country.

"The people connected with the sport in Pakistan will have to look into it. I'm not saying this with disrespect. Pakistan of the old had some great cricketers, which I don't see in this squad," Ganguly said.

For Vaishali, Global Chess League is opportunity to learn from Anand and visit London Eye

PTI ■ LONDON

Set to make her debut in the Global Chess League alongside the great Viswanathan Anand, Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali says doing well in the star-studded event is not the only target on her mind when she lands in the British Capital next month.

Taking a ride on the London Eye also figures quite high on the agenda.

The 23-year-old Grandmaster was among the top picks at the league's player draft held in August. The event's second edition will be held here from October 3 to 12 at Friends House.

Speaking about playing alongside five-time world champion Anand for Ganges Grandmasters and against her brother R Praggnanandhaa's team, Alpine SG Pipers, Vaishali said, "This will be a very special event for me to play alongside Vishy sir in the same team." "It is a wonderful opportunity for me. My brother Pragg is on Magnus



Carlen's team, which is great as well. Of course, we won't compete against each other, but our teams are different."

Anand has had a huge role to play in mentoring both Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali.

In the tournament, each team will play a total of 10 matches in a double round-robin format, with the winner of each match being decided in a best-of-six board scoring system. Vaishali described it as an interesting and unique format. "To have many strong players in one team, we get to discuss a lot about the game and share ideas. It will definitely help players improve individually," she added.

Away from the game, Vaishali has already planned her off-the-board adventures in the city.

"The last time I visited London was five years ago. Back then, I missed going to the London Eye ride, so it's the best opportunity for me to visit this time," she signed off.



New Zealand-Afghanistan Test: Opening day called off without a ball bowled

PTI ■ GREATER NOIDA

No play was possible on the opening day of the one-off Test between New Zealand and Afghanistan due to a wet outfield here on Monday.

The match officials conducted multiple inspections through the day but the conditions were not fit enough for players to take the field. There was no rain on Monday but the ground, lacking a modern drainage system, has been impacted by heavy rain through the last week.

With rain and thunderstorms forecast throughout the week,

it remains to be seen how many days of the Test is impacted.

This is the first-ever Test between New Zealand against Afghanistan who got their Test status in 2017.

Afghanistan, who have played 10 Tests so far, have endured defeats in their last three matches against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Ireland.

For New Zealand, this will be their first Test since March and it will kick off a busy couple of months in the subcontinent ending with a three-Test series against India in October-November.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The health of Indian motorsport has improved significantly over the past five years but a lot more can be done in terms of infrastructural support, says JK Tyre motorsport head Sanjay Sharma.

Sharma's organisation has been supporting Indian motorsport for close to three decades. The tyre maker is running its national racing championship for the 27th consecutive season but seeing the bigger picture, this year the company has partnered with RPPL for the Indian Racing Festival (IRF).

RPPL is the promoter of the FIA-sanctioned Formula 4 championship in India and could bring Formula 3 to the country as soon as next year. "The health of motorsport is improving considerably. If you just compare how things

have changed in the last 8 to 10 years, everything is crystal clear. It's very unfortunate that in terms of infrastructure, we do lack a lot of support," said Sharma following round two of IRF. MotoGP hosted its inaugural race at the Buddh International Circuit last year but the round was dropped for the 2024 season and is expected to return in March next year.

The premier two-wheel race needed changes to the track that hosted Formula 1 for three editions and now it needs to be homologated again for four wheel racing. Sharma lamented the state of affairs in this context.

"The only big F1 track which hosted MotoGP last year now even doesn't have a homologation to do car events. And they have their own set of little problems, but whatever they are, they are

not available for the sport.

"So this is one of the very major kind of setback, because even to our championship, because one of the reasons that we got together (RPPL and JKTyre) two like-minded people, was that we will come back with a package that was worth BIC standard with fast cars and good turnout.

"However, having said so, if you see there are more promoters, more sponsors, more patronage for drivers, things are looking really good. In terms of government, I would say from the era where they didn't recognize us as a sport, we have come a long way. They are very receptive.

"And the live example of that is street races in Hyderabad and now Chennai (held earlier this month)," said Sharma. The tyre major had brought Formula BMW to

India back in 2011 but a decade and more later, Sharma feels the current Formula 4 championship in the IRF is a better package.

"On paper, the Formula 4 does look a little better. But safety-wise, there is a whole lot of difference. These new generation cars are far ahead, carrying all the latest safety norms. Then coming to the program of the FIA, if you follow it also helps you later for the super license."

"The structure is more formalised by the FIA (the world body). Unlike in the past, we don't need to race outside India anymore. Now everything is available in your own backyard, in your own pocket size."

"With the kind of vigour and vision that our partner RPPL has, I think the story which now will unfold will be the best that India can ask for," Sharma added.

'Health of Indian motorsport has improved significantly over past five years'



Meghalaya's Myngken to meet Manipur's TGES in junior Subroto Cup final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Banganson's hat-trick powered Myngken Christian HSS, Meghalaya's 7-0 rout of Govt. Secondary School, Arunachal Pradesh and their entry into the final of 63rd Subroto Cup junior boys international football tournament here on Monday.

They will face T.G. English School, Bishnupur, Manipur in the summit clash at the Ambedkar Stadium on Wednesday.

The TGES qualified for the final after edging Sri Lanka Schools Football Association by a solitary goal.

Myngken were in cruise control from the start but it took them 21 minutes to break the deadlock through a fine solo run and finish by Banganson.

The goal opened the floodgates as Banganson doubled the advantage in the 36th minute and three minutes later, Mebanlamiyinit made it 3-0 from a deadly counter attack. Alicestar scored the fourth in

the 44th minute after the striker slotted the ball into the empty net.

Banganson completed his hat-trick in the 46th minute with a neat finish after stealing the ball from a defender.

Alicestar piled on the misery for the Arunachal side, scoring his second goal and the team's sixth with a powerful left footer. Substitute Menatskheng completed the rout in the 65th minute, foxing two defenders and the goalkeeper to slot the ball into the empty net.

In the second semifinal, Heroba's 27th minute strike against the Sri Lankan side was enough for TGES to enter the final.

RESULTS: Myngken Christian HSS, Meghalaya - 7 (Banganson 21st, 36th, 46th, Mebanlamiyinit 39th, Alicestar 44th, 51st, Menatskheng 65th) beat Govt. Secondary School, Yazali, Arunachal Pradesh - 0. T.G. English School, Bishnupur, Manipur - 1 (Heroba 27th) beat Sri Lanka Schools Football Association - 0.

Prabhas enjoyed a lot after watching the trailer: Sri Simha

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Popular music director Keeravani's younger son Sri Simha is coming up with another film, *Mathu Vadalara 2*. This is a sequel to the earlier hit one with the same title and it also happened to be Simha's debut film as lead actor. After that, he did a few films but was not successful at the box office. Now again, he is banking on the same film in which he made his debut.

Now, again, he is basking on the sequel of the film, in which he made his breakthrough. "You can see more action sequences and more fun in this second one," said Sri Simha. He added that it took quite a time to come up with a sequel because of the director, Ritesh Rana. "When *Mathu Vadalara* became a hit, the director had some other thoughts and it was only last year that he came up with this sequel," said Sri Simha. "We can't force the director to do the sequel until he has a proper story. As soon as he is ready with the story, that's when the sequel works begin," he added.

The teaser and release date announcement of *Mathu Vadalara 2* came up as a surprise to the audience as soon as the team completed the film's shoot. "Yes, it's part of the promotional strategy only. If we announce the film initially, people will think for a few days and may forget about it. So we wanted our film to be in the audience's minds. We started promotions after we decided the release date. After the teaser and trailer, people are now talking about our film and our plan worked out pretty well," he said. Actor Prabhas had released the trailer for the film. Speaking of it, Sri Simha said, "After watching the trailer, he enjoyed it a lot and actually he watched all the promotional videos and spent a lot of time with us."

Simha and Satya had played the characters of the delivery boys in the first part and now in the second part, they play the characters of agents. "We have shown the story

MM Keeravani's younger son, Sri Simha, needs a break and is preparing for his upcoming film, *Mathu Vadalara 2*. He discusses the film, Prabhas and his uncle Rajamouli



of how we both became agents in a little bit," he said about the story. He added that the story has come out organic and has not forced any unwanted scenes in it.

There is no pressure when making the sequel because the first part became a big hit, he shared. "The second part is also equally matched to the first part and the fun is more than the first one in this. So, I am confident that the audience enjoys the sequel very much," said Sri Simha.

For this film, they have regular language in the film. "There are no cuss words or double meaning words; how the present youth are using some words, we used them only. We didn't use words against anyone; we used the regular words. It's only then then that it would connect to the people," he said.

"We have used the memes, but we are not completely dependent on them. We have a strong story and content and after that comes these memes. If any person is not using the internet and doesn't know social media, they can also enjoy this film after watching. If you are on social media, you'll enjoy it even more," he said about memes.

Talking about his uncle Rajamouli, who had also shared the trailer of this film on his social media and supported it. "If he likes the trailer or teaser, then only he will post; otherwise, he doesn't. Whether it's my film or my brother's film, if he likes, it's only then that he will support it," said Sri Simha about his uncle SS Rajamouli.

Talking about Vennela Kishore, who appears different in the second part trailer, Simha said they changed his character in the sequel. "He is the lookalike person of the first part and his character also changed. He is a big star in this second part," he said.

His earlier two films didn't do well at the box office. So is this something that he discusses at home? "Yes, I will analyse those films and where they went wrong and how to take care about them in the upcoming films. There are a few minor mistakes that we thought would appeal to the audience, but they misfired somewhere," he said. He added that in the coming days he wanted to do a character-driven story. "First, I want to concentrate on *Mathu Vadalara 2* film release and the promotions. I wanted to do film after film; at present I don't have anything; I have to listen to a good script and then I decided about my next film," said Sri Simha about his upcoming projects.

Dileep Prakash, who made his debut with the Kannada film *Crazy Boy*, is now coming up with his second film, *Utsavam*, after six years. The actor talks about his co-artist Regina Cassandra and other senior actors in the film. His challenge, the film's backdrop and many more.



'Utsavam is based on theatre artistes and plays,' says Dileep Prakash

Dileep Prakash's debut film *Crazy Boy* is a Kannada film, which was an above-average one. It was released in 2016 and now Dileep is coming up with a Telugu film titled *Utsavam*. The story of the film is based on theatre artists and plays, mostly called *Surabhi Natakalu*. "When I was in school, I took part in cultural events. I used to write plays and demonstrate them. I used to write on *Panchatantra*, *Birth of Christ*, *Ramayana* and many more. After school, I studied engineering B.Tech and then completed my MBA in marketing," said Dileep. Initially, he played a small role in a film and later played the lead actor in *Crazy Boy*. "At the success of that film, I met director Arjun and he narrated *Utsavam* story," said Dileep.

He added that he travelled with Arjun Sai for nearly six years. "When he narrated the story, I felt that it's a respectable subject and in this film the story is the hero." Many senior actors like Prakash Raj, Rajendra Prasad, and Nassar Ali have been a part of this film. "It is an honour for me to work with them, because they are all very seniors and have acted in hundreds of films. It's also a challenging task to work with them, but I enjoyed the process," he said. "He (Prakash Raj) is one of the best actors and also knows eight languages. So, when I have scenes with him, I will prepare well to face him. After the film was completed, Prakash Raj sir patted my back, which made me feel very happy about his gesture," said Dileep. Regina Cassandra plays the female lead in this film. "She is the sweetest co-artist and very senior to me. So, she used to

give me some tips when I faced the camera and also in acting. I learned a lot from her," said Dileep.

Director Krishna Vamsi's *Ranga Marthanda* was released a while ago and it didn't do well at the box office, but the film's subject is mostly based on the theatre artists. "I have seen the film; it is more on emotions, but in my film, apart from emotions, the story is narrated more in an entertaining way. My film's story is based on theatre artistes, plays like *Surabhi Natakalu*. Theatre is the starting point for entertainment and from theatre, the cinema started. In this film, the protagonist wanted to bring back the age-old tradition of theatre plays now," said Dileep. He added there is also a family entertainer in it. "There is not only about plays; there is also a family drama, romance, songs and much more," he added.

The film shows a lot of Telugu tradition and culture. "If there was no theatre, Cinema wouldn't have been there. How the theatre is back once again is shown in this film. People will also support those art forms once again," he said.

Many popular and senior actors acted in the film; more than that, the film is going to be released in Telugu by Mythri Movie Makers and in Kannada by the popular Hombale Films, which produced the *KGF*. "I am lucky that I am getting good support and it all happened because of my producer, Suresh Patil," he said.

Dileep Prakash said his mother hails from Hindupur and his father is a Kannadiga. Thus, he speaks Telugu fluently. He added that he will announce his next project soon as he is working on it.

Sudheer Babu now banking on *Maa Nanna Superhero*

Despite his films not being successful at box office, Sudheer Babu doesn't miss out on bringing up different kinds of subjects and characters. His earlier one, *Harom Hara* was an actioner, but now, he has come up with an emotional film titled *Maa Nanna Superhero*. Directed by Abhilash Reddy Kankara known for his *Loser* web series, the film was announced and is also hitting the screens this Dasara. They started the promotions by unleashing the film's first look poster on Monday.

In this first look, Sudheer Babu is in a typical middle-

class guy avatar riding a scooter laden with vegetables, and he is seen greeting the school-children on his way home. His warm smile adds a perfect touch to the poster. The makers also announced that they are releasing the teaser of this film on September 12.

Maa Nanna Superhero is a heartfelt father-son drama that delves into the profound themes of love and connection. Aarna stars as the leading lady opposite Sudheer Babu.

Sunil Balusu is the producer. Sudheer Babu is now banking on this film to get a good break.



Dulquer Salmaan's new film *Kaantha* begins

Popular actor Rana Daggubati these days seemingly is concentrating more on production. Recently he was involved in a small film *35 Chikka Katha Kadu*; now he is producing a multilingual film with Malayalam Super Star Dulquer Salmaan. The film officially started on Sunday in Hyderabad.

Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media, in collaboration with Dulquer Salmaan's Wayfarer Films, marked the beginning of their most-awaited multilingual film project *Kaantha* with a puja at Rama Naidu Studios in Hyderabad. Directed by Selvamani Selvaraj, the film stars Dulquer Salmaan, Bhagyashree Bhorse and Samuthirakani and the filming also began on Tuesday.

Set in the evocative backdrop of 1950s Madras, *Kaantha* is a cinematic journey that explores the complexities of human relationships and societal change during a dynamic period in history. Bhagyashree Bhorse plays the female lead opposite Dulquer Salmaan, while Samuthirakani is cast for a crucial role.

"Partnering with Wayfarer Films for *Kaantha* adds a new dimension to this project. Their commitment to quality cinema aligns perfectly with our vision at Spirit Media. *Kaantha* is the ideal film to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Suresh Productions and mark the beginning of a new era with Spirit Media," said Rana Daggubati. Dulquer Salmaan, founder of Wayfarer Films

and lead actor in the film, said, "I am excited to embark on this journey with Spirit Media and get started with *Kaantha*. This is a beautifully layered story that captures the depths of human emotions and gives an actor a lot of scope to perform. I am thrilled to get started and bring this film to life."

Director Selvamani Selvaraj, whose storytelling expertise brings unique authenticity and depth to this period drama, adds, "Collaborating with such talented producers and creative teams has been a privilege. With *Kaantha*, we aim to transport audiences to a bygone era, capturing its essence while telling a story that resonates with contemporary emotions," said Dulquer Salmaan.



Indraganti's *Sarangapani Jathakam* wraps up its shoot

Director Indraganti Mohanakrishna, who is looking for a break, with his upcoming film *Sarangapani Jathakam*, has completed its shooting. Comedian turned actor Priyadarshi is playing the lead character and the makers announced the title *Sarangapani Jathakam* a few weeks back. Sivalenka Krishna Prasad is producing this film under Sridevi Movies and this is his third collaboration with Indraganti Mohanakrishna.

"On Priyadarshi's birthday, the first look and title poster were released. They received an amazing response. *Sarangapani Jathakam* is a perfect comedy film and we are glad that the filming part has now been completed. We finished the film in five schedules in Hyderabad, at Ramoji Film City, and in Visakhapatnam," said producer Krishna



Prasad. He added that they will start the dubbing programs from September 12 onwards. "I have always wanted to make a full-fledged entertaining film. I aspired to make a film under the direction of Jandhyala Garu, but unfortunately, it didn't happen. He wrote dialogues for two of our successful films, namely, *Chimodu-Peddodu* and *Aditya 369*, but couldn't direct any film. Finally, the void is behind us. We are delighted to be doing a complete entertainer with Mohanakrishna Indraganti, who has made two successful films under our banner. *Sarangapani Jathakam* will be a memorable movie from Sridevi Movies. We are making this film without compromising on the budget and technical quality," said the producer. Roopa Koduvayur of *Mr Pregnant* fame will be seen playing the female lead opposite Priyadarshi.