

# the pioneer

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**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

During BRS rule, medical colleges existed only on paper. There was no college building, no hostel and no hospital. So the NMC decided that the colleges could not be permitted. Staff was not hired or equipment purchased. It was the Congress admin which made arrangements according to NMC guidelines and appealed to get permission


- Damodar Rajanarasimha, Minister, Telangana

P3



**PM Modi pitches India to chip makers**

**EYEING 10% SHARE OF PATENTS IN 6G SERVICES FOR INDIA: SCINDIA**



**I'm not doing films for money; it's my love: ABHIRAMI**



**DON'T MISS...**

**CM heaps praise on I&PR Minister...**

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, who visited Eluru district on Wednesday to inspect the damage in the flood-affected places, heaped praise on Minister for I&PR and Housing Kolu Parthasarathy for the relief measures. The CM praised the Minister for alerting the district administration to prevent the flood damage in Eluru district, inspecting the canals and ponds that are overflowing in Nuzvid constituency. The Minister also visited the flood-affected areas and spoke to the people, assuring the victims of help from...

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**Wealthy Indians send kids...**

Over three-fourth of wealthy Indians have sent or are planning to send their kids overseas for education, according to a survey. The survey of 1,456 Indians, having investable surplus between Rs 84 lakh (USD 100,000) and nearly Rs 17 crore (USD 2 million), conducted in March found the strong urge for overseas education with 78 per cent of the respondents saying they are keen on a foreign education for their children. Investable survey is the amount set aside for investment from overall net worth...

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**India committed to climate-friendly...**

NITI Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam on Wednesday said India is committed to climate-friendly growth, but fossil fuels are still going to drive the country's economic growth. Addressing an event here, Subrahmanyam said markets alone cannot solve the problem of climate change. "India is committed to climate-friendly growth... (but) fossil fuels are still going to drive the country's economic growth," he said. Subrahmanyam further said that NITI Aayog is working with states in developing a...

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**Rohit, Kohli, Pant are probably...**

Veteran Australian spinner Nathan Lyon has identified Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant as the three "big ones" to watch out for in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series. The five-Test series between India and Australia gets underway Down Under from November 22, part of the World Test Championship. Besides the big ones, Lyon has also warned that the visitors have an "amazing line-up", making things massively challenging for the hosts. "Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh..."

-SPORTS

**10 hurt as mob attacks cops in Shimla mosque dispute**

Protesters demanding the demolition of an illegal portion of a mosque in Shimla's Sanjauli area clashed with security personnel on Wednesday, breaking barricades and pelting stones as police used water cannons and baton charged to disperse them. About 10 people including police and women were injured. Public Works Vikramaditya Singh said the government was seriously concerned over escalation of the situation and keeping a close watch on all the developments. "We are in touch with the central lead-

## CM assures justice for all flood victims

**Conducts aerial survey of flood-hit areas in Eluru dist**

PNS ■ ELURU

"I have personally experienced all the problems that you are facing and I will do justice for each and everyone," the Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, on Wednesday assured all the flood victims.

Chandrababu conducted an aerial survey of all the flood-affected areas in Eluru district aboard a helicopter and later held a review meeting with the officials at the Sir CR Reddy Degree College auditorium. They particularly discussed the prevailing situation of Kolleru Lake, Upputeru and Tammileru. Later, interacting with the flood victims, the Chief Minister said the whole damage caused due to floods in the State will be calculated with transparency and accountability. "The pain of the farmer is inexplicable when he loses the paddy crop after 70 days of plantation when it is almost ready for harvest."

He pointed out that the TDP government had paid Rs 16,000 as ex-gratia for crop loss in each hectare before 2019, but the previous government increased it by merely Rs 1,000 per hectare. "But this time the ex-gratia will be increased to Rs 25,000 per hectare while Rs 10,000 per acre will



- Naidu promises to increase ex gratia for crop loss, with Rs 25,000 per hectare for affected farmers and emphasised transparency in damage assessment.
- CM attributes the extensive damage to blunders by the previous government.
- Plans to relaunch the Polavaram project announced by CM.
- Efforts to prevent future calamities highlighted.

be paid for paddy crop loss," he said. Since 70 per cent of the cultivators are tenant farmers, the input subsidy will be directly credited to their accounts and the ex-gratia will be paid for all the flood victims before September 17, he said.

Continued on Page 2

## Seven killed, two injured as mini-truck overturns

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Seven people were killed and two injured when a mini-truck they were travelling in overturned at Chilakavari Pakala of Chinnayagudem on the highway connecting East and West Godavari districts. The mini-truck, laden with cashew nuts, was on its way from Borrampalem of Eluru district to Tadimalla in East Godavari district.

Police said the accident occurred when the driver lost control and the vehicle skid off the road and overturned in the adjoining agricultural field.

Nine labourers, who were travelling on the mini-truck, got trapped under the sacks of cashew nuts. While seven of them died on the spot, the police rescued two others and shifted them to a nearby hospital. The police, with the help of locals, pulled out the bodies from beneath the sacks and shifted them to Kovvuru Government Hospital for autopsy.

According to the cops, the driver fled the scene after the accident. A case has been registered, and an investigation is underway. Six of the deceased were identified as Burraiah (40), Tammireddy Satyanarayana (45), P Chinna



Musalaiah (35), Kattava Krishna (40), Kattava Sattipandu (40) and Tadi Krishna (45), all residents of Samisragudem mandal. The seventh deceased, Bukka Prasad, hailed from Kata Koteswara in Nidadavolu mandal. One of the injured was identified as Ganta Madhu while the details of the other injured were not known.

**Chandrababu, Pawan, Jagan express grief**

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has expressed shock over the road accident that took place near Chilakavaripakalu, Devarapalli mandal, in East Godavari district. The CM expressed grief over the death of seven people whose mini-truck lost control and overturned. He directed the authorities to provide good treatment to the injured. He further assured that the government will stand by their families. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expressed grief over the incident. He conveyed his condolences to the families of the deceased. Pawan said he was shocked to learn about the ghastly mishap and the tragic deaths of seven workers. He assured that the government would extend all possible help to the families of the victims.

Continued on Page 2

## Central team assesses flood damage

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A six-member Central team is on a visit to the State to assess the damage caused due to the unprecedented floods. As part of their programme, the members of the team headed by the Joint Secretary of Union Home Ministry, Anil Subrahmanyam, held a two-and-half-hour meeting with various Heads of Departments (HoDs) at the office of the Disaster Management at Tadepalli on Wednesday.

The Engineer-in-Chief of the Water Resources Department, Venkateswara Rao, explained in detail to the team members the massive damage caused due to the heavy floods that lashed various parts of the State. The Special Chief Secretary of the Revenue and Disaster Management, RP Sisodia,



through a PowerPoint presentation, explained to them the seriousness of the damage caused to various sectors, which is estimated at Rs 6,880 crore preliminarily.

The main damage caused in the sectors like farming, horticulture, animal husbandry, fishing, roads in panchayats and the R and B besides

in various municipalities, irrigation and other sectors were explained in detail by the officials to the Central team.

Following the low pressure in the Bay of Bengal, River Krishna experienced record level of floods, the officials told the team members.

Continued on Page 2

## Union Cabinet okays Rs 12,461 cr for 31,350 MW hydro power projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an outlay of Rs 12,461 crore to support the development of 31,350 MW hydropower projects to be implemented over the next eight years.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Power for modification of the scheme of budgetary support for the cost of enabling infrastructure for Hydro Electric Projects (HEP) with a total outlay of Rs 12,461 crore, an official statement said. According to the statement, the scheme will be implemented from FY2024-25 to FY2031-32.

The limit of the budgetary support for the cost of enabling infrastructure has been rationalised to Rs 1 crore per MW for projects up to 200 MW capacity and Rs 200 crore plus Rs 0.75 crore per MW for projects above 200 MW capacity.

For exceptional cases the limit of budgetary support may go up to Rs 1.5 crore/MW provided sufficient justification exists.

The scheme has a total outlay of Rs 12,461 crore for cumulative generation capacity of about 31,350 MW to be implemented from FY 2024-25 to FY 2031-32, the statement said. The scheme will be applicable to all hydro power projects of more than 25 MW capacity, including the private sector projects which have been allotted on a



The scheme will be applicable to all hydro power projects of more than 25 MW capacity, including the private sector projects which have been allotted on a transparent basis.

This scheme will also be applicable to all pumped storage projects (PSPs) including captive/merchant PSPs, provided the project has been allotted on a transparent basis.

A cumulative PSP capacity of about 15,000 MW would be supported under the scheme. The projects whose Letter of Award of first major package is issued up to June 30, 2028 would be considered under this scheme.

The statement said that the move would widen the ambit of the budgetary support for cost of enabling infrastructure by including four more items apart from construction of roads and bridges.

**AP tops in handling online crime against women, kids**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh police have been recognised for its outstanding performance in addressing online crimes against women and children. On the occasion of the first Foundation Day of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Union Home Minister Amit Shah felicitated the Additional Director General of Police, CID, A Ravi Shankar, and SP Women Protection Cell, KGV Saritha, at a ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

**Efforts of CID team led by ADGP A Ravi Shankar and SP KGV Saritha lauded**



**MP envisions elevating Vizag to international standards**

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## MP Sivanath vows to drain out floodwater in 24 hrs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a determined response to the rising concerns of flood-affected residents, Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath assured that stagnant floodwaters in Jakkampudi and Ambapuram within the Mylavaram constituency will be drained within 24 hours. On Wednesday, Minister P Narayana, MLA Kolikapudi Srinivasa Rao, and MP Sivanath visited the flood-affected regions to assess the situation firsthand.

During the visit, MP Sivanath emphasised that under Minister Narayana's leadership, measures have already begun to tackle the floodwater accumulation in critical areas such as Jakkampudi Colony-Pipula Road and Inner Ring Road. By creating small breaches, the floodwaters are being redirected back into the



'Budameru' canal. He reassured the residents that the government is committed to providing all necessary aid to those stranded by

the floods, including distributing essential supplies to victims. Minister Narayana, speaking on the cause of the current crisis,

- Floodwater being redirected to the 'Budameru' canal through small breaches.
- Essential supplies being distributed to flood victims.
- Minister Narayana blames the previous govt for neglecting canal maintenance.
- Preventive steps being taken under CM Naidu to avoid future disasters.
- MLA Kolikapudi says it could take 15 days for water to subside naturally, but urgent measures aim to resolve it in 24 hours.

maintenance of the 'Budameru' canal over the past five years, which he claimed exacerbated the flood situation. He added that under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, preventative measures are now being implemented to avoid future disasters of this magnitude. MLA Kolikapudi Srinivasa Rao also addressed the timeline for relief, explaining that if left unattended, it could take up to 15 days for the water to subside naturally. However, with the urgent steps being taken, the stagnant water is expected to be channelled back into the canal within the promised 24-hour period, allowing the situation to normalise swiftly.

The government's rapid response offers hope for the flood-hit residents, as officials race against time to restore normalcy.

# AP shines once again in EoDB Rankings

There are two peculiarities concerning the Telugu states worth discussing in relation to the latest Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) rankings. First, despite former AP chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's apparent disregard for the efforts made under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, Andhra Pradesh continues to secure top positions. Second, Telangana's former minister K.T. Rama Rao attempted to shift blame for Telangana's poor performance in the EoDB rankings onto the current Congress government, sidestepping his own administration's role in the decline.

The EoDB rankings were introduced by the Union government in 2014, with the main objective of fostering competition among the states in India by encouraging reforms to make business operations smoother. The Centre

developed a framework to assess which states were making it easier to do business. Based on this framework, the rankings were released four times: in 2015, 2017, 2019, and most recently.

The key point is that, ever since the rankings started, the Telugu states have been highly competitive. In 2015, Andhra Pradesh (AP) secured the second spot, while Telangana ranked 13th. Determined to improve, then minister KTR placed significant focus on the rankings, and by 2017, Telangana had made substantial progress, with AP securing first position and Telangana coming second.

The new Telugu states' competitive rise in the business rankings even gained national recognition. By 2019, AP once again secured the top spot, with Telangana ranking third. In the latest EoDB rankings

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The first rankings were released under then chief minister Chandrababu Naidu, with then-IT Minister Nara Lokesh making considerable efforts to improve AP's business environment. It was widely

acknowledged, even by renowned business journalists like Swaminathan Anklasaria Aiyar, that Naidu's leadership enabled AP to compete with more industrially advanced states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Telangana also advanced in the rankings, with KTR's efforts playing a crucial role in moving from 13th to second place.

But in the latest rankings, two key observations emerged.



**RAMESH KANDULA**  
Chief Editor Swatantra TV and author

Let's first examine AP's ranking. As mentioned earlier, AP has consistently remained in the top two positions. The third set of rankings was released for the year 2020, when YS Jagan Mohan Reddy served as the chief minister. Despite that, AP still managed to top the rankings, and the YSRCP government proudly

claimed credit. However, it is interesting to note that when Jagan was in the Opposition, he had ridiculed the EoDB rankings, dismissing them as a media fabrication.

Despite becoming chief minister in 2019, Jagan continued to make dismissive remarks about the rankings. His attempts to defame the rankings failed to acknowledge their value, even as AP was recognised again in the 2020 rankings (for the year 2019)—clearly not due to his administration, but due to the groundwork laid by the previous TDP government.

In the latest EoDB rankings for 2022 (announced on September 5 by the Centre); AP once again secured second place. So, should Jagan's government receive credit? Given Jagan's earlier disdain for these rankings, it seems unlikely that his administration actively

pursued this recognition. Thus, it is more plausible that the foundations laid during the 2014-2019 period contributed to AP's continued success in these rankings.

Now, let's look at Telangana. As noted earlier, Telangana had previously secured 13th, second, and third positions in past rankings. However, in the most recent EoDB rankings, Telangana's name is conspicuously absent. KTR responded to this by tweeting, blaming the Congress government under Revanth Reddy for the decline. "The latest Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) reformers' rankings reflect the misuse of the Revanth government in Telangana," he observed.

However, there's a catch. The rankings KTR referred to were for 2022 -- a period when the BRS government, led by KCR, was in power. Therefore, the responsibility for this fail-

ure lies with KTR's own administration.

KTR's hasty criticism of the Congress government overlooks this critical point. While he had worked hard during BRS' tenure to compete with the TDP government, Telangana's decline in the rankings highlights a lack of consistency and follow-up. Interestingly, KTR blamed the Naidu government in 2016 for 'stealing' its ease of doing business data. His government even lodged a complaint alleging theft of website information and template copyrights with its cybercrime police. But it seems AP continued to blaze a trail in securing top rankings, while Telangana lagged due to its political leaders.

Ultimately, both Jagan and KTR have shown that their political priorities often overshadow their commitment to improving their states.

## MP envisions elevating Vizag to international standards

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

MP M Sriharat has unveiled an ambitious vision to transform Visakhapatnam into a city akin to Singapore, focusing on significant infrastructure development and urban enhancement. Speaking to The Pioneer, Sriharat outlined a comprehensive plan that includes modernising the Visakhapatnam railway station, constructing five new overbridges, and initiating Metro Rail.

"We are working diligently to create master plans that will elevate Visakhapatnam to international standards," Sriharat stated.

"Our goal is to build a city that is not only beautiful but also functional, ensuring safety, increased green spaces, and effective solutions to pollution and traffic issues."

Sriharat acknowledged the delays and stalled development at the Visakhapatnam railway station, a concern that

**Plan includes modernising railway station, constructing five new overbridges, and initiating Metro Rail**



has long troubled passengers. "Development work at the railway station has faced interruptions in the past. I am committed to reviewing and tracking progress to resolve these issues," he explained.

The MP highlighted his

intent to address inefficiencies that have caused trains to frequently stop at Duvvada before reaching Visakhapatnam, leading to delays. He emphasised the importance of providing the government with uninterrupted time to serve its people.

Sriharat expressed his commitment to ensuring comprehensive development in education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The impending arrival of the new railway zone at Mudasarlova and the metro train project, planned under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, are central to his strategy. "Despite financial challenges, our government is dedicated to advancing infrastructure through innovative PPP projects," he remarked.

Sriharat strongly supported merging the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant with the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL).

"The integration with SAIL will safeguard against losses and ensure the implementation of best practices," he affirmed.

## Central team assesses...

Continued from Page 1

The officials also briefed the team about how the Chief Minister, his Cabinet colleagues and the officials worked for 24 hours a day to provide relief to the flood-hit.

They also explained in detail how food and other essentials were supplied to the victims through drones and other ways.

The team members later visited all the areas, including Guntur, Bapatla and Krishna districts which suffered heavy damage due to the flash floods. The Central team's visit to the State will continue for another two days.

Headed by the Joint Secretary of the Union Home Ministry, Anil Subrahmanyam, the six-member team consists of the Director of Farmers Welfare of Maharashtra, Dr AL Vagmer, Chief Engineer of Surface Transport, Rakesh Kumar and Financial Wing Consultant, RB Koul.

## Sealyan team begins operation to remove sand boats

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A challenging operation is currently underway at the Prakasam Barrage to remove heavy sand boats, each weighing 40 tonnes, that are stuck at the barrage gates. Initial efforts to lift the boats using cranes proved unsuccessful, leading Water Resources Department (WRD) authorities to decide on cutting the boats into smaller parts for easier removal.

On Tuesday, Beckham Infra, Hyderabad engineers attempted to remove the boats but were unsuccessful. Recognising the complexity of the task, the State government entrusted the operation to Sealyan, an experienced Visakhapatnam-based diving team known for handling similar operations, including work at the Pulichintala dam. On Wednesday,

Sealyan's team arrived at Prakasam Barrage and commenced the challenging task of breaking the boats.

The diving team, equipped with modern gear and gas cutters, began the process by scuba diving 12 feet underwater with



Special team deployed a rescue operation removing boats at Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Wednesday  
Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar

oxygen cylinders to cut the boats into manageable pieces. Working in rotations, two divers spent an hour at a time cutting through the boats. Despite their efforts, none of the boats were fully removed on the second day of operations.

Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu visited the Prakasam Barrage to inspect the progress and enquired about the ongoing work with WRD officials. He urged the team to expedite the process, emphasising the need for quick action to resolve the

issue. Meanwhile, a large number of journalists from both print and electronic media, along with photographers and videographers, gathered at the Prakasam Barrage to cover the removal operation of the sand boats stuck in River Krishna.

However, as the process faced significant delays, the journalists were left waiting for extended periods. Many of them eventually sat on the footpath of the barrage, awaiting updates and the chance to document the operation once it progressed.



## Chandrababu...

Continued from Page 1

YSRCP president and former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed profound shock over the road accident. He called for immediate government action to ensure that the injured receive the best possible medical care and that the families of the deceased are adequately supported. The accident, which took place late at night, involved a raw cashew truck that overturned, resulting in the unfortunate deaths of seven individuals.

TODAY	
ALMANAC	
<b>Month &amp; Paksham:</b>	Sukla Paksha
<b>Tithi:</b> Navami	Sep 11 11:46 PM to Sep 12 11:33 PM
<b>Dashami:</b>	Sep 12 11:33 PM to Sep 13 10:30 PM
<b>Nakshatram:</b>	
<b>Moola:</b>	Sep 11 09:22 PM to Sep 12 09:52 PM
<b>Purva Ashadha:</b>	Sep 12 09:52 PM to Sep 13 09:35 PM
<b>Rahukalam:</b>	1:43 PM to 3:14 PM
<b>Yamagandam:</b>	6:07 AM to 7:38 AM
<b>Varjyam:</b>	07:22 AM to 08:56 AM
<b>Gulika:</b>	9:09 AM to 10:41 AM
<b>Amritakalam:</b>	03:25 PM to 05:03 PM
<b>Abhijit Muhurtham:</b>	11:48 AM to 12:36 PM
<b>VIJAYAWADA WEATHER</b>	
<b>Forecast:</b> Partly Cloudy	
<b>Temp:</b> 34°C	
<b>Humidity:</b> 67%	
<b>Sunrise:</b> 5:55 AM	
<b>Sunset:</b> 6:12 PM	
<b>Updated:</b> September 11, 2024 5:00 PM	

## App created to streamline compensation for farmers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu has emphasised the importance of transparency and efficiency in providing compensation to farmers affected by natural calamities. He announced the creation of a digital application aimed at streamlining the process of delivering investment subsidies for crop loss compensation. This initiative is a first-of-its-kind in the country, launched under the direction of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, he said.

During a teleconference on Wednesday from his camp office in Vijayawada, Atchannaidu met with key officials, including Principal Secretary of Agriculture B. Rajasekhar, Agriculture Commissioner Dr. S. Dilli Rao,

**First-of-its-kind initiative in the country: Agriculture Minister**



and Horticulture Commissioner Srinivasulu. The discussions focused on the recent floods and heavy rains, which caused widespread crop damage across the State, and the introduction of a new digital app designed to provide timely assistance to affected farmers. He said that the app will allow real-time registration of crop damage, ensuring transparent data entry and immedi-

ate access to the information for future use. According to the preliminary estimates, 2.06 lakh hectares (5,15,000 acres) of agricultural crops and 19,735 hectares (49,337 acres) of horticultural crops were affected, with around 2.80 lakh farmers across the State suffering losses, he said.

Further, the Minister stated that the government has prepared estimates of Rs.390.12 crore in investment subsidies to assist these farmers. Meanwhile, he said that in addition to the subsidy, the app would enable the registration of field-level losses, followed by compensation payments through social inspections in the affected villages.

## CM assures justice for all...

Continued from Page 1

Observing that plans are afoot to deal with such calamities in future, the Chief Minister stated that the huge damage caused by these unprecedented floods is only due to the blunders committed by the previous government. "The sins committed by the previous government have turned into a curse to the State," Chandrababu remarked. Appreciating the efforts of the Minister for Irrigation, Nimmala Ramanaidu, in filling the breaches of Budameru, the Chief Minister also said that the Minister for Housing, Information and Public Relations, Kolu Parthasarathi, too worked hard. Recalling that he has successfully ended rowdiness in the State and factionism in Rayalaseema to extend better governance in the State even without communal hatred, Chandrababu said that he had moved forward resolutely even after a

bomb attack on him during the Brahmosavams in Tirumala. The present situation of the State is so bad that the revenue is not enough even to pay the interest for the loans raised by the previous government. Terming the Polavaram project as a boon to the State, he said that he managed to get Rs 12,000 crore from the Centre after convincing the Union Government. "The Polavaram works will soon be relaunched," he added. Chandrababu announced several benefits for Eluru, including constructing a bridge with Rs 15 crore near Sanivarapupeta causeway.

Ministers Nimmala Ramanaidu and Kolu Parthasarathi, Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar, MLAs Badeti Radha Krishnaiah (Chanti), Dr Kamineni Srinivas, Chintamaneni Prabhakar, Raghurama Krishnan Raju, Dharmaraju and others were present.

## Power supply restored 100%: Minister Ravi Kumar

**Extraordinary efforts to restore power, services of electricity employees commendable**

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The efforts of the official machinery of Andhra Pradesh power utilities in power restoration and flood relief activities are highly commendable that resulted in 100 per cent power supply restoration to all the areas affected by the recent floods. The power is fully restored for 2,49,825 affected electricity service connections (Urban-1,59,419 No's, Rural-90,406 No's) and all the Units of Vijayawada Thermal Power Station (VTPS) are ready for full operation, said Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar.

Minister Ravi Kumar said:

"The department, which is on high alert, has formed special teams to monitor power supply situation. On one side, the power utilities have strategically carried out the power restoration activities in flood affected areas swiftly and on the other side the utilities are successful in providing 24x7 quality power supply to all other parts of the State."

He said inspired by the commitment of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, the power utilities strived hard to overcome the devastating situation caused by floods and completed power restoration activities in all the areas affected by the recent floods. The Minister appreciated



the electricity employees for contributing one day's salary totalling to around Rs 10.61 crore as donation to the victims of recent floods.

Special Chief Secretary Energy K Vijayanand said that all six units of each 210 MW of Dr

Narla Tatarao Thermal Power Station (Dr. NTTPS) are in service and entire coal plant operations are restored to feed all the units. Further, all the six units at RTPP, three units at SDSTPS and all hydrel units are in service. "As part of power restoration activities, ward wise special officers (Senior Engineers) were appointed to monitor power supply issues in the ward and emergency control rooms were established at district headquarters and Division Offices.

The details of responsible persons were made available to public to contact for immediate relief and restoration operations," he added.

## AP tops in...

Continued from Page 1

Director General of Police Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao lauded the exceptional efforts of the CID team led by ADGP A Ravi Shankar and SP KGV Saritha, in tackling critical issues related to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), Rape and Gang Rape (RGR), and Child Pornography (CP) through the CP/CSAM/RGR portal. The portal, initiated by I4C in May 2019 under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has been pivotal in the State's enforcement efforts.

The portal managed by SP KGV Saritha is supported by a dedicated team of officers including one Sub-Inspector, one Head Constable, and two Police Constables. The team actively monitors and verifies CSAM tip lines, downloads relevant information, and forwards it to the respective District SPs for case registration and action.

## Jagan visits MP Nandigam...

Continued from Page 1

Jagan encouraged him to stay strong during this challenging time.

Speaking to the media outside the jail on Wednesday, Jagan condemned the arrest of former Dalit MP Suresh as illegal, stating that the State had never witnessed such a blatant misuse of power. He criticised the government for making arrests when the State was in chaos due to severe rains. He alleged that CM Chandrababu Naidu's mismanagement and negligence caused the deaths of nearly 60 people during the floods.

He highlighted that despite the recent floods, the government tried to distract the public by arresting important people, like the former MP and husband of the Vijayawada's Deputy Mayor in the middle of the

night on September 4.

Describing the flood relief efforts by Chandrababu as 'a complete failure', Jagan said the government has been using arrests as a diversionary tactic to cover up its shortcomings, particularly in the handling of the four-year-old TDP office case. He also pointed out that even though TDP spokesperson K Pattabhi Ram had insulted the then chief minister in public with derogatory language, no personal vendetta was taken against him by the then government. Instead, legal

procedures were followed, and notices were issued.

Jagan stated that neither Nandigam Suresh nor the Deputy Mayor's husband was involved in the incidents related to the attack on TDP office. He said that investigations, including CCTV footage, will prove this, yet arrests were being made using false statements to frighten and manipulate witnesses. He said that the TDP coalition government is focusing on destruction, lawlessness, and intimidation rather than governance.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**  
**RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT**  
No.28 to 44/10/AMM/1st call/2024-25 TENDER NOTICE Date: 09-09-2024  
Online tenders are invited through the e-procurement platform for execution of 12 works worth Rs. 1,202.99 lakhs, sanctioned from O & M funds, in Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Circle, Eluru. The tender documents are available in the e-procurement platform. Submission of tenders till 10:00 AM on 12-09-2024 to 27-09-2024 till 3:00 pm. The last date for tenders: 27-09-2024 up to 4:00 pm. Commencement of technical and financial bids: At 11:00 am on 30-09-2024. For details, contact www.tender.approcurement.gov.in e-procurement market place. The Superintending Engineer, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Circle, Eluru AEE RWS Cell No: 801962389. Email: JD\_ee-rws-elr@ap.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer, RWS & S Circle, Eluru. R.O.No: 14813/SC/NT/2024/27, Dt: 11.09.2024

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# Relief kits distributed to flood victims



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Municipal Administration P Narayana, along with other TDP leaders, distributed relief kits to the flood victims of Rajarajeswara Peta, Singh Nagar, Chitti Nagar, Pipula Road, Rajeev Nagar, and Vambay Colony on Tuesday. As part of the relief operation organised by Dahinchu Agni Ministries headed by Dr Thomas, 1,500 blankets, 1,500 shirts, 1,500 sarees, 1,500 nighties and 4,000 luggage bags were distributed to the families who lost everything in the flood. Narayana said that since September 4, the Ministry

was on the forefront in extending necessary essential commodities to the people. He also mentioned that Dr Thomas has done many such relief measures in the past three-and-a-half decades. Karishma Praised the programme on behalf of Dahinchu Agni Ministry. Dr Thomas said that they will always take the initiative to help the needy.

Meanwhile, Kakinada City MLA Konda Babu, Telugu Desam Party spokesperson Pattabhi, former minister Peethala Sujatha, and Amarlapudi Shekhar, MD, Christian Finance Corporation, distributed the relief kits.

# Bankers urged to be involved in providing aid to flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Government Additional Secretary (Finance) J Nivas, has appealed to the public and private sector bankers to be involved in providing financial assistance to the flood-affected people from the Economic Restructuring Package. Banks are playing a pivotal role in providing financial assistance to the people, he said.

As per the directions from the State government, Nivas, along with NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana, convened a meeting with bankers at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday. They highlighted the need for collaboration between the banking sector and the government to ensure that those impacted by floods receive the necessary financial relief. J Nivas and Dr Srijana held an elaborate discussion on financial support. Later, Nivas emphasised that the State government is committed to providing substantial assistance to those affected by floods. He urged the bankers to extend support to those in need. Following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) guide-



Additional Secretary (Finance) J Nivas addressing the meeting with bankers along with NTR District Collector Dr Srijana at the collectorate meeting hall in Vijayawada on Wednesday

lines, additional benefits should be provided to the districts affected by natural calamities, he added.

He stated that to facilitate loan rescheduling and flexibility in consumer loans, and the issuance of new loans, bank branches in flood-affected areas are advised to compile detailed databases, including information on existing borrowers, consumer loans, loan amounts, loan accounts, loss values, and other relevant data. Nivas also suggested that banks should employ their field staff, such as surveyors and assessors, to gather this infor-

mation. He noted that data from government machinery will be available to aid in these efforts.

Dr Srijana requested the bankers to join hands with the government in supporting the flood-affected people. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has already convened a special meeting with bankers and insurance companies. Further, the government is mulling another meeting to reschedule current loans more effectively, she added.

NTR District Lead Bank Manager (LDM) K Priyanka and others were present.

# CM heaps praise on I&PR Minister Kolusu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, who visited Eluru district on Wednesday to inspect the damage in the flood-affected places, heaped praise on Minister for I&PR and Housing Kolusu Parthasarathy for the relief measures.

The CM praised the Minister for alerting the district administration to prevent the flood damage in Eluru district, inspecting the canals and ponds that are overflowing in Nuzvid constituency. The Minister also visited the flood-affected areas and spoke to the people, assuring the victims of help from the government. He directed the authorities to solve the problems of victims and actively participat-



ed in the flood relief programmes in Vijayawada. The CM also said that Minister Parthasarathy's role was very important in the prevention of flood damage in Eluru district. The Chief Minister mentioned that people want public representatives who provide services when they are in need and distress.

# 'Fish Andhra' initiative fails, outlets closed

Scheme aimed to benefit unemployed individuals from SC, ST, BC, and minority communities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The ambitious Fish Andhra initiative, introduced three years ago by the YSRCP government to create employment through fish-related businesses, has failed to live up to its expectations. Despite its initial promise, none of the outlets in the district are operational today.

Under the Pradhana Mantri Mathhya Sampadha Yojana (PMMSY) in collaboration with the Central and State governments, the Fisheries Department established Fish Andhra units in villages across

the district. These units were designed to sell fish, prawns, and crabs and were targeted at unemployed individuals from SC, ST, BC, and minority communities. With each unit valued at Rs 2.5 lakh, the government promised substantial subsidies 60 per cent for SCs and STs, 40 per cent for BCs, and 50 per cent for minorities. To further ease participation, officials assured that only 10 per cent of the amount needed to be invested by the beneficiaries, while the remaining funds would be provided through bank loans.

In Chodavaram and Madugula constituencies, a total of 19 outlets were opened under the scheme. Today, none of them are functional. "This scheme had the potential to provide a livelihood for many unemployed youth, but due to poor planning and execution, it has failed miserably," said a local official on condition of anonymity.

Beneficiaries are now calling on the government to address the issues plaguing the scheme and provide the necessary support to revive the Fish Andhra units.

# 'Med colleges only on paper under BRS'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha, in response to the comments of BRS MLA Harish Rao, said that during the BRS government, medical colleges were merely on papers with issuance of GOs.

"The colleges were merely on paper limiting to GOs. Due to the upcoming Assembly elections the former government has hurried the process of GOs for medical colleges. There is no college building, no hostel, no hospital. The staff was not hired and the equipment was not bought. But, the colleges were set up." "However, when Congress government was formed, the NMC has concluded that colleges cannot be permitted. We have made the arrangements according to the NMC guidelines and appealed to get permissions," he added.

In the first appeal, the NMC was convinced for Mulugu, Gadwal, Narayanpet and Narsampet colleges. Later, upgradations were made for another



four districts, he said. BRS MLA Harish Rao said, "I am proud to see that Telangana has achieved a historic milestone, becoming the only State in India to have a medical college in every district. With the recent approval of four new medical colleges, the State now has 34 government medical colleges, a remarkable transformation from just five before Telangana's formation. Under the leadership of former Chief Minister KCR, we have added 29 new medical colleges in just nine years, increasing the number of MBBS seats from 850 in 2014 to 4,090

today. This dramatic expansion allows Telangana to produce over 10,000 doctors every year, helping meet both local and global healthcare needs."

KCR's vision of establishing a medical college in every district has been realised. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Yadadri, Medak, Maheshwaram, and Quthbullapur, where new colleges have been approved, and to the people of Mulugu, Narsampet, Gadwal, and Narayanpet, where colleges were approved last month, Harish Rao said.

The previous KCR government had secured funds and land for eight new medical colleges, but due to administrative delays under the Congress government, only four were approved last month by the NMC. The Congress government has since appealed to the Centre, promising to meet all necessary conditions, and we are pleased that four additional colleges have now been approved, he added.

# VMC Commissioner asks officials to drain water from roads

Public urged to rely on VMC-supplied drinking water

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra is actively addressing the aftermath of flooding in various parts of the city, by touring the affected areas and providing guidance to residents. During his visit to Nandamuri Nagar, Vambay Colony, KV Kandrika, and the CVR Flyover on Wednesday, he urged the public to prioritise their safety by relying on the VMC-supplied drinking water provided through tankers, rather than using piped water for drinking.

Dhyanchandra emphasised the importance of promptly removing garbage and waste from the roads and ensuring proper dewatering of floodwaters. He warned that stagnant water on the roads could lead to seasonal diseases. To achieve

this, VMC has deployed 465 vehicles for sanitation maintenance, he explained.

With the support of Minister for Municipal Administration & Urban Development P Narayana, the VMC is using an array of equipment, including 184 tractors, 122 tipper, 65 JCBs, and other machinery like Bobcats, dozers, excavators, and cranes to expedite the dewatering and cleaning process. Additionally, roads are being cleaned immediately after dewatering, he added.

Dhyanchandra also noted that 6,830 sanitation workers, alongside 950 sanitary supervisors and 62 sanitary nodal officers, have been deployed for the initiative from other municipal corporations and municipalities in the State. The sanitation process is being supervised by 149 Ward Secretariat staff and 32 Special Officers, he added.

# Safety, norms ignored in restaurants and bars

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam's vibrant restaurant and bar scene is being marred by a rampant disregard for safety and regulatory norms, exposing a serious regulatory gap that is largely being overlooked by authorities. Despite clear guidelines, several establishments are operating without necessary licences, including fire safety clearances, food licences, and trade permits.

During an inspection by the city police on Wednesday, it was discovered that 33 establishments lacked adequate parking facilities, and 60 bars were operating without a fire safety NOC, raising significant public safety concerns. "What will happen in the event of an emergency? Are we going to wait for a disaster before taking action?" questioned a senior police officer.

Many suspect the involvement of prohibition and excise officials in turning a blind eye to these irregularities, with revenue-generating potential leading to regulatory leniency. "The so-called 'formalities' are nothing but a way to extract money from the operators. We all know the officials are making lakhs by keeping silent on violations," said a source.

# Kits distributed to flood-affected in Vijayawada



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Among many NGOs that are carrying out relief activities in the flood-affected areas in Vijayawada, Amrita Hastam Charitable Trust has been continuously extending support to the victims in all ways ever since the first day. Every day they have been visiting the inundated colonies and providing food, water, milk and biscuits.

On Wednesday, the Trust members visited Vambay Colony under the direction of its president Dara Karunasree, and distributed groceries and clothes. They distributed the

kits that included steel glass, plates, blankets, towels, water bottle, bun, chips packet, biscuit packet etc.

Karunasree said that their Charitable Trust has been distributing food, drinking water, milk, curd, biscuits, buns, chips to the needy in many places like Ranigari Thota, Swati Theater, Labor Colony, RTC Workshop Road, Vambay Colony, Ajjithsingh Nagar, etc.

The Trust members include Gudivada Krishna Kishore, K Anjaney, Srija from Helping Hands Hyderabad, Asif Ex Army, Purna M Events, Srinivas, Yarlagadda Babu, Naga Babu, Durga and others.

# School student brutally beaten by teacher

Mandal Education Officers summon teacher Palli Venugopalrao for questioning

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

A fourth-grade student was brutally beaten by his teacher for failing to solve math calculations correctly. Udayapuram Mokshit, a student of Government Primary School, was subjected to corporal punishment by teacher Palli Venugopalrao, leaving him with severe bruises. "I was struggling to complete my math homework, and the teacher hit me with a cane," Mokshit said. "I couldn't understand why he was so angry with me."



"Physical punishment is strictly prohibited in schools, regardless of the circumstances. We will not tolerate such behaviour," said Tulsu Rao. "We will take stern action against the teacher and ensure that he is held accountable for his actions."

His parents, Sudhir and Sukanya, were horrified to discover the extent of the injuries and immediately sought help from local authorities. "We were devastated to see our child in such a state. No child deserves to be treated like this," said Sudhir. "We demand justice for our son and want to ensure that no other child suffers like this."

Mandal Education Officers D. Tulsu Rao and Chinna Rao took swift action, summoning the teacher for questioning. While Venugopalrao downplayed the incident, the MEOs deemed it unacceptable and issued a show-cause notice.

# ITDA introduces Mauritius pineapple to farmers

Mauritius pineapple variety to be cultivated over 90 acres in Seethampeta, Bhamini mandals

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

The Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) is set to revolutionise the fortunes of local pineapple farmers in Seethampeta by introducing the Mauritius pineapple variety. This move addresses the long-standing challenges faced by farmers growing the local Simhachalam variety, which has struggled with poor returns due to subpar quality and limited storage life.

The pilot project will see the

Mauritius pineapple variety cultivated over 90 acres in Seethampeta and Bhamini mandals, marking a significant shift from the less lucrative Simhachalam variety. "The Simhachalam variety has proven to be a poor performer," said SV Ganesh, Project/Horticulture Officer (PHO) at ITDA, Seethampeta. "It's slightly sour, of low quality, and has a limited storage life, forcing farmers to sell at reduced prices."

In contrast, the Mauritius pineapple variety offers a promising alter-



native. "It is a game-changer," Ganesh explained. "It boasts a longer storage life and yields heavier fruit, selling at approximately Rs 50 per kg, providing a much-needed boost in market value." Despite past setbacks, ITDA remains optimistic. "We're adopting the Mauritius variety on an experimental basis. The input costs are similar, but the potential for higher returns is substantial," Ganesh noted.

The initiative is a strategic effort to improve the economic conditions of local farmers. By enhancing the

profitability and sustainability of pineapple farming, ITDA aims to provide farmers with a viable path to financial stability and success. The call for tenders to procure Mauritius pineapple suckers marks the beginning of a new chapter in the region's agricultural landscape. "The introduction of the Mauritius variety is a crucial step towards transforming the local pineapple industry," said a local farmer. "We're hopeful that this new variety will bring better returns and improve our livelihoods."

# Army conducts emergency relief operations at Kandrakota

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Emergency flood relief operations by the Indian Army are going on in response to the potential threat at Kandrakota in Peddapuram due to the Yeleswaram Reservoir's conditions. Authorities have been closely monitoring the situation following concerns of a likely breach affecting approximately 500 families in the vicinity.

A preliminary reconnaissance mission was conducted by emergency teams in coordination with the Tehsildar of Peddapuram. The inspection, focusing particularly on the sluice gates of the Kandrakota area, has confirmed that there are no breaches at this time.

In preparation for any sudden change in conditions, a Flood Relief Quick Response Team (QRT) consisting of two boat assault units (BAUTs) is stationed at a local school in Marlawa village, within the Kandrakota region, ready for immediate deployment.

Residents in the affected and surrounding areas were advised to stay informed through official channels and be prepared to follow evacuation orders if issued.



# Flood situation in Konaseema, EG, WG districts turns grim

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

The flood situation in Konaseema, East Godavari and West Godavari has turned to be grim as the Godavari River is receiving heavy inflow and the second danger signal has been issued at Dowleswaram project.

As the Gollaprolu-Pithapuram highway is submerged in the flood water, the police diverted the vehicular traffic via Achampet junction in Kakinada district. The vehicles coming from Visakhapatnam and going to Kakinada were diverted via Kattipudi national highway. Jagnanna colony, Surampet, SC pet in Gollaprolu mandal an Raparathi, Rayavaram, B Prathipadu in Pithapuram mandal and Esukapalli and Nagulapalli and Ramanakka villages in Kottapali mandal were inundated in the flood water. Aggravating the flood situation, the Gouthami and Vrudda Gowtham, the tributaries of the river Godavari are also in spate with heavy inflow in Konaseema district. The villagers of Kanakayalanka, Burugulanka, Anaganilanka, Arigelavaripet, G Pedapudilanka, Ayuodyalanka, Peddamalanka, Veeravallipalem and



Aienavallilanka were using boats to come out of the villages.

Over 13 lakh cusecs of water was being discharged to the downstream at the Dowleswaram barrage and the authorities issued a second warning. East Godavari district Collector Prashanti directed the officials to be on high alert in the next 24 hours as several villages are likely to be inundated with the Godavari flood water in Konaseema district. She also asked the officials to postpone

the immersion of Ganesh idols to two day as the river Godavari is in spate now.

The water level stood at 50 feet at Bhadrachalam. The inflow to the Dowleswaram project would increase to 14 lakhs in the next 24 hours, the Collector announced. So far 200 people living in the low-lying areas were shifted to the relief camps in East Godavari district.

In Konaseema district, the road connectivity to the Ainavilli village was cut off as flood water

was overflowing on the road. The people living in the low-lying areas were being shifted to the relief camps on boats. Konaseema district Collector Mahesh Kumar visited some of the vulnerable villages and reviewed the flood situation.

In Eluru district, several villages in Kukunoor and Velerupadu mandals were inundated in the Godavari flood water. The road between Vinjaram and Cheeravelli was marooned in the flood water and

vehicular traffic was suspended. The road connectivity to 25 villages in the mandals has been cut off for the last two days.

Meanwhile, Panchayat Raj Minister K Pawan Kalyan reviewed the Yeluru rivulet flood situation with the Kakinada district Collector over phone. The Collector explained to Pawan Kalyan that crops in over 62,000 acres were inundated by the flood water. The road connectivity between Pithauram-Raparathi, Peddapuram-Gudivada, Samalkot-Pithapuram was cut off as flood water overflowed on the road at various places. The teams were working at the maximum level to shift the affected people to safer places, Kakinada district Collector said.

The Collector clarified that the flood water of Yeluru stream has started receding. At present the rivulet was receiving 12,567 cusecs of water. As against the full capacity of 24.11 TMC of Yeluru reservoir, 22.16 TMC of water is impounded. The flood water of Yeluru stream was being released by lifting four crest gates to the downstream. Minister Pawan Kalyan asked the Collector to utilize the services of NDRF, SDRF and Army personnel to carry out relief operations in the flood hit area.



## Arts College inks MoU with Archaeology Department

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Historic agreement was signed between the History Department of the Government College (A), Rajahmundry and the Archaeology and Museums Department of the Andhra Pradesh Government here on Wednesday.

This agreement aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills between the Archaeological Department and the History Department. Both of them have agreed to collaborate on sharing expertise and conducting research activities, engaging students

actively in these processes.

In addition, the agreement covers the organization of seminars, workshops, and various activities to enhance awareness of archaeological topics. Other activities include organising field trips, internships, archaeological data collection and analysis in and around Rajahmundry.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ramachandra said, "Our collaboration with the AP Government's Department of Archaeology and Museums will provide our students with unique opportunities to engage with history and heritage preservation. This partnership

aligns perfectly with our commitment to academic excellence and community engagement."

The event saw participation from distinguished individuals including K. Timmaraju, Assistant Director, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Dr. B. Anjani Kumari, Head of the History Department, Academic Coordinator Dr. Rajeshwari, and IQAC Coordinator Dr. A.A. Annapurna, Vice Principal Dr. K. S. Sreeram Murthy, Contract lecturer (History) P. Tulasi Kumari, Guest Faculty (History) Varaprasad and students.

## Officials directed to promote horticulture crops with NREGS linkage

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Collector A Thameem Ansariya underlined the need of encouraging the horticulture crops in the district.

The Collector on Wednesday visited flood damaged Teegaleru stream culvert at Chinna Dornala village on Wednesday. She inquired with the officials about the loss due to the floods. Later she laid the foundation stone for the digging up a borewell and other works. She directed the RWS

officials to take steps to ensure that the borewells get recharged after a spell of rain.

The Collector visited some horticulture crops at Ramachandrakota village. She spoke to a horticulture farmer Ambati Tirupati Reddy and asked him how much he invested to raise the guava crop. She also asked him how much he earns per year on the guava crop.

The Collector directed the officials to encourage the farmers to raise horticulture crops by linking the NREGS. The

officials apprised the Collector that Rs 4.57 lakh was granted to the farmer under NREGA for three years with 100 percent subsidy.

Later, the Collector visited the Junior College at Pedda Dornala village and planted a sapling on the College campus. She interacted with the Intermediate students and exhorted them to excel in studies for a radiant future. The College principal explained to the Collector that additional classrooms were required for Intermediate students.



The Collector also visited the health centre and inspected the medical services being provided to the patients. Markapuram sub-Collector Sahadeeth Venkat Trinag and Tahsildar Santhi were among those who accompanied the Collector.

Later the Collector held a meeting with the officials and reviewed the implementation of the PM Janman scheme in the district. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Thameem Ansariya said that with the aim of development of the tribal

community people, the Central government has directed 11 indicators related to various departments with the aim of providing safe housing, clean drinking water, better health care, education, nutrition, road and telecommunications connectivity, as well as opportunities for sustainable livelihood.

"The officials of the relevant departments should review those indicators from time to time and the officials of the relevant departments should work hard to improve the living standards of the tribals.

The MPDOs should examine the works undertaken by the respective departments at the field level," the Collector directed the officials.

The Collector ordered the officials of the departments concerned to take special care in making the tribal community people aware of the objective and main purpose of the PM Jan Man scheme. RDT K Nagaraju, ITDA PO Suresh Kumar, DTWO Jagannadha Rao and DRDA PD Vasundhara were among those who attended the meeting.



## Vishnu Educational Institutions donate Rs 25 L

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Vishnu Educational Institutions chairman BV Raju has donated Rs 25 lakh for the flood relief operations.

BV Raju handed over the cheque to district Collector Chadalavada Nagarani here on Wednesday.

BV Raju donated Rs 25 lakh for the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to carry out relief operations in the flood hit areas and extend help to the flood victims. Collector Nagarani appreciated BV Raju for contributing Rs 25 lakh for the CMRF. The Collector informed that so far Rs 47,88,500 was donated by 13 people. West Godavari has

stood at top in sending required food and other commodities to the flood affected areas, the Collector highlighted.

Collector Nagarani said that so far West Godavari district has sent 4.09 lakh food packets, 1.85 lakh water bottles, 1.10 lakh water sachets, 9,500 bread, 1.62 lakh biscuit packets, 21,000 packets of rusks and 77 bags of rice bags of 25 KGs to the flood victims. Moreover, candles, bananas, guava fruits, milk and bread packets and vegetables were also sent for the flood victims from the district in vehicles. Joint Collector T Rahul Kumar Reddy was also present.

## 13 red sanders logs seized; two smugglers arrested



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Red Sanders Anti Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) personnel seized 13 red sander logs and arrested two smugglers at Kesapuram check-post on the Rayachoti-Madanapalli highway in Annamayya district.

A RSASTF team led by RI Chiranjeevulu and RSI M Muralidhar Reddy conducted checking of vehicles at the check-post on Rayachoti-Madanapalli highway.

The police noticed a car moving suspiciously. The RSASTF team stopped the car but the car went forward without stopping there. However, the car dashed against a boulder and stopped. The two occupants of the car tried to flee but the task force personnel chased and apprehended them. The police checked the car and found 13 red sander logs. The logs were being transported illegally. SI Rafi registered a case. Another task force team led

by RSI Raghavendra arrested and seized an axe from them. The task force police said that when they were conducting combing they noticed a person sitting on a motorcycle speaking to some persons.

When the police task force team was approaching them they managed to escape into the forest.

However the task force personnel arrested one person and seized the motorcycle. CI Suresh Kumar registered a case.

## Two youths drowned in canal

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Two youths were drowned in an irrigation canal located at Palapadu road near here on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased Pasumarthi Santosh (22) and Surupul Venkata Sudhir (9) entered the canal for a bath. They slipped and drowned in the canal. The bodies were fished out from the canal. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for post-mortem.



## Heavy inflow continues to Srisailem project, two crest gates lifted



PNS ■ KURNOOL

The heavy inflow continued to the Srisailem project on Wednesday prompting the authorities to lift two crest gates.

According to the project engineers, the Srisailem project was receiving 1.44 lakh cusecs of water. The engineers lifted two crest gates of the project to release 1.23

lakh cusecs of water to the downstream Nagarjuna Sagar Project. The project engineers maintained 883.80 feet water level at the project against the full capacity of 885 feet. As of now, 208.72 TMC of water impounded at the project against its capacity of 215 TMC. Meanwhile, the hydropower is being generated through the left and right canals.

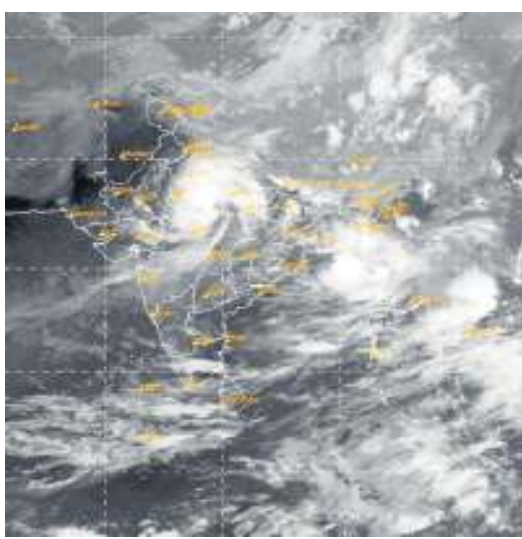
## Light to moderate rain likely in AP over next one week

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said strong surface winds with speed ranging from 30-40 Kmph is likely to prevail at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days.

The southwest monsoon has been weak in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema. Rain occurred at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours.



## NIT inks MoU with Sankar Foundation Eye Hospital

PNS ■ ELURU

National Institute of Technology Andhra Pradesh (NIT AP) has formalized a partnership with Sankar Foundation Eye Hospital, Visakhapatnam, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The signing ceremony occurred at IIT Hyderabad, with NIT AP's in-charge Director Dr. B.S. Murthy and Dr. T. Ravindra, CQI and Research Director of Sankar Eye Hospital, representing their respective institutions.

This collaboration aims to enhance early detection of glaucoma, a serious eye condition that can lead to blindness. Research under Dr. Sri Phanikrishna Karri from the Electrical Engineering



**This collaboration aims to enhance early detection of glaucoma, a serious eye condition that can lead to blindness. Research under Dr. Sri Phanikrishna Karri from the Electrical Engineering Department at NIT AP will leverage artificial intelligence to develop an app for diagnosing glaucoma, facilitating timely consultations with eye care professionals, especially in rural areas lacking adequate medical facilities**

Department at NIT AP will leverage artificial intelligence to develop an app for diagnosing glaucoma, facilitating timely consultations with eye care professionals, especially in rural areas lacking adequate medical facilities.

Dr. Murthy emphasized the significance of this MoU for fostering collaboration among doctors, NIT faculty, and research students, allowing them to share insights and utilize advanced equipment.

This agreement marks the 29th MoU signed by NIT AP with various organizations for research and student development initiatives, informs NIT Dean Research and Consultancy Prof. G.R.K. Sastry.

This MoU has been inked in the presence of Sankar Eye Hospital Medical Education Director P. Krishna Prasad, Retina Services Department Head Dr. T. Krishna, General Manager K. Radhakrishnan, DGM A. Ramesh Kumar and others.

ACROSS THE STATES



ED attaches fresh assets of Nirav Modi

The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday said it has attached fresh assets worth Rs 29.75 crore of fugitive diamond trader Nirav Modi under the anti-money laundering law. A provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to attach these assets that are in the form of bank deposits, land, and buildings, it said in a statement. The agency, which has been probing Modi in the alleged USD 2 billion fraud against the Punjab National Bank for over five years now, has attached assets worth Rs 2,596 crore in India and abroad in the past. Modi, 53, is presently lodged in a UK jail and has lost his extradition plea to India in connection with this alleged bank loan fraud case, which is also being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation.



MiG-29s, Jaguars to take part in Exercise Eastern Bridge

An IAF contingent comprising MiG-29s, Jaguars and C-17s will take part in a bilateral military exercise in Oman scheduled to take place on September 11-22 that seeks to enhance interoperability between the air forces of the two countries. This is the seventh edition of Exercise Eastern Bridge which will take place at Air Force Base Masirah. The bilateral exercise endeavours to enhance interoperability between the Royal Oman Air Force and the Indian Air Force and shall provide a platform for both teams to engage in a series of joint training missions designed to strengthen strategic cooperation and operational readiness, the defence ministry said in a statement. The IAF contingent comprises MiG-29 and Jaguar fighter jets and C-17 transport aircraft, it said. Exercise Eastern Bridge VII aims to improve tactical and operational skills, foster mutual understanding and bolster the ability of both air forces to collaborate effectively in diverse scenarios.



Naga govt denies permission to 'Gau Mahasabha'

The Nagaland government has decided not to grant permission to 'Gau Mahasabha' (mega meeting for cows) in Kohima on September 28, a senior minister said on Wednesday. Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, Swami Avimuktेश्वaranand Saraswati, is scheduled to preside over the meeting. In Christian-majority Nagaland, beef is consumed by a majority of the population. The decision not to allow the programme was taken during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, government spokesperson and minister C L John told reporters here. The Cabinet highlighted the protection given under Article 371A of the Constitution on the religious and social practices of the Nagas as well as the Naga customary law and procedure, John said. During the meeting, the Cabinet was apprised of the opposition voiced by various civil society organisations and political parties in the state.

Tribunal upholds ban imposed on 5 J&K separatist groups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A judicial tribunal of the Delhi High Court has confirmed the Centre's ban on separatist group Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir (Bhat faction) and four factions of the Jammu and Kashmir People's League (JKPL) for threatening India's integrity by promoting, aiding and abetting the secession of Jammu and Kashmir through terrorism.

Two separate orders -- one for the Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir (Bhat faction) and another for the four factions of the JKPL -- upholding the ban imposed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was issued by the tribunal consisting of Justice Neena Bansal Krishna,

a Delhi High Court judge. The Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir (MCJK-Bhat) was declared a banned association by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) through a notification on February 28.

The tribunal was constituted on March 18 for the purpose of adjudicating whether or not there was sufficient cause for declaring the MCJK-Bhat an unlawful association.

"And, whereas, the said tribunal, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (3) of section 4 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, passed an order on August 23, 2024, confirming the declaration made in the said notification," the home ministry said through a notification issued on Tuesday.

PM Modi pitches India to chip makers

Stresses supply chain resilience

PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said resilience of supply chains is critical for the economy as he made a pitch to boost investments in domestic manufacturing of semiconductors -- the foundation of everything from smartphones to EV and AI.

Speaking at the SEMICON 2024 conference on the outskirts of the national capital, the Prime Minister said the Covid pandemic showed the importance of the supply chain and underscored the need to act to ward off any disruption.

"Whether it was Covid or war, there hasn't been a single industry to remain unaffected by supply chain disruptions," he said.

Stressing the importance of a resilient supply chain, the Prime Minister expressed pride in India's central role in



building resilience across sectors, positioning the country as a key player in the global mission to safeguard supply chains.

"Resilience of the supply chain is very important," he said. "India is working to cre-

ate the same in different sectors of the economy."

A halt in flights, factory shutdowns in China, and surges in demand for specific products broke supply chains during Covid-19. One of the sectors impacted was chips

that form a critical part of every electronic device.

Prime Minister showcased India's reformist regime, stable policies and a market that has tasted technology to make a strong pitch for investments in semiconductor manufacturing.

BRICS NSAs meet

Doval interacts with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Wednesday called on the BRICS nations to work together to effectively deal with terrorism and challenges emanating from the digital domain. In his address at a conclave of the national security advisors of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) in St Petersburg, Doval also called for reform of multilateralism saying existing structures are no longer capa-

ble of handling modern threats and sensitive issues of common concerns.

At the venue of the conclave, Doval also had a brief interaction with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi.

Doval and Wang are set to hold a bilateral meeting on Thursday on the sidelines of the BRICS conclave.

"The wide participation in the meeting today testifies to the fact that there is an urgent need to reform multilateralism if we are to restore credibility," he said.

Gram Nyayalayas will improve access to justice: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said establishment of Gram Nyayalayas across the country would help improve access to justice.

An Act passed by Parliament in 2008 provided for the establishment of Gram Nyayalayas at the grassroots level for providing access to justice to the citizens at their doorsteps and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to anyone because of social, economic or other disabilities.

A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai was hearing a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and all states for taking steps to set up 'Gram Nyayalayas' under the supervision of the apex court.

During the hearing, advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for petitioner NGO National Federation of Societies for Fast Justice and others, said only about five to six per cent of Gram Nyayalayas have been set up till now.

"Some of the states are say-

ing we don't need Gram Nyayalayas because we have Nyaya Panchayats," Bhusan

judicial officers.

The bench appointed a senior advocate to assist it as an



A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai was hearing a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and all states for taking steps to set up 'Gram Nyayalayas' under the supervision of the apex court

told the bench, which also comprised Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan.

He said Nyaya Panchayats were not really the same as Gram Nyayalayas, which have

amicus curiae in the matter.

"Sooner these Nyayalayas are established... it's better for access to justice," the bench observed.

An advocate appearing for

the Himachal Pradesh High Court told the bench that the high court has been writing to the state government since 2009 requesting for establishing Gram Nyayalayas.

The bench noted that the counsel appearing for the Himachal Pradesh High Court has stated that in spite of repeated reminders to the state for establishment of Gram Nyayalayas, no steps have been taken in the matter.

The apex court directed the Himachal Pradesh government to respond before the next date of hearing.

It posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The bench asked states or high courts that have not yet filed their affidavits in the matter to file those within three weeks.

While hearing the matter on July 12, the apex court had observed, "In our view, the establishment of more Gram Nyayalayas would, apart from providing access to justice at affordable price and providing justice at door steps, also de-log the huge pendency of matters before the trial courts."

BJP's Sikh cell demand apology from Rahul over his remarks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the Delhi BJP's Sikh cell staged a protest against Rahul Gandhi near his 10, Janpath residence here on Wednesday, demanding an apology from the Congress leader over his remarks in the US concerning the community. Raising slogans and carrying- placards, the protesters, including women, tried to approach Gandhi's residence from Vigyan Bhawan, but were stopped by police at a barricade.

Addressing a gathering of several hundred Indian Americans in Washington DC on Monday, Gandhi accused the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of considering some religions, languages and communities inferior than others and said the fight in India is about this and not about politics.

Asking the name of a turbaned person in the gathering, Gandhi said, "The fight is about whether a Sikh is going to be allowed to wear his turban in India or a kada in India. Or he, as a Sikh, is going to be able to go to a gurdwara. That is what the fight is about. And not just for him, for all religions." The protesters raised slogans against the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, demanding his apology for "humiliating" Sikhs and held the Congress responsible for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the country.

Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national spokesperson R P Singh alleged that Gandhi has "insulted" Sikhs through his statement. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Sikh community is witnessing progress and the members of the community feel safe in India.



President Murmu awards 15 nurses for outstanding service

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fifteen nurses received an award from President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday for their outstanding commitment to duty and service to the community.

At a function held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the president gave the National Florence Nightingale Awards 2024 to the nursing professionals, a health ministry statement said.

Speaking at the event, Union Health Minister J P Nadda said that the accolade will inspire

the nurses to continue pushing the boundaries in public service, and added that nurses are the "backbone of the healthcare sector".

The National Florence Nightingale Award was instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India in the year 1973 as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by the nurses and nursing professionals to the society.

A total of 15 awards are given in the category of registered auxiliary nurses and

midwife, registered nurses and midwife and registered lady visitor, the statement said.

The award is given to outstanding nursing personnel employed in central, states and Union territories and voluntary organisations.

The nurse in her/his regular job in the hospital or community settings, educational or administrative setting is eligible for the national award.

Each award consists of a Certificate of Merit, a cash award of Rs 1,00,000 and a medal, the statement said.

FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Niti Aayog group pitches for a separate law

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An expert group constituted by Niti Aayog to prepare a framework for future pandemic preparedness has suggested enacting separate legislation to handle public health crises.

The report titled 'Future Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response - A Framework for Action' said learning from the experience of COVID-19, the experts have realised that responding in the first 100 days of an outbreak is crucial for effective management.

"A separate Public Health Emergency Management Act (PHEMA) is proposed to facilitate the management of any public health crisis.

"The PHEMA can address various aspects beyond epidemics, including non-communicable diseases, disasters, and bio-terrorism, and should be in place for a developed country," it said.

It will allow a holistic approach to health management, covering prevention, control, and disaster response, the report added.

"The Act would also provide for the creation of skilled public health cadres at national and state levels," it said.

The report also observed that it is critical to be ready with strategies and countermeasures, which can be made available within the first 100 days.

The report proposed that an Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) chaired by the Cabinet Secretary be established for Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response, and a well-oiled machinery is put into action, which prepares and readies itself before any emergency.

"A well-structured score-card mechanism should regularly monitor the progress of key targets," the report said.

Wealthy Indians send kids overseas for education: Survey

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Over three-fourth of wealthy Indians have sent or are planning to send their kids overseas for education, according to a survey.

The survey of 1,456 Indians, having investable surplus between Rs 84 lakh (USD 100,000) and nearly Rs 17 crore (USD 2 million), conducted in March found the strong urge for overseas education with 78 per cent of the respondents saying they are keen on a foreign education for their children.

Investable surplus is the amount set aside for investment from overall net worth.

The Global Quality of Life 2024 survey commissioned by foreign

lender HSBC said the United States is top overseas destination for Indians, followed by the United

Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Singapore.

So strong is the urge for foreign education for the child that the parents are willing to suffer financial strains as

well, the survey said, pointing out that the investment in education may come at the sacrifice of retirement savings.

The expected or actual annual cost of overseas education works out at USD 62,364, and may use up to 64 per cent of parents' retire-

ment savings. Parents resort to dipping into general savings, taking loans and selling assets to fund the overseas education, the survey said.

The quality of overseas education tops the list of primary reason for considering the overseas education, followed closely by the possibility to specialise in an area, the survey said.

The survey said that financial concerns are the biggest worry for parents when the kid flies out for education, and followed by others like social or mental concerns and physical or health concerns.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Presidential debate showdown

In a heated TV debate, Harris and Trump present sharply contrasting visions on issues like healthcare and economy

The 2024 presidential race is shaping up to be one of the most intense and polarised in US history. At the forefront of this political battle is a head-to-head TV debate between two defining figures—Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump. Their exchange, filled with sharp contrasts in policy, tone, and vision for America, laid bare the deep ideological divide within the nation. Vice President Kamala Harris took the stage emphasising unity, justice, and inclusivity. Known for her dynamic speaking style and sharp prosecutorial background, she framed her narrative as one that focuses on healing America's divisions while pushing for progressive reforms. Harris reiterated her commitment to building a more equitable society, focusing on issues such as healthcare reform, boost to small businesses, climate action, and women's rights to make choices about themselves. One of her most resonant points during the debate was her advocacy for women's reproductive rights, which she positioned as not just a women's issue but a fundamental human right. However, Harris's challenges lie in overcoming the perception of being too liberal for moderate voters.



On the other hand, Donald Trump, came out swinging with a populist message centred on nationalism, economic protectionism, and anti-establishment rhetoric. Trump focused on border security, economic growth, and energy independence, tapping into the concerns of many rural and working-class Americans who have felt left behind in the evolving global economy. At one point in time, he called Harris a Marxist implying her left-of-centre agenda. Trump's ability to connect with his base through a straightforward

approach remains his powerful asset. His rhetoric around deregulation and America-first policies resonated with voters who see him as a champion of their economic interests. However, in most of the debate, he looked less confident and defensive, unlike his debate with Joe Biden where he was more aggressive. Besides, he was floored by Kamala's facts that he was criticised by his staff and even Republicans including Dick Cheney were rooting for her. His handling of key issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and the January 6 Capitol riot also came up in the debate which further receded his confidence and put him on the backfoot. The big question is who resonates more with the people and who would eventually win. Right now, it looks like a fair competition but with Kamala having a slight edge, though it would be folly to disregard Trump's fanbase and constituency which is proactive and loud. Many of the cherished goals of Kamala like climate action, Israel policy, and Gun policy do not go down well with many Americans who would be looking up to Trump as their representative. Trump, continues to resonate with a significant portion of the American population—particularly white, rural, and working-class—who feel disconnected from the progressive direction the country has taken in recent years. His simplistic ideas may not work but they do sway people.

## PICTALK



Low clouds cover the mountains after rainfall, in Shimla, PTI

## Alzheimer's: Early detection is the key

Thanks to the new technology, early detection with accuracy of Alzheimer's is now possible which can lead to better outcomes through timely interventions

Alzheimer's disease is one of the most challenging neurological disorders, affecting millions globally. It is characterised by progressive memory loss, cognitive decline, and behavioural changes. While the disease is often associated with older adults, the importance of detecting it in its early stages cannot be overstated. Early detection allows for timely intervention, which can slow down the progression of the disease, offering patients more years of quality life. Moreover, early diagnosis empowers individuals and their families to plan for the future, make informed decisions, and access the latest treatments.



stages of Alzheimer's.

Researchers are now focused on identifying the disease's biomarkers before significant memory problems arise, providing a window of opportunity for early intervention. Beyond medical benefits, early detection has psychological and social advantages. It allows patients to maintain independence for a longer period, reduces anxiety associated with uncertainty, and provides clarity to families about caregiving responsibilities. Detecting Alzheimer's in its early stages has become a critical aspect of managing the disease effectively. With the advent of advanced diagnostic tools like CLEIA, early detection is now more achievable than ever. Agappe Diagnostics in collaboration with Fujirebio Holdings of Japan, has made a groundbreaking advancement in India's healthcare sec-

tor by introducing Chemiluminescent Enzyme Immunoassay (CLEIA) technology. This development is a monumental step forward in the indigenous manufacturing of cutting-edge diagnostic tools, specifically designed for early detection of critical diseases like Alzheimer's, Cancer, and Gastrointestinal disorders. "We have long standing productive relations with India that are all set to further strengthen and flourish," said Takashi Ariyoshi, deputy chief of Japanese embassy in India. CLEIA, an evolved version of the widely recognized Chemiluminescent Immunoassay (CLIA), merges the sensitivity of chemiluminescence detection with the precision of enzyme immunoassays. This powerful combination allows for the accurate detection of low concentrations of biomarkers, making it a game-changer in early diagnosis. In the case of Alzheimer's, early identification of disease-specific biomarkers can significantly slow down cognitive decline by enabling timely interventions, including medications and lifestyle changes.

In modern In-Vitro Diagnostics (IVD), CLEIA plays a crucial role not just in early detection but also in disease progression monitoring and guiding personalized treatment. These aspects are particularly relevant in Alzheimer's care, where early diagnosis opens the door to medical treatments and cognitive therapies that can prolong independence and improve quality of life.

This technology is a significant leap in advancing immunoassay technology in India. Through this partnership, cartridge-based CLEIA systems have been developed and launched, supporting the healthcare system with advanced, locally manufactured diagnostic tools. Besides, beyond Alzheimer's, CLEIA is instrumental in detecting cancer markers at an early stage, significantly improving survival rates for patients. The Inod-Japanese partnership underlines the benefits of the "Make in India" initiative, reducing dependency on imports in critical healthcare technologies. (The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



KUSHAL JEENA

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

## Haryana elections: BJP faces Congress' resurgence

As Haryana gears up for its high-stakes assembly elections, the political landscape is marked by shifting alliances and big promises



KALYANI SHANKAR

Who will emerge victorious in Haryana's upcoming assembly polls?

Will the ruling BJP retain the state, or will the resurgent Congress seize the opportunity to win? The nation is watching as the results of the impending polls in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Jammu, and Kashmir will shape these states' future and significantly impact the national political landscape. Haryana is gearing up for a diverse, multi-cornered contest with 90 seats.

The main competition is between the BJP and the Congress. Still, other parties like AAP, Samajwadi Party, CPI(M), and Haryana Lokhit Party are also in the field, adding diversity to the electoral dynamics. The BJP, JJP, and Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) have allied with Dushyant Chautala as their chief ministerial candidate. At the same time, the INLD and BSP have chosen Abhay Singh Chautala as theirs.

The BJP and Congress have not declared their chief ministerial faces, but former chief minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda is leading the battle for Congress. The new BJP chief minister, Saini, is facing internal problems. In the case of the BJP, Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and MLA Lakshman Dass Napa left the party after being denied tickets. Other prominent figures and district leaders resigned after not being considered for tickets. During seat-sharing discussions with its coalition partner AAP, Congress leaders in Haryana, including Hooda, are willing to concede only a few seats.

The Congress, led by former chief minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda, is optimistic about returning to power after a ten-year gap. The party is strategically wooing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Samajwadi Party for an alliance. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is facing allegations of involvement in a liquor scam. The Haryana polls are crucial. The BJP wants a third term, while the Congress aims to regain power. Other



regional parties are also vying for a share of power. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP won all ten seats.

In 2024, it only secured five seats, with the Congress taking the other five. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP, lacking the majority, formed the government with the help of JD(U) and Telugu Desam. Before 2014, the BJP was a minor player in Haryana. Only after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the party gained momentum. In 2019, the BJP formed a government with 40 seats, just six short of the majority. Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), which won ten seats, supported the BJP. However, JJP recently ended its alliance with the BJP.

In Haryana, the BJP's vote share decreased from 58.2% in 2019 to 46.11% in 2024. This was mainly due to the farmers demanding a legal minimum support price (MSP) guarantee. In 2024, the INDIA bloc, a coalition of regional parties and Congress surpassed the BJP's vote share. In March, BJP replaced Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini. The new Chief Minister has introduced welfare schemes, promised to fill government job vacancies,

and aims to leverage the Jat issue. However, the BJP does not have Jat's support. Also, Saini's short six-month tenure has limited his impact. The Congress is upbeat after doubling its Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Congress focuses on joblessness, inflation, farmer's issues, and the controversial Agniveer scheme. The party is preparing its manifesto based on public suggestions, which includes welfare schemes like a Rs 6,000 pension for old-age people and 300 units of free electricity. The party also counts on 452,000 first-time voters and 4.09 million young voters. Congress aims to unite the opposition votes, while the BJP seeks to divide them strategically. AAP has some influence in border areas of Haryana. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is trying to keep the Indian coalition intact. The AAP has agreed to fight in five seats. There are rumblings in the Congress, too. The Congress is facing factional fights. It is divided into two groups led by Hooda and Kumari Saini. The party tries to satisfy both factions, but Hooda holds more influence because of his previous role as chief minister. Turncoats and relatives of former chief min-

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MAMATA IN THE DOCK

Madam — West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose has urged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to comply with Article 167(c) of the Indian Constitution by informing Raj Bhavan of all decisions made by the state cabinet. This request comes in the wake of the public outcry following the gruesome rape and murder of a woman doctor at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

A statement from the Governor's office, issued, emphasized that under Article 167, it is the Chief Minister's duty to provide the Governor with details of all cabinet decisions relating to the state's administration and any proposed legislation. The statement also reminded the Chief Minister that updates should be provided on matters discussed by the cabinet, especially when a minister's decision was not taken into consideration by the cabinet. The Governor's office criticised the state administration and law enforcement, stating that public perception had condemned their actions in this case.

The statement outlined several concerns, including misinformation given to the victims' parents, alleged tampering of the crime scene, delays in filing the FIR, and the hasty disposal of the body despite the parents' request for more time. Furthermore, it noted that the transfer and reappointment of the Principal of the hospital raised suspicions about the state's intentions, as did the Kolkata Police's alleged attempts to cover up the crime scene tampering. The statement added that civil society and the courts had strongly reprimanded the law enforcement agencies for their handling of the case, particularly regarding the events following the discovery of the victim's body. Kolkata calling shots.

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

### COURTS MUST BRING DOWN PENDENCY

Madam— The time has come for the judicial think tank to put the house in order. The job of the Judges are becoming a thankless one while going by their contin-

### GST relief for the middle class



The 54 GST council meeting held under the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has brought some important relief to the middle class with deduction of tax cuts on sev-

eral items and services apart from cancer drugs. The middle class are burdened with penumbra of taxes on GST, results in upsetting the household budgets. Over the past few years, the taxes are being added up consistently, but the economic stature of the common man in the country are still the same. The banking sector in the country are grappling with cash crunch as the saving capacity of the people have gone down of inflationary spike. The Centre's gross GST collection for FY24 stood at Rs.20.18 lakh crore but the condition of economically crumbling the non BJP states should also be improved and their GST share must be settled. The recommendation to constitute GOM to reduce GST from eighteen percent on health and insurance services seems reasonable and boost up these two sectors if implemented by October. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

using commitment to serve the common man. This is the midfield crunch situation for Indian courts to have strategic timeout while going by the statistics of the pending cases. More than five crore cases are pending in various courts, including district courts, High Courts and the Supreme Court as revealed by the recent report. Without the support from the executive the dream of the courts for the common man will continue to be the herculean task. The trial courts must be filled with enough Judges. Doesn't mean other courts are hands free. The Court should set the accountability to dispose of cases within the stipulated time in all courts? The court should entertain appeals only after the due satisfaction of merits of the lower court order. The court must take stock of the backlogs and put a strategic team to find out reasons for delay. Depending on the nature of the case, prioritise the focus on those cases towards early completion. Besides they should not allow adjournments to eat away the time of courts and litigants time and cost. A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

### LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN INDIA

Madam — The GDP of any country, alongside other factors, depends on the physical health of its citizens. However, a modern sedentary lifestyle is common, and government intervention is needed to encourage physical activity. A national survey revealed that over 200 million Indians are physically inactive, with 155 million adults and 45 million adolescents failing to meet WHO guidelines. The joint study by Dalberg Advisors and Sports and Society Accelerator found that 48% of older adults believe they are too old for physical activity, and 45% think sports are unsafe for girls. Misconceptions, such as physical exertion being harmful to menstruating women or affecting marriage prospects, contribute to the gender gap in physical activity. Women, especially in urban areas, spend 75% of their active time on household chores, leaving little time for exercise. Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

### GOD HAS THE SOLUTION

All we have to do is to take His shelter and remain in it



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

A famous oncologist was being interviewed on television. He was asked by a reporter about the causes of cancer. The doctor replied, "It is over stress mainly." Every time this matter came up, the oncologist emphasized the over stress reason. And we know what over stress is. It is mostly caused by cyclic thinking. We get into some problem and keep on thinking about it. Surely, worry results. The solution has to come from other sources. Aren't we extremely limited in what we know? But we refuse to accept this fact. I will recite three examples of when I found answers provided by God when I was in trouble, and only God could help. Beginning with my nature to fear excessively, I was suffering. One day I prayed sincerely for relief. Suddenly, a thought came that the Bhagavad-Geeta may have a solution.

Didn't Gandhiji turn to this book of eternal wisdom whenever he was faced with some problem? I looked for a knowledgeable person, and located one who was well-versed in the Geeta. I explained my problem. He referred me to verse #2.40, which is, "Neither there is a waste of effort here nor there is opposite effect. Even a little of this Karma-yoga protects one from great fear." This is what I was looking for. The next question was about karma yoga. What does this imply? He explained that all activities about God come under it. He cited examples of praying, having darshan, doing namaskar to God, chanting God's names or some mantra like Ohm and thanking God for favours done. They seemed simple enough and I got started. A connection was made with God. Sure enough, God got interested in me. I began to get intuitions. For example, I had been suffering from headaches mainly in the forehead part



for quite some time. I prayed for help. I got a feeling that I should go to Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place, New Delhi. I did and prayed there sincerely for guidance and help. While returning, I felt that God was asking me to bring Him to my forehead. I was very excited and checked with my spiritual guide.

He confirmed that this is a bona fide process, as the 'ajna (agya) chakra' is located there. I began doing it and astonishingly I was beginning to get some relief. After practice for a few days, the persistent headache was gone. Since then I have been fortunate to not be so troubled by it. I recounted my experience to my spiritual guide. He told me that God is very pleased with me and giving guidance. Another headache appeared, which was only on the right side. I tried everything but there was no relief. Somehow, I had an inkling to look up various choices in Crocin. There was one with caffeine. My sixth sense, which is the same as God's guidance was to take it. Sure enough, there was relief. What happened? I had to know. I had stopped drinking green tea just before getting this strange headache. This tea had caffeine. Now I knew what the connection was. Only God could have known it, and He did. I was suffering headaches due to caffeine withdrawal. Another trouble arose due to the use of a nasal spray.

One spray and I began to feel uneasiness. When I got ready to use it another time, as prescribed, I was feeling quite troubled. Surely, I looked up its composition; it had steroids. God had prevented more damage from happening to me. All we have to do is to take His shelter and remain in it. The question is: why don't we? It is a very slow process. One must have good Sanskars to get started on this journey. Otherwise, one will not get started. Fortunately, I was blessed to have them. Lord Krishna has promised it. "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace." (18.58) This culminates in liberation from the painful cycle of birth and death when God releases us from all sins. (18.66) However, this will take several births after we get started. (6.45) I am counting upon it.

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

# The making of Kerala's catastrophe



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Despite warnings from experts about the perils of unchecked quarrying and deforestation in the Western Ghats, successive governments failed to act, leading to Wayanad disaster



SK Pottekkat, who could be rated as India's best travelogue writer has elaborated on his 1955 visit to Finland. "The country's area is 1,30,119 sq miles out of which 71 per cent is forests. Finland's main source of income is the pine trees grown in its forests. But to get permission from the government to cut down a single pine tree, one has to furnish proof that he has planted six pine saplings," writes Pottekkat in his memoirs.

He was a delegate to the World Peace Council meeting held in Helsinki, the capital city. In 2024, despite a massive industrialisation drive, the country has the tenth highest percentage of forest cover in the world. Pottekkat hailed from Kozhikode, the neighbouring district of Wayanad.

Once the region was full of evergreen forests filled with exotic trees, plants and flowers. Folklore is that the tribal youth who led a team of Englishmen to Wayanad was shot dead by the visitors to ensure that no more outsiders entered the fertile landscape.

But Wayanad has become a teardrop since 30 July 2024 as landslides and flash floods struck the district in quick succession swallowing hundreds of people and their houses. Pinarayi Vijayan, the chief minister, has asked the Centre to release Rs 2,000 crore as the first instalment towards the rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction mission to be undertaken by the Government of Kerala.

He also blamed the Centre for its failure to provide the exact date, time and place of the natural disaster and has vowed to establish the State's early warning system for floods, landslides and heavy rain-falls. Vijayan will outclass the best of the entrepreneurs in the skill of mobilization of resources for the Chief Minister's Disaster Relief Fund.

All media briefings by Vijayan end with him announcing the details of persons who have contributed to the CMDRF in the aftermath of landslides and deluge that devastated Wayanad. But what stands out is the generous offer made by High Range Rural Development Society,



PINARAYI VIJAYAN, THE CHIEF MINISTER, HAS ASKED THE CENTRE TO RELEASE RS 2,000 CRORE AS THE FIRST INSTALMENT TOWARDS THE RESCUE, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION MISSION TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVT OF KERALA

a non-governmental organisation, which came forward to build houses for all those who lost their dwelling places in the flash floods. According to the Kerala Government's estimate, 500 homes were washed away by the gushing waters. The HRDS told the Government that it would rebuild/construct 500 safe and secured houses each of 700 sq ft and costing Rs 10 lakh free of cost.

The NGO also told the government that it would help the landslide victims to set up group farming so that they could earn a reasonably fair monthly income. All the 500 houses to be constructed by the HRDS will feature self-contained guest rooms which could be rented out as part of the homestay programme. But Vijayan and his comrades are cold to the offer. The Centre has asked Vijayan to submit details of the losses suffered in nature's fury and how the State would go ahead with the rehabilitation and reconstruction. Though the disaster struck nearly a month ago, the Government has yet to come out with the details of the losses. In the aftermath of the 2018 floods, Vijayan had demanded Rs 40,000 crore as flood relief which included Rs 20,000 crore to rebuild the roads washed away in the deluge.

But senior officials who took stock of the situation once the flood water receded had told that roads could be rebuilt with Rs5,800 crore. As part of mitigating future floods, Vijayan accompanied by an entourage of relatives (including his five-year-old grandson) and senior bureaucrats undertook a junket to the Netherlands.

But there is no end in sight for the floods in Kerala. There is no need to search for the

reason behind the landslides and floods in Wayanad and other places in the State. Prof Madhav Gadgil, a noted environmentalist who headed the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) had told the State Governments not to disturb the ecology and environment beyond the current level.

The team of experts had found to their horror that quarrying and sand mining of unprecedented level were taking place with official connivance across the length and breadth of Western Ghats and this included Wayanad. In 1986, this writer shot a television documentary on the Wayanad district for Doordarshan.

There were no resorts or star hotels those days anywhere in the district. The District Collector Raveendran Thampi had been sanctioned one room as his camp office in the low power transmitter station of the Doordarshan at Kalpetta. Immediately after nature's fury in July 2024, Prof Gadgil said that the disaster was a man-made one and was waiting to happen at any time. "Wayanad has no more space for resorts, quarries and sand mining," said Prof Gadgil immediately after the landslide and flash floods.

But what the chief minister said in his briefing was shocking. "The Gadgil committee report is a big joke and one need not take it seriously," said Vijayan. The committee of experts led by Prof Gadgil toured the entire Western Ghats region and they were shocked by the kind of quarrying, mining and deforestation that was happening in the region. Prof Gadgil had described the Western Ghats region as the Water Tower of peninsular India.

Vested interests including religious groups are exploiting Wayanad to the hilt and this

made the committee ask the authorities to stop herewith the constitution of special economic zones and reschedule reservoir operations to downstream flows. More than what the Gadgil Committee had said in its report, what Prof T P Kunhikannan, a CPI(M) activist, had said about the report is significant.

A thorough study by Kunhikannan has proved that Prof Gadgil's suggestions should be accepted in toto by the authorities concerned. "The Church is campaigning against Gadgil Committee findings to save its commercial interests. There is nothing anti-people or anti-minorities in the report," said Prof Kunhikannan in his studies "Gadgil Report and Kerala's Development".

The top echelons of the Church read pastoral letters asking the laity to stage demonstrations across the country against the report as it was anti-minority," said Kunhikannan. No purpose will be served by subjecting the Wayanad disaster to another academic analysis. The Church sabotaged the Gadgil committee report by terming it as anti-development, anti-farmers and anti-people.

Through a series of pastoral letters (which were read out during Sunday Mass), the clergy unleashed a blitzkrieg against the WGEEP report. The then union government appointed another committee headed by G Kasturirangan, former ISRO chairman, to "examine" the feasibility of Gadgil's findings. Kasturirangan did his masters proud by diluting the WGEEP report and that was the death warrant of Wayanad.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

## India's green hydrogen revolution: Paving the way for a sustainable energy future

Green hydrogen is emerging as a powerful alternative fuel, offering a clean and versatile energy source produced through renewable means

The entire world grapples with the dire consequences of climate change and desperately searches for sustainable and clean energy sources. Green hydrogen, a powerful alternative fuel produced using renewable energy, has emerged as a viable alternative.



ARIF AGA

Now, in India, the green hydrogen revolution is gaining momentum, with the government, private sector, and start-ups playing pivotal roles in positioning the country as a global leader in this transformative technology. In recent years green hydrogen, produced through electrolysis powered by renewable energy sources like solar and wind, has gained significant attention.

The National Hydrogen Energy Roadmap, introduced in 2006, marked the first formal effort by the government to explore hydrogen's potential in India. Since then, technological advancements and a growing commitment to renewable energy have laid a solid foundation for the green hydrogen revolution. India faces immense pressure to decarbonize its energy systems

due to its heavy dependence on fossil fuels and huge carbon emissions. Green hydrogen can serve as a versatile energy carrier, with applications ranging from industrial processes and transportation to power generation and storage. Unlike grey or blue hydrogen, which is produced from fossil fuels and involves carbon emissions, green hydrogen is entirely clean, thus aligning with global sustainability goals. India's vast renewable energy resources, particularly solar and wind, make it an ideal location for large-scale green hydrogen production.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has noted that India's renewable energy capacity could provide the

low-cost electricity needed for green hydrogen production, potentially making it one of the most cost-effective producers in the world. Recognizing the strategic importance of green hydrogen, the Union Government has implemented a series of policy measures to promote its development and adoption.

To make the country a global hub for green hydrogen production and export, the Indian government launched its ambitious National Hydrogen Mission in 2021. The mission focuses on creating demand in various sectors, ensuring supply chain resilience, and supporting research and development in hydrogen technologies. Key policy incentives include



subsidies and financial support for pilot projects, the development of hydrogen hubs, and mandates for industries to use green hydrogen in their operations.

This proactive approach has started giving positive results now. However, there is a need to create a robust regulatory framework to facili-

tate the use of hydrogen as a fuel in multiple sectors, including refining, fertilisers, and transportation. India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, as announced at the COP26 summit. Green hydrogen is expected to play a crucial role in this journey by decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors like steel, cement, and petrochemicals.

The transition to green hydrogen could also reduce India's dependence on imported fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and providing a significant economic boost.

Indian conglomerates and big private businesses have been quick to recognize the potential of green hydrogen

and are making substantial investments in this area.

Investments are being made for setting up hydrogen production units and integrating hydrogen fuel cells into transportation. Start-ups in the energy sector are also focusing on developing and deploying electrolyzers, creating robust hydrogen storage solutions, and innovating in the transportation sector with hydrogen fuel cell technology.

International collaborations will be instrumental in bringing global best practices to India and accelerating the green hydrogen revolution. India has actively sought to collaborate with Germany, Japan, Australia, and the European Union, forging partnerships to develop joint

ventures, share technology, and build capacity.

The green hydrogen revolution in India represents a unique opportunity to transform the country's energy landscape and lead the global transition towards a sustainable future.

With strong government support, proactive efforts by the private sector, and dynamic innovation from start-ups, India embarks on a journey to become a green hydrogen powerhouse. To achieve the target of net-zero emissions, green hydrogen would play a pivotal role in shaping India's energy future and driving global sustainability efforts.

(The writer is director, SgurrEnergy India; views are personal)

IN BRIEF

Eyeing 10 per cent share of patents in 6G services for India: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the fastest 5G rollout, India is targeting a tenth of all worldwide patents in sixth generation mobile services, Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said on Wednesday.

He was delivering a keynote address at the 51st edition of the AIMA National Management Convention here.

"Whilst we have the fastest growing 5G network in the world, in 22 months building out 4.5 lakh 4G towers, building out our own 4G technology for BSNL, we are also embarking on our path towards 6G by setting up the Bharat 6G Alliance.

"Our target is to ensure 10 per cent of international worldwide patents for India in 6G through this Bharat 6G alliance in the days to come," he said.

India has emerged as a beacon of hope and stability amid tremendous amount of global economic and social turbulence, the minister said. "She (India) today is rising on the world stage, no longer an embodiment of a struggling



economy, but an economy that is on the rise, an economy that is rising like a phoenix in the comity of the nations," he said.

The fact that India today is the second-largest producer of mobile phones in the world is a testimony of the same, Scindia said.

India's communication industry has gone through its own metamorphosis over the last decade.

"India, for the first time in her existence, has developed

her own 4G stack technology that will be rolled out by the middle of next year," Scindia said.

It is important not only to implement technology, but also to design and develop indigenous technology. Likewise, it is not only important to copy what the world has set as standards, but "India also should set the standards for the world in the days to come" the minister asserted.

"There are three targets that we have set for ourselves.

The first target is to ensure saturation...Every corner of our country must be connected digitally. Every single person must be able to avail of every single opportunity through the digital revolution," he noted.

India, so far, has raised almost 4.5 lakh towers of 4G across the country, he said, adding that there are close to 6000 villages in the north-east that remain to be connected through the USOF Fund (now rechristened as Bharat Nidhi).

"We have committed almost Rs 6,000 crore towards that and achieved 50 per cent of the goal across the length and breadth of India's villages.

"We have committed to putting up close to 20,000 towers, and committed Rs 44,000 crore towards that initiative, and by mid FY 25 we will have committed and completed 100 per cent saturation in our country," he said.

'Will protect aspirations of 100 m small retailers, mom-and-pop stores'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said that the government will protect the interest of 100 million small retailers, who are facing competition from major e-commerce players.

Last month, the minister lambasted the e-commerce companies, questioning their business model that has been impacting small retailers in the country.

"I assure you that we will continue to work with you to meet the aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians for a better quality of life, for a better future, the aspirations of 140 million farming families...the aspiration of a 100 million small retailers, the small mom-and-pop stores, which have disappeared from the US landscape, which we are at least making an effort to protect to some extent," he said.

Goyal was addressing members of the India-US business council.

He also said that the US-India CEO forum will meet on October 2-3 in Washington to further their commercial dialogue.

"The minister noted the 'common source of concern' for both the US and India in critical minerals and stressed on self-reliance in the sector.

"Let us work towards critical minerals which is an important part of our partnership to have a resilient supply chain. We have a lot to offer and you have a lot to offer," he added.

"The minister had last month stated that e-commerce companies are eating into the small retailers' high-value, high-margin products that are the only items through which the mom-and-pop stores survive



Microsoft acquires 16.4 acre land in Pune for Rs 520 cr

Global tech giant Microsoft has bought 16.4 acres of land in Pune for Rs 520 crore, according to real estate consultant Square Yards. "As per the registration document reviewed by Square Yards, Microsoft's Indian arm, Microsoft Corporation (India) Pvt Ltd, acquired 66,414.5 square meters (around 16.4 acres) of prime land in Pune's Hinjewadi. The transaction, registered in August 2024, involved the purchase of land from Indo Global Infotech City LLP," the consultant said in a statement. The deal incurred a stamp duty of Rs 31.18 crore and a registration fee of Rs 30,000, it added. Microsoft did not share any comment on this deal. In 2022, the company also acquired a 25-acre plot in Pimpri-Chinchwad for Rs 328 crore. Earlier this year, Microsoft secured 48 acres of land in Hyderabad for Rs 267 crore. Both deals are part of Microsoft's broader strategy to expand its presence in India, particularly within its data centre operations.



Private credit deals to touch \$ 10 bln: Report

Private credit deployments are likely to surpass the \$ 10 billion mark in 2024, a report by a consultancy firm said on Wednesday. The January-June period saw private credit transactions of over \$ 6 billion in 96 deals, and the last two-and-a-half years have seen over \$ 20 billion being deployed in the emerging alternative serving the credit needs of Indian companies. Major deals were witnessed across real estate, infrastructure, and healthcare sectors in the first half of the year, the report by EY said. Domestic funds are gaining traction and market share in the private credit space leveraging local expertise and the influence of lower-cost domestic money, it said. The first half of the year saw Reliance Logistics and Warehousing, Vedanta Semiconductors, and Matrix Pharma collectively raising approximately \$ 1.3 billion.



Labour unrest at Sriperumbudur industrial belt

Labour unrest in the industrial belt of neighbouring Sriperumbudur emerged as a section of employees belonging to Korean electronics giant Samsung have resorted to a strike, pressing for various demands including wage revision, sources said on Wednesday. The facility located about 40 km from here in Sriperumbudur produces various consumer durable products across categories. It employs about 1,750 people who work in various shifts, round-the-clock. Since Monday, a section of workers went on strike demanding wage revision, recognising their union among others, sources said. "We have been informing the management but they did not heed to our demands. We need a better pay package, and demand recognition for the union," they said. According to the agitating employees, Samsung has formed a union in July comprising about 100 of them which was not agreed upon by the workers who are on strike. "Already there is a union backed by the CITU (Centre for Indian Trade Unions).

SILVER JUMPS RS 500

Gold climbs Rs 500 to Rs 74,600 per 10 grams

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 500 to Rs 74,600 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday on account of increased buying by local jewellers as well as strong cues in the global markets.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 74,100 per 10 grams in the previous close on Tuesday.

With this, gold prices have surged over Rs 1,000 over the past two days.

Silver prices, too jumped Rs 500 to Rs 85,000 per kilogram on Wednesday. It had finished at Rs 84,500 per kg in the previous session, according to All India Sarafa Association.

Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also rallied Rs 500 to Rs 74,250 per 10 grams from Rs 73,750 per 10 grams.

Traders said sentiment turned upbeat on the back of a pick-up in buying from local jewellers and retailers, there-

by leading to a rise in gold prices.

In the international markets, Comex gold is trading 0.31 per cent higher at USD 2,550.90 per ounce.

"Gold prices rose on Wednesday due to a pullback in the US dollar and fall in Treasury yields," Samil Gandhi, Senior Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In addition to this, equity market sell-off and risk-averse sentiment drove flows towards haven assets like gold, which also lent support for gold prices, Gandhi added.

Silver was also quoted higher at USD 29.11 per ounce in the overseas markets. "Gold continued to trade in a positive territory since yesterday (Tuesday) with sentiments seen improving on the back of decline seen in US Treasury yields.



Aurobindo Pharma unit gets first product approval

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aurobindo Pharma on Wednesday said its unit has received the first product approval from the US Food and Drug Administration for a generic anaesthesia medication.

The new injectable facility of Eugia Steriles, a subsidiary of Eugia Pharma Specialities and a stepdown unit of the company, situated at Anakapalli District of Andhra Pradesh was inspected by the US FDA from March 28 to April 5 this year.

The plant has now received its first product approval from the USFDA for Lidocaine Hydrochloride Injection, Aurobindo Pharma said in a regulatory filing. Shares of Aurobindo Pharma on Wednesday ended 0.74 per cent down at Rs 1,507.20 apiece on the BSE



Sensex declines by 398 pts, Nifty ends below 25K

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex reversed its early gains to close lower by 398 points while broader Nifty slipped below the 25,000 mark due to selling in Tata Motors, Reliance Industries and L&T amid weak global trends.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 398.13 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 81,523.14.

The index opened higher and touched the day's high of 82,134.95 points in the mid-session.

However, selling pressure emerged in the pre-close session and the index tanked 498.15 points or 0.60 per cent to hit a low of 81,423.14. The NSE Nifty declined 122.65 points or 0.49 per cent to 24,918.45.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Motors was the biggest loser, tumbling nearly 6 per cent, followed by NTPC, Adani Ports, Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank and Titan.

In contrast, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Bajaj Finserv were among the gainers.

"The domestic market experienced a minor consolidation in line with Asian peers due to correction of commodity



prices like crude which has collapsed to USD 70 per barrel.

"Market sentiment remained cautious due to the slowdown in the Chinese economy. Investors await the release of the US CPI and domestic inflation data," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.57 per cent and midcap index went lower by 0.52 per cent.

Among the indices, oil & gas slumped 2.25 per cent, while metal (1.35 per cent), utilities (1.29 per cent), auto (1.17 per cent), commodities (1.14 per cent) and telecommunication (0.84 per cent) also closed lower.

Consumer Durables and FMCG were the gainers.

Markets traded with volatility, losing nearly half a percent as the consolidation phase continued, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

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

European markets were trading mostly in the green. The US markets ended mostly with gains on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,208.23 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.49 per cent to USD 70.22 a barrel.

Private credit deals to touch \$10 bln in 2024

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Private credit deployments are likely to surpass the USD 10 billion mark in 2024, a report by a consultancy firm said on Wednesday.

The January-June period saw private credit transactions of over USD 6 billion in 96 deals, and the last two-and-a-half years have seen over USD 20 billion being deployed in the emerging alternative serving the credit needs of Indian companies.

Major deals were witnessed across real estate, infrastructure, and healthcare sectors in the first half of the year, the report by EY said.

Domestic funds are gaining traction and market share in the private credit space leveraging local expertise and the influence of lower-cost domestic money, it said.

The first half of the year saw Reliance Logistics and Warehousing, Vedanta Semiconductors, and Matrix Pharma collectively raising

approximately USD 1.3 billion, while real estate sector continued to be a focal point with borrowers such as Prestige Group, Puravankara Group, Kalpataru Group, and Shapoorji Group being active.

The firm's partner Bharat Gupta said private credit investments are at an all-time high, driven largely by growth-oriented strategies.

"The outlook remains promising, though thorough due diligence and effective deal oversight are crucial to

maximizing returns and managing potential risks," Gupta added. With the maturing of the system, there is a subtle shift towards performing credit deals in India with funds increasingly engaging in sub-18 per cent Internal Rate of Return transactions, the report said. In the high-yield segment, mergers and acquisitions/buyout deals, and bridge-to-initial public offering transactions have gained traction within private credit funding, it said.

India committed to climate-friendly growth: NITI Aayog

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NITI Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam on Wednesday said India is committed to climate-friendly growth, but fossil fuels are still going to drive the country's economic growth.

Addressing an event here, Subrahmanyam said markets alone cannot solve the problem of climate change.

"India is committed to climate-friendly growth...but fossil fuels are still going to drive the country's economic growth," he said.

Subrahmanyam further said that NITI Aayog is working with states in developing a roadmap for green energy transition and a pathway to achieve a net zero carbon emissions target.

"NITI Aayog is working with states in developing a roadmap for

energy transition...we will come out with a document in November," he said.

Subrahmanyam opined that markets alone cannot solve the problem of climate change.

"India is one of the countries on the track to meet its climate targets under the 2015 Paris Agreement...We are committed to achieving net zero emissions target by 2070, even though less than 4 per cent carbon emission is from India," he said.

As part of its national climate plan, or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, India has committed to achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based electricity installed capacity by 2030.

Subrahmanyam informed that the government is intending to provide more money for climate finance even though India's per



"India is one of the countries on the track to meet its climate targets under the 2015 Paris Agreement...We are committed to achieving net zero emissions target by 2070, even though less than 4 per cent carbon emission is from India," he said

capita energy consumption is half of the global average.

"The growth and rise of India is

undeniable but it is happening in times which are very different.

"This is the first time in the his-

tory of mankind that a large country is seeking its future to be a developed nation, Viksit Bharat@2047, in an environment where climate change is an ever-present threat and technological changes like AI are not just minor disruptions," he said. Further, he noted that climate change is also an opportunity for India to become a leader in green technology and all the new green growth-related models.

"This is one of the most challenging times for India. We have the challenge of growth, jobs and energy consumption which we have to balance with environmental considerations," Subrahmanyam said. According to him, it is no longer about growth or sustainability but growth and sustainability.

The NITI Aayog CEO pointed out that states do not know how to generate green projects.

Demerger of Vedanta likely by end of FY25: Top official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The demerger of mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd's key businesses, including aluminium, into separate listed companies is expected by the end of FY25, a top official of the company said on Wednesday.

Vedanta Ltd has filed an application for its demerger scheme before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) after receiving a nod from lenders.

Asked when is the demerger happening, John Slaven, CEO of aluminium business of Vedanta, said, "it's not within our control. It's the NCLT process. They typically take, I don't know, four to six months, to run that process. So by end of this fiscal year, by the end of this fiscal year (I see it happening)."

Slaven was speaking during the launch of Vedanta Aluminum's two new products for power sector.

The first product offers superior electrical conductivity, mak-

ing it ideal for remelting. The second product is the electrical conductor grade wire rod, designed for winding strip applications with a balance of strength, conductivity, workability, and formability.

Talking further about the demerger, he said, "Well, it's at almost the final phase... So the process that took long time... So we have now filed with NCLT.

NCLT are running their process now.

"That culminates in approval sessions with both shareholders and lenders, and then that will enable them to give their final approval. So that's the stage we're at now.

"We've kicked into that, that next stage."

The proposed demerger of Vedanta's diverse verticals that represent more than 15 commodities will see the company progress from being asset managers to asset owners, Chairman Anil Agarwal had said in a recent report.





# MALAIKA & AMRITA ARORA'S FATHER DIES BY SUICIDE

The industry is shocked by the sudden passing of Anil Arora, Malaika and Amrita Arora's father. Police reported that their father passed away from suicide earlier today. According to the reports by Wednesday, 6:53 PM, Joyce, Malaika and

Amrita's mother had shared a statement stating that she saw her ex-husband's slippers in the living room, she went to look for him in the balcony. When she could not find him there, she leaned over and saw below. The building watchman was shouting for

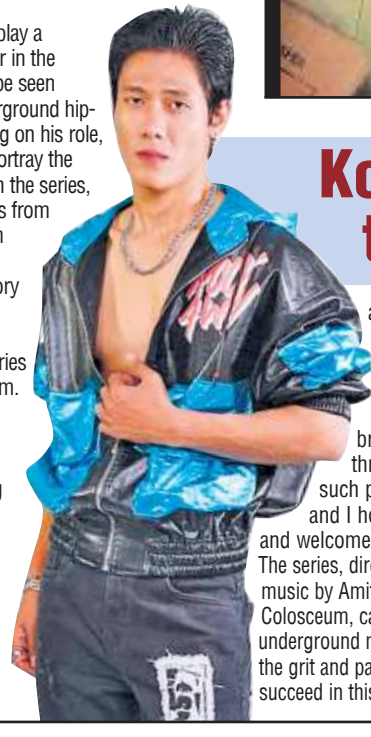
help! Reports have also claimed that he had leaped from the 3rd floor of the apartment and not the terrace. The incident occurred at approximately 9 am this morning. Arbaaz Khan, the actress's former husband, along

with high-ranking police officials, had arrived at her home. Police stated that the body has been sent for post-mortem examination and an investigation is currently in progress. Later, Arjun Kapoor and Alvira Agnihotri were also seen at her residence.

Malaika was spotted wearing a mask while quickly entering the house to avoid the paparazzi. Yet, when she reached the house, Paparazzi created a negative atmosphere and online users criticised the media for their lack of sensitivity during this mourning period.

Zander, the internationally acclaimed supermodel, has taken the fashion world by storm with his captivating charm. Born to a Korean-Indian father and Half Nepali Indian Mother Zander is an all-rounder over his languages of speaking Hindi, English, Nepalese, and Korean. Despite once aspiring to be an army officer, Zander has successfully ventured into modelling and now he is taking his next big step into the world of acting.

The rising star is set to make his debut in the Bollywood OTT space with the highly anticipated series *Khalbali Records*, which will be released on September 12th on Jio Cinema Premium. Zander is all set to play a prominent character in the series, Zander will be seen portraying an underground hip-hop artist. Reflecting on his role, Zander shares, "I portray the character of Ninja in the series, he is one who starts from nothing, rising from anonymity to recognition. The story showcases the everyday struggles, mistakes, and victories of chasing my dream. It reflects on all the challenges that are faced by me and all artists over juggling jobs while trying to keep their passion alive and make it in the competitive world of hip-hop. My character is all about the internal and external battles



## Ajay Devgn's *Raid 2* set for a Feb 2025 release

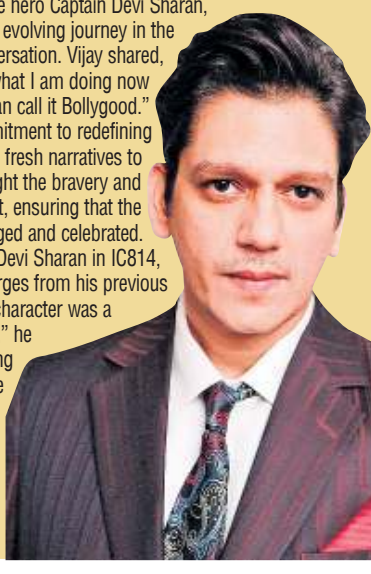


With its gripping narrative, Ajay Devgn's *Raid* captivated audiences' hearts in 2018, becoming a standout success. Now, the makers are all set to bring another intriguing quest led by IRS officer, Amay Patnaik (Ajay Devgn). Directed by Rajkumar Gupta and produced by Bhushan Kumar, Kumar Mangat Pathak, Abhishek Pathak, and Krishna Kumar, *Raid 2* will be released on 21st February 2025. Along with Ajay Devgn, the film features Vaani Kapoor as the female lead, Ritesh Deshmukh as the antagonist and Rajat Kapoor in a pivotal role. Extensively shot in Delhi and Lucknow, *Raid 2* promises another adrenaline-filled ride.

*Raid 2* is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Kumar Mangat Pathak, Abhishek Pathak and Krishan Kumar. The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series and is a Panorama Studios production. The film is set to release theatrically on 21st February 2025.

## VIJAY VARMA CALLS NEW B'WOOD AS 'BOLLYGOOD'

Following the release of *IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack*, where Vijay Varma impressed audiences with his portrayal of the real-life hero Captain Devi Sharan, the actor reflected on his evolving journey in the industry in a recent conversation. Vijay shared, "Commercial or not commercial, what I am doing now is the new Bollywood. You can call it Bollygood." Vijay's statement emphasises his commitment to redefining Bollywood by pushing boundaries and bringing fresh narratives to the screen. Through his performance, Vijay brought the bravery and calmness exhibited by Captain Sharan into the spotlight, ensuring that the unsung hero's efforts are finally acknowledged and celebrated. Vijay Varma shared his thoughts on portraying Captain Devi Sharan in *IC814*, expressing how refreshing it was to step into a role that diverges from his previous complex characters. "Getting to play a fairly simple, noble and heroic character was a welcome change for me after playing some extremely twisted men," he chuckled. For Vijay, this role allowed him to explore a different side of his acting spectrum, embracing the straightforward heroism of Captain Sharan with a sense of ease and fulfillment, a contrast to the darker, more layered personalities he's been known for. As he gears up for his upcoming role in *Matka King*, audiences eagerly anticipate another stellar performance. Vijay Varma's approach to storytelling ensures that he remains a significant force in what he proudly calls "Bollygood."



## Korean supermodel Zander set to venture into Bollywood

as they chase their dreams." Expressing his excitement about his first acting project, Zander says, "This is my debut project and I've worked hard to bring this character to life. I'm thrilled to be working alongside such prominent names in Bollywood and I hope the audience will accept me and welcome me with open arms." The series, directed by Devanshu Singh with music by Amit Trivedi and produced by Colosseum, captures the raw energy of the underground music scene, highlighting the grit and passion required to succeed in this cutthroat industry.

With his acting debut on the horizon, Zander is ready to charm audiences once again—this time on screen—as he takes his first step toward building a career in Bollywood.

## 'WHEN SPY FILMS WERE NOT IN TREND, I DID IT'

Taapsee Pannu has solidified her reputation as one of Indian cinema's most dynamic actresses, celebrated for her diverse roles and compelling performances. Her recent work, including the latest installment of the *Hasane Dilliruba* franchise, underscores her remarkable range, with her performance in the sequel receiving praise for its charm and depth. As she gears up for her next project, *Gandhari*, Taapsee reflects on her journey through the spy genre and her ongoing collaboration with Kanika Dhillon. In a recent statement, Taapsee discussed her pioneering role in the spy genre with *Naam Shabana* (2015), a film that set a precedent for spy narratives in Bollywood when they were not yet popular. "At a time when spy films were not the trend, that's when I did it and got done with it. So, now when this has suddenly come back in trend, I was offered a few films (in the genre) that I turned down because I felt I had done it before, and those were embraced very well by the audience," Taapsee shared.



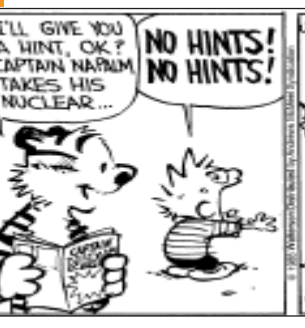
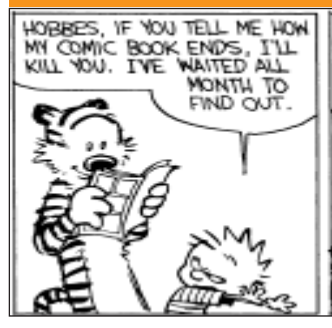
Looking ahead, Taapsee is set to collaborate again with Kanika Dhillon, a screenwriter with whom she has previously worked on several projects that were loved by the audiences. Their upcoming film, *Gandhari*, is an action thriller that represents a shift from her earlier roles. Reflecting on this transition and comparing her character in *Gandhari* to her spy role in *Naam Shabana*, Taapsee remarked, "They accepted and loved me in that role. Then Kanika came up with the idea of doing this film called *Gandhari*. I am not a spy in this! I am a mother, who is going to fight it out for revenge." From her groundbreaking performance in *Naam Shabana* to her recent success in the *Phir Aayi Hasane Dilliruba*, Taapsee Pannu continues to make a significant impact in the film industry. With *Gandhari* on the horizon, fans are eagerly anticipating her next role in the reunion with Kanika, where she will once again demonstrate her acting prowess in a fresh and exciting new way.

### FUN

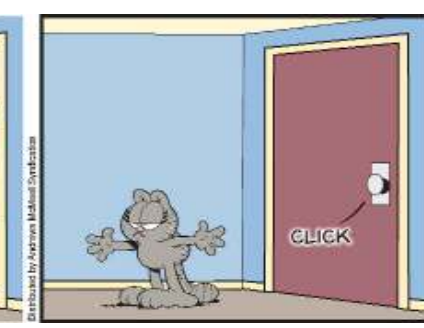
#### ARCHIE



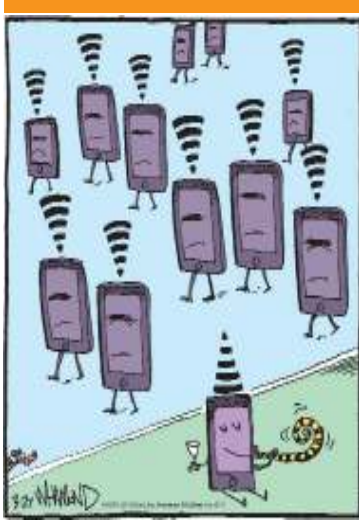
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU

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1			2	3				
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Yesterday's solution

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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.

#### GINGER MEGGS



#### ACROSS

- 1 Graveyard
- 2 In the lead
- 3 Shelf
- 4 Pay attention
- 5 Threesome
- 6 Yours and mine
- 7 An old fortified building
- 8 Racket
- 9 Mirror reflection
- 10 A jewellery item
- 5 A type of pen
- 6 Got well again
- 11 Liquid always in your mouth
- 13 Lift
- 15 To bother or annoy someone for fun
- 16 Feeble

#### DOWN

- 1 A game played on a squared board
- 2 Infuriate
- 3 Story
- 4 Jockey





## Uniting Kerala diaspora in Hyderabad

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The season of festivals has already begun and now lately, we've been celebrating the annual harvest and cultural festival celebrated mostly by the people of Kerala, Onam. Wednesday marked the main festive day of Onam, which was *Thiruvonam*.

Making the celebrations more eventful, *The Pioneer* brings to you a community in Hyderabad, specially dedicated for the Malayalis.

It was in 2005, far from the lush landscapes of Kerala, that a group of passionate individuals gathered to form a hope of tradition and community in the bustling city of Hyderabad. The Nair Service Society (NSS) had existed in the hearts and history of Kerala since 1914, founded by the visionary Mannathu Padmanabhan, but its roots were about to spread into the Deccan plateau, creating a bridge between two regions that shared a bond of culture and heritage.

Suresh Kumar, the society's general secretary and one of its founding members in Hyderabad, recalls those early days vividly. "We were a small but determined group, wanting to recreate the sense of unity and support that we had left behind in Kerala. Starting the Hyderabad chapter of NSS was a way to stay connected to our roots while helping each other navigate life in a new city," he reflects.

In its 18-year journey, the Nair Service Society Hyderabad has transformed into a formidable force for community welfare, social engagement and cultural preservation. Today, the organisation operates across 10 cities with a dedicated 31-member committee, all working towards



The Nair Service Society has united Keralans and created a sense of community by forging a family from outside. In order to bring you a special interview for our very special Community Wise feature, *The Pioneer* gets in touch with the community's general secretary



the singular goal of serving the Nair community while contributing to the wider social fabric.

The very essence of the Nair Service Society's existence lies in its foundational goal, community support. Whether it's arranging marriages, assisting with medical emergencies, or helping families through the hardships of loss, society stands as a rock for its members. "In Kerala, families have their relatives close by. But here, in Hyderabad, many of us are on our own. That's why we banded together—to ensure no one feels alone."

The community extends its reach

beyond its own members, too. Nair Service Society, Hyderabad has been known to offer medical aid and educational scholarships to those in need, regardless of their background. During the pandemic, their efforts reached heroic proportions, distributing food kits to families across Hyderabad, including street vendors, migrant workers, and sweepers. "We didn't stop at just helping our community. It was about supporting humanity as a whole," he says with pride.

For a community so deeply rooted in tradition, Nair Service Society Hyderabad has ensured that the vibrant colours of

Kerala culture continue to shine in a city known for its own rich heritage. From the graceful *Mohiniyattam* dance to the rhythmic *Thiruvathira* performances, the society organises cultural programs to keep the younger generation connected to their origins. "It's not just about reminiscing the past, but about passing it on to our children, so they too can feel that connection to Kerala," he notes.

One of society's most anticipated events is the annual Onam celebration, a festival that transcends religious and caste boundaries. "Onam brings everyone together, not just the Nairs, but all Malayalee organisa-

tions in the city," he adds. The celebration of Onam in Hyderabad is a sight to behold, vibrant, inclusive and full of life, with traditional feasts (*Sadya*) and cultural performances adding to the festive spirit.

As the community grows and evolves, so does their commitment to modern issues. Gender equality, for instance, plays a significant role in society's activities. The formation of the Vanitha Samajam Wing, a women's forum, has empowered the women of the Nair community to actively participate and lead various initiatives. Whether it's organising cultural festivals or providing support to families in need, the

women of the Vanitha Wing are vital to the organisation's success.

In the future, the society plans to focus on education and employment, with plans underway to establish an educational institution and an old-age home. "We've acquired land and are working towards building a school," he shares. "Our goal is to provide quality education and a safe space for the elderly, reflecting both our traditional values and modern aspirations."

Though the Nair Service Society is deeply committed to preserving the customs and values of its community, it also recognises the importance of modernity. "We're a forward caste and that presents unique challenges, particularly in terms of government support and employment opportunities," he points out. Yet, the Nair Service Society is undeterred. With initiatives like the Nair Udyog, a WhatsApp group that connects community members to job opportunities, the society is embracing technology and modern communication methods to uplift its members.

As the Nair Service Society Hyderabad looks toward the future, its vision remains clear, blending the richness of tradition with the demands of modern life, fostering unity, and continuing its mission of service. With new generations stepping up and taking an active role in society's activities, the Nair community is set to thrive in this ever-evolving urban landscape.

For Suresh Kumar and the other members of the society, the journey has been one of perseverance and pride. "We are here for each other, no matter what the challenge," he says with exhilaration. And in that simple statement lies the heart of the Nair Service Society—an unbreakable bond of heritage, community, and compassion.

## 'I had auditioned for all three lead actors in *Loop 11:47*'

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Whether you're seeking adrenaline-pumping crime dramas or a rom-com, OTT, beyond a doubt, has got so many different genres and shows to provide the audience to binge-watch. In this world of OTT, there's Keshav Sadhna, who is slowly but surely turning into an OTT star. His latest release, *Loop 11:47*, streaming on Zee5, is a not-so-regular concept that proves his versatility and prowess to the fullest.

*Loop 11:47* centers on three roommates who embark on a spontaneous trip to break free from their boring routine and setbacks. As one person risks it all for a girl, another person leads a double life for their social media audience. The third person is struggling in his professional role with an overly authoritative boss. Their holiday turns for the worst when they find themselves stuck in a never-ending loop of the same day resetting every night, lasting for more than a year! The sci-fi show also stars Akashdeep Arora and Qabeer Singh.

Well, we have Keshav onboard for an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*. Looking back at his journey, it's been no less than a roller coaster ride, just like many. Coming from a non-film background, "There's always a roller coaster of emotions. You never know what might happen next. However, having been in this field, you are emotionally and mentally prepared to take up the challenges."

*College Romance* or *Couple Goals*, *Code M* or *4 Thieves*, Keshav has always been on the forefront to try out something new, every time a project comes his way. "Hailing from Ghaziabad and coming to Mumbai was a whole lot of a decision in itself. Choosing a field that not many parents would allow! Back then, in Ghaziabad, not many people knew that you could make a full-fledged career in this field. However, my dad had supported me a lot. Eventually, when you try out something new or learn, it takes time. For the first 4-5 years, I used to only and only give auditions, but eventually, as I did theater, things started to work."

Not that Keshav began his work with just theaters. He, like many others, got into corporate but continued doing theaters side-by-side. Then, as soon as his good acting worked, it was then that he shifted to Mumbai and rest his history!

"Being a part of so many shows and now including *Loop 11:47* feels great. Talking about this show, it is something different. Though there was a similar show, *Loop* is not your regular sci-fi shows. The story in itself was so intriguing. It's about three friends and I feel, *Jaise hi doston ki kahaani aajati hai*, it becomes interesting. It's always fun because most of the OTT audience can relate," shares the *College Romance*

Actor Keshav Sadhna, who is known for bringing his best on-screen, has once again enraptured hearts with his latest project, *Loop 11:47*. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, he discusses his formative years, getting onboard for the project and a lot more around it.



fame as he speaks of what really intrigued him about this project.

All three characters, Varun, Bhavik and Nirwan, have had their own stories. As we go ahead in this exclusive interaction, Keshav reveals to us how he had auditioned for all three characters. Yes, you read it right!

"First, I had auditioned for Nirwan and then for Bhavik. Then they were like, 'Varun ka audition bhi de hi do' (we laugh out loud). I had a feeling that I would get the role of Nirwan; the rest I had auditioned just for fun. But eventually, they felt that I'd fit for the role of Bhavik. My character Bhavik had this scope that he could bring fun and comedy anywhere and everywhere. We had done a lot of improvisations in the dialogues too. In the final credits, you get to even see my name. Anudeep had given me so much freedom to explore and use some catchy slang."

As compared to the other characters, reviews and the audience have a special mention of his character Bhavik, feeling much more relatable. However, the *4 Thieves* actor believes, "I feel all three characters are relatable because they are of the current times. Be it Nirwan working in corporate, Varun as a musician, or people wanting to become a social media influencer that's shown through Bhavik. This, I feel, is one of the reasons why his character is relatable. Everyone has their social media and phones on every time, be it even while traveling. The way my character had been given freedom by the makers, it has come the way it has."

The show shows his character shifting from MP to Mumbai, bringing an Andori and/or Bhopali touch to it. His character was pretty much relatable because that was how he began his journey. Though his character Bhavik had come to Mumbai for his college, Keshav, on the other hand, was in Mumbai to fulfill his dreams of becoming an actor. So undeniably, there's pretty much all of the reality between him and the character.

"Every actor has his own way to prepare their character," enthuses the *It's My Pleasure* actor as he goes on. "Every actor needs to get the liberty to improvise their character, which was something that I got in this show. As the actor begins to work, one gets to experience it. At times, we improvise it on the sets too. I'm someone who always feels if I've done a good job. I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but I always have a doubt about it. I always try to say the dialogues in a way that it turns out to be catchy, just like how I've done in *Loop 11:47*. I always have a doubt, but if a director shows a thumbs up, then it is a thumbs up."

Going ahead, Keshav, who has a few projects in the pipeline, without revealing much of the details, concludes this chat sharing, "To be honest, beggars are not choosers. I'm not a beggar in that sense (he laughs). But yeah, there's a lot of things one has to consider that they'd get to know as soon as they read the script. You get an intuition that this would work and you should go ahead with it. Either it should be a project with a good budget or a project you are keen to try in your free time. The project needs to have potential."

## SAFEGUARDING LIVES WITH CONSUMER SAFETY!

Reinforcing its commitment toward illicit tobacco trade prevention,

Philip Morris International's (PMI) affiliate, IPM India intensifies its efforts to tackle the menace to safeguard India's economic interest and protect consumers. The illicit tobacco trade is a major threat and growing challenge worldwide. As part of its continued efforts towards tackling the illicit trade menace, PMI's strategy focuses on five critical areas: research & intelligence, protecting the supply chain, partnerships, co-operation with law enforcement and raising awareness. The organisation supports and helps law-enforcement agencies by inspecting and authenticating seized products and performing forensic evaluations. Additionally, profiles illicit products, shares intelligence on emerging routes and trends shaping the black market and trains officials on the innovative authentication and security features of products.

India has witnessed a significant rise in illicit in recent years and it only seems to rise with time. As per the 2022 FICCI Cascade study, the overall market for illegal cigarettes in India is estimated to be at Rs. 22,930 crore. As per the reports, the total loss to the Govt. of India estimated for 2022, on account of the illicit markets in the tobacco industry is Rs 13,331 crore, up from Rs 6,240 crore in 2012, an increase by 46%. According to the Tobacco Institute of India (TII), the illegal cigarette trade comprising internationally smuggled and locally manufactured tax-evaded cigarettes accounts for as much as one-fourth of the cigarette industry in India. As per the recent reports, throughout 2023-2024, law enforcement agencies have seized illegal cigarettes across many Indian cities. In Guwahati, customs officials and railway authorities confiscated over 11 lakh sticks on multiple

occasions, with the Assam Rifles also making seizures. Visakhapatnam saw the police and customs seize over 21 lakh sticks, while in Vijayawada, the tally reached over 103 lakh sticks, including 75 boxes. Hyderabad's police force seized 267 cartons and 4.5 lakh sticks. Additionally, Lucknow's customs officials seized over 2.12 lakh sticks and a substantial number of packs and boxes. Furthermore, Calicut Airport, Faridabad, Amritsar and Indore experienced various seizures by customs, the police and the DRI. Pune and Silchar, Raipur, Surat and Ahmedabad saw the DRI seize over 85 lakh sticks. According to Euromonitor International's 2023 report, illicit cigarette volumes in India reached 30.2 billion sticks in 2022, trailing only behind China and Brazil.

Expressing concern over the rise of the illicit tobacco trade, Navaneel Kar, Managing Director, IPM India said, "Eliminating illicit trade has been a longstanding priority for us and continues to be an integral part of our efforts to drive operational excellence and build a sustainable future. In India, PMI has contributed significantly over the past decade, partnering with law enforcement and investigative agencies in the fight against the trade of illegal cigarettes. Public-private partnerships based on an inclusive approach by governments, the private sector, and civil society are vital to helping combat the trade. Interconnected systems and advanced technologies such as digitally verified track-and-trace systems, holograms, QR codes and RFID tags are essential for monitoring and detecting counterfeit products. As India progresses on its path to become a global economic powerhouse, it is critical to take stricter measures to eradicate illicit and build a safer tomorrow."



# 2023 ODI World Cup in India generated economic impact of USD 1.39 billion: ICC

PTI ■ DUBAI

The 2023 ODI World Cup in India created an "economic impact" of USD 1.39 billion with tourism among the biggest beneficiaries, according to a report released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday. The Economic Impact Assessment conducted by Nielsen for the ICC, claimed that the mega-event held in October-November last year was the biggest ever ODI World Cup. "The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 has demonstrated the significant economic power of cricket, generating economic benefit of USD 1.39 billion (Rs 11,637 crore) for India," ICC Chief Executive, Geoff Allardice said in a statement. Australia ended India's unbeaten run in the tournament to win the trophy for a record-extending sixth time. "The impact of tourism across the host cities amounted to USD 861.4 million of revenue generation, through accommodation, travel, transportation and food and beverage because of a massive influx of domestic and foreign tourists attending the matches," read an ICC statement. "The secondary and incremental spends within the economy was a key driver, generating USD 515.7 million, which was approximately 37 per cent of the total impact." However, the ICC did not specify



whether the massive figure cited in the report is actual revenue. A record-breaking 1.25 million spectators attended the mega event, of which nearly 75 per cent were attending an ICC 50-over match for the first time ever, the report claimed. "Nearly 55 per cent of the international respondents had previously visited India regularly, whilst an injection of new visitors thanks to the World Cup saw 19% of international attendees making their first ever visit to the country. "International travellers visited multiple tourist destinations during their stay which amounted to an economic impact of USD281.2 million and nearly 68 per cent of international attendees said that they would recommend India as a tourist destination to friends and family in the future further enhancing India's global image," read the statement from the governing body. Over 48,000 full and part time jobs were created by the event through direct involvement in delivering the tournament, as well as other organisations across the hospitality sector, added the report. "The event created thousands of jobs and showcased India as a premier tourist destination, proving that ICC events not only engage fans passionately but also contribute significantly to the economies of our host nations," Allardice said.



## It will be harder to face SG balls: Bangladesh batter Litton on India Tests

PTI ■ DHAKA

He was Bangladesh's batting star during their historic 2-0 away Test series win in Pakistan but Litton Das believes that facing the red 'SG Test' in India would present an entirely different and more difficult test for the team. Litton, who scored 56 and 138 in the two Tests, along with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and young Shadman Islam will once again form the core of the Bangladesh batting line-up during the Test series starting September 19 in Chennai. In Pakistan, Test matches are played with Kookaburra balls, which is also used at home by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, New Zealand, South Africa. Stitches of the Kookaburra balls aren't as thick and pronounced as the Indian manufactured 'SG Test', which can aid reverse swing. "The ball will be a different one in India," Litton was



quoted as saying by ESPN Cricinfo. "It is a little harder to play against the SG ball. The Kookaburra ball is easier to play when it gets old. It is the opposite with the SG ball. It is harder to get away against the old ball when it's the SG." The right-handed keeper-batter's 138 after Bangladesh were reduced to 26 for 6 in the second Test is considered as one of the finest knocks under pressure but Litton doesn't want to rest on past laurels. "We played good cricket against Pakistan but it is already in the past," Litton said. "It is important for us to look forward. We will need your (media's) help. It would be helpful if you don't talk about the Pakistan series. As a player, it is already in the past for me," he said. For Litton, Bangladesh's improvement in traditional format has been gradual and inspiring. "It is inspiring that people will know you if you do well," he said. "There's nothing better than that. I don't think it is pressure. We are improving in Tests, so we have to become more consistent in the format. That's the main challenge." Having played 223 international games across three formats for the 'Tigers' in past nine years has given him enough experience to tackle various situations. "I have to take responsibility now," he said. "It is the right time. I have been playing for ten years, so there has been some experience. I try to score off deliveries that I believe are there to hit. Scoring runs is more important these days. I think I bat in the same way that most batters approach the game." Batting with lower-order is another expertise that he has acquired in recent years. "I usually get to bat with (Mehidy Hasan) Miraz. Sometimes I bat with Shakib bhai (Shakib Al Hasan) or Mushfiq bhai (Mushfiqur Rahim). If I don't play my shots, the team score won't go anywhere. I want to play like this. I try to play the way I bat in training," he said.

## Hope GCL makes big impact on chess like IPL did on cricket: Arjun Erigaisi

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi hopes the Global Chess League will have a transformative effect on the sport similar to the revolutionary impact IPL had on cricket. The GCL is the world's first and largest official franchise league of its kind, with chess players from all over the world competing in a unique joint team format. "It's definitely a great thing that we now have Global Chess League in the chess circuit. I really hope it makes a big impact in the chess world like IPL did to cricket," The 21-year-old chess prodigy from Warangal has been creating waves this year. He ascended to World No.4 in the FIDE world ratings in June this year after beating France's Loic Travadon in the French Team Chess Championship 2024. Having watched the 2013 World Championship match between the legendary Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen, Erigaisi is delighted to get a chance to be on the same as the two veterans. "Last year, I was on the same team as Magnus Carlsen, and now I am on the same team as Vishy Anand, sir. I remember following the 2013 World Championship Match as a fan, and after 10-11 years, I got the chance to be in the same team as them. It's a big delight," said Erigaisi. The second season of GCL begins in London on October 3. "There are a limited number of team chess tournaments, but I love it whenever I get a chance to participate in a team event."

## Rohit, Kohli, Pant are probably going to be really big ones: Lyon ahead of Border-Gavaskar Trophy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Veteran Australian spinner Nathan Lyon has identified Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant as the three "big ones" to watch out for in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series. The five-Test series between India and Australia gets underway Down Under from November 22, part of the World Test Championship. Besides the big ones, Lyon has also warned that the visitors have an 'amazing line-up', making things massively challenging for the hosts. "Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant are probably going to be the three really big ones. But then, you've still got (Yashasvi) Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, (Ravindra) Jadeja, and who else will come out another five, I'm not sure," he told Star Sports. However, Lyon was confident that if the Australians

delivered as a bowling unit over an extended period, it would be beneficial for them. "But, it's a pretty amazing line-up they've got, so it's going to be a massive challenge. As I said, if we, as a bowling group, are good enough for long periods, hopefully, we can challenge their defence," he added. The Aussies have failed to win the title since their last series victory in 2014-15 at home. The Indians have won the title on four consecutive instances since then, winning twice each at home and away, a record for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Besides, they also became the only Asian team to win a Test series in Australia, and also winning it on multiple occasions. Overall, India is the most successful side when it comes to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, winning it on 10 instances, along with a retention.

## Punjab FC announce squad for 2024-25 Indian Super League season

PTI ■ MOHALI

Punjab FC, the only representative from north India in the top-tier Indian Super League, on Wednesday announced their 26-member squad for the upcoming season. The team's home, away and third kits were also unveiled at an event here. The Shers will start their ISL campaign against Kerala Blasters on September 15 in Kochi and will play their first home game on September 20 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. Head coach Panagiotis Dilmpieris has picked a squad that has a balance of youth and experience. Luka Majcen, Mushaga Bakenga, Ezequiel Vidal, Ivan Novoselec, Asmir



Suljic and Filip Mrzljak are the foreign signings of the squad. The new Indian signings include Vinit Rai, Ninthoingamba Meetei, Muheet Shabir, Nihal Sudeesh (on loan) and

Likmabam Rakesh Singh (on loan). Mohammed Suhail F. And Shami Singamayam from the academy have been promoted to the senior side, joining Tekcham Abhishek Singh,

Manglenthang Kipgen and Ayush Deshwal. Dilmpieris said, "We have named a squad that can challenge for the top spots in the league this season. The foreign signings have plenty of experience and we have an exciting pool of Indian players. "We have also maintained the core of our Indian players from last season. Our pre-season has been good, and we hope we start our season well and perform to our best capacity." Dilmpieris will have Konstantinos Katsaras and Sankaral Chakraborty as his deputies along with Papaioannou Ioannis as the strength and conditioning coach and Manish Timsina as the goalkeeping coach.

# Duleep Trophy: Focus on Rinku, Iyer, Washington in round two

PTI ■ ANANTAPUR

Fringe players like Rinku Singh along with some seasoned names who have been ignored by the national selectors will be aiming to attract their attention when round two of Duleep Trophy begins here on Thursday. The star power in the season-opening red-ball event will be reduced significantly for round two with India squad players released for a national camp ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh in Chennai from September 19. Sarfaraz Khan is the lone India squad member who will be featuring in the domestic competition. In the absence of national regulars, the focus will shift on the likes of Rinku, who was surprisingly not picked for the first round despite having an impressive first-class record. The spirited southpaw has also done well for India in T20 cricket. Shubman Gill joining the national team has led to Mayank Agarwal captaining the India A unit. Having played his last Test in March 2022,

Agarwal needs a bagful of runs to get back into national reckoning. Pacer Prasad Krishna, who missed the Duleep Trophy opener having not fully completed his rehab for a left quadriceps tendon, has been named in the India A squad. With the Australia tour on the horizon, the performance of the lanky pacer will be keenly observed. In the India B squad, captain Abhimanyu Easwaran will need to lead from the front following a forgettable outing in Bengaluru last week. Sarfaraz, who made a successful Test debut against England earlier this year, was upstaged by his brother Musheer in the opening game, the latter's 181 taking India B to a fine win over India A. The elder brother will be eyeing a big knock before joining the national team in Chennai. Washington Sundar also features in the India B squad and his all-round abilities keep him in the mix for all formats. Pacer Mukesh Kumar, who was pipped by Akash Deep for the first Test, will have a point to prove.



India C opens Sai Sudharsan and Rituraj Gaikwad will be looking to pile on the runs to make a case for the reserve opener's role in the India setup. Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar will be aiming to build on his match-winning performance against India D. Rajat Patidar, dropped from the Indian team following a disastrous debut series against England, will need to show the hunger for red-ball runs. Shreyas Iyer, captain of India D, is another player who has been sidelined from the Test squad and only a mountain of runs can bring him back into the national reckoning. The same goes for Devdutt Padikkal and Sanju Samson, who was a notable name missing from India D's playing eleven against India C. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh too needs to do a lot more to enhance his red-ball credentials. SQUADS: India A squad: Mayank Agarwal (C), Riyan Parag, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Tanush Kotian,

Prasidh Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan, Kumar Kushagra, Shaswat Rawat, Pratham Singh, Akshay Wadkar, SK Rasheed, Shams Mulani, Aaqib Khan. India B squad: Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Sarfaraz Khan, Musheer Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Navdeep Saini, Mukesh Kumar, Rahul Chahar, R Sai Kishore, Mohit Awasthi, N Jagadeesan (WK), Suyash Prabhudessai, Rinku Singh, Himanshu Mantri (WK). India C: Rituraj Gaikwad (C), Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Abhishek Porel (WK), B Indrajith, Hrithik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Gaurav Yadav, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Anshul Khamboj, Himanshu Chauhan, Mayank Markande, Aryan Juyal (WK), Sandeep Warrier. India D squad: Shreyas Iyer (C), Atharva Taide, Yash Dube, Devdutt Padikkal, Ricky Bhui, Saransh Jain, Arshdeep Singh, Aditya Thakare, Harshit Rana, Akash Sengupta, KS Bharat (WK), Saurabh Kumar, Sanju Samson (WK), Nishant Sindhu, Vidwath Kaverappa.

# I'M NOT DOING FILMS FOR MONEY; IT'S MY LOVE: ABHIRAMI

**Actress Abhirami starred in the 2004 Telugu film *Cheppave Chirugali* as the female lead. She is now back to Telugu films in her second innings with *Bhale Unnade* in which she plays Raj Tarun's mother. She discusses her journey, decision and priorities when she signed a film**

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Actress Abhirami is returning to Telugu cinema with the film *Bhale Unnade*. She plays Raj Tarun's mother in the film, which is directed by Sivasai Vardhan.

"Actually, I signed this film first, but my other film, *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* and *Maharaja*, was released first," she said about her entry into Telugu. The actress further shares her excitement about receiving good roles in her second innings now.

"As director Sivasai narrated this story to me, I was very keen to do it. I am playing Gauri, an independent and strong, principled single woman. Incidentally, I am working in a bank in this film," she said. Her parents worked at a bank, so she grew up watching them and is familiar with the appearance of bank employees.

When asked about her parents and cinema, she states that she has no film background but has been involved in the industry. After

working on several films, she relocated to the United States to study and later married there. She performed the female lead in the 2004 film *Cheppave Chirugali* opposite Venu Thottempudi, which was a huge success.

Basically, she shares, "I completed the film in July and later in August, I flew to the US for my studies. Several people had approached my parents. However, they informed me that I wasn't interested in doing any films back then. So that's how I took a break," she said.

Talking about her film career, she says, "It's been like a joyous twist of fate for me. I am lucky and grateful that this is my profession and I like it," said Abhirami.

Her criteria for choosing a project is pretty simple; the story and her role. "The story is my driving force. I am not bothered about whether the production house is big or small, the director is new or old; I am not doing this for money; I am doing it for love," she said.

Talking about her comeback, she said it was Kamal Haasan who asked her to dub for a character in the *Vishwaroopam* film. "When

Kamal sir offered, I just landed in India. At that time, the 100 years of cinema celebrations were going on and I too participated in it. I met all my old friends and people enquired about me and offered me roles. I started in a small way initially, but now I am getting different roles," she said.

In the last 10 to 15 years, the industry has exploded technically. "A woman like me at this age is getting very strong female characters. There is a big change in directors and writers' minds; they are thinking in a broader way," she said. Even in Telugu too, she is approached for a couple of projects, but her hands are full. "I am playing lead actress in two Tamil films; I am doing a comedy film and I also signed a film where four stories are to be told and my story is one of them. I play a sweeper and mother to a transgender kid whose daughter and mother relationship is told in one story," she said about her upcoming projects.

The OTT and digital technology impact has been huge and because of it, many women are getting stronger roles. "I am also doing

a web series. I play a corporate company manager and the story revolves around the company."

Unlike in *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram* or *Maharaja*, in *Bhale Unnade*, her character will be seen throughout the film. "It's a mother-son relationship and my character is not a small one like in my earlier films, throughout the film," she said. In this upcoming film, Raj Tarun plays the character of a saree draper. "I gave only one piece of advice to Raj Tarun: how to tie a saree, because he doesn't know," she said.

After her re-entry, she shared, "In the last two years, I finished nearly ten films." Now, she is busy with many projects. "But I am not in a rush to do quantity of films, as I want to take it in a slow manner. I want a long career, so I am looking for interesting roles," she said. She added that she is playing a negative role in an upcoming film.

"Now I am in a very exciting part of cinema, as I am getting different roles. The new generation is coming up with incredible stories, so I am looking for different kinds of roles in the future," she said.

## Samyuktha's two films announced on her birthday



On the occasion of actress Samyuktha's birthday, the filmmakers of her upcoming film unveiled the looks of two of her upcoming films.

One is *Sameera*, in which she plays opposite Bellamkonda Sai Sreenivas. The film is directed by Ludheer Byreddy and produced by Mahesh Chandu. The plot revolves around a 400-year-old dashavatara temple and stars Samyuktha in the main role. To commemorate her birthday, the filmmakers released the first look poster for her character, *Sameera*. Her involvement is crucial in the picture.

In another film, Samyuktha plays the female lead opposite Sharwanand in a film directed by Ram Abbaraju. The director previously delivered a hit, *Samajavaragamana*. This film is produced by Ramabrahmam Sunkara under Anil Sunkara's AK Entertainments. This film features two female leads opposite Sharwanand. Sakshi Vaidya and Samyuktha are the leading ladies! The makers released a poster of Samyuktha on her birthday and introduced her character as DIA through this.



## Sai Durgha Tej's great gesture

Actor Sai Durgha Tej once again demonstrates compassion, this time for the flood victims in Andhra Pradesh. He frequently stated that he was influenced by his uncle, Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan. In reaction to the floods that have affected both the Telugu states, Sai Durgha Tej has made a big contribution to relief operations.

He has pledged Rs 10 lakh each to the Chief Minister's Relief Funds of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, for a total of Rs 20 lakhs. He also contributed another Rs 5 lakh to the Amma Foundation and other charities. His generosity continued as he personally visited Vijayawada to donate the pledged money.

Actually, on his birthday in 2019, Sai Durgha Tej vowed to create a new building for the Amma Orphanage, which he completed in 2021. He also set aside monies from his compensation to run this orphanage in Vijayawada, which he continues to oversee. Following the recent floods in Vijayawada, Sai Durgha Tej visited the Amma Orphanage to check on the senior residents' well-being after completing his *Durga Amma darshanam*. He generously donated two lakh to the Amma Foundation and another three lakh to other charities.

After passing over the checks, he met and engaged with the foundation's elderly inhabitants. Sai Durgha Tej constantly leads charity efforts.



## MY CHILDREN AND I ARE COMPLETELY BLINDSIDED: AARTI RAVI

Tamil actor Jayam Ravi a few days back announced his separation from his wife Aarti. He posted a message on his social media profile, stating that he has decided to end his marriage to Aarti. He gave personal reasons for his separation from his wife. He asked everyone to respect his private life during this period.

On Wednesday, his wife, Aarti, posted another note on her Instagram and said that she was shocked to see his husband's statement! "I was deeply shocked and saddened by the recent public announcement regarding our marriage, which was made without my knowledge or consent," said Aarti in her note.

She added in her note that she sought several opportunities to

speak with her husband and to have an open talk. "Sadly, that opportunity was not afforded to me, leaving both my children and me completely blindsided by this announcement. The decision to walk out of our marriage is purely one-sided and does not benefit our family," said Aarti.

Jayam Ravi and Aarti married in June 2009. Aarti is the daughter of noted television producer Sujatha Vijayakumar. They have two sons, one of whom, Aarav, played a role in his film *Tik Tik Tik* (2018). The news about their marriage comes after Aarti removed Ravi photos from her social media page a few months back. Now, Ravi officially announced the separation from his wife a few days back and now their separation turns new, with Aarti saying it is completely one-sided.

## Bagheera roars for Oct 31 release



The makers of *Bagheera*, starring Srii Murali in the lead role, on Wednesday announced that the film is heading for its theatrical release on October 31.

The teaser of the film was released in 2023 and audiences since then have been awaiting the release.

*Bagheera* is directed by Dr. Suri. The film's story is written by Prashanth Neel, the director of the KGF films and Salaar. Rukmini Vasanth of Saptasagaradaache Ellofame is the female lead while seasoned actor Prakash Raj is said to play a prominent role in the film.

## 'Abundance of women energy surrounding me in *Bench Life* caught my attention'

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*Bench Life*, a Telugu web series, will soon be available digitally. Launching on Sony LIV on September 12, the project stars Vaibhav Reddy, Ritika Singh, Aakanksha Singh and Charan Peri in important roles.

Additionally, actress Aakanksha Singh, who is one of the leading stars in this soon-to-be-released series, exclusively reveals to *The Pioneer*, "Given that my spouse comes from the business sector, I was somewhat aware of the plot of the series. However, I was ignorant of the "benching" notion that the debutant director had shared with me. In the business culture, this idea is not well known. I'm confident that my series will ultimately raise awareness of it. People are genuinely "on the bench" in the business world, meaning they have no roles to do. They are reliant on openings! Hold on, though—they do receive monthly payments. Isn't it fascinating to learn this? Just picture the effect on screens."

Going ahead, the *Malli Raava* fame continues. "I have some knowledge of the telecom industry thanks to my husband. But my director had already drawn a character sketch for me, so I didn't feel the need to ask him for any advice. The abundance of women's energy surrounding me on the *Bench Life* sets was what really caught my attention and gave me a boost in confidence. However, the show isn't just about the novel idea; it also doesn't go into a completely humorous area. This figure would resonate with everyone, not just those in corporate settings." She did, in fact, remember a specific instance with us: "I usually perform in between action and cut, but I recall working on a sequence that was so emotionally charged that I was unable to stop

**Actress Aakanksha Singh, who is next going to be seen in Sony LIV's *Bench Life*, speaks to *The Pioneer* about getting onboard for the project, a day on the sets and more**

myself on the sets. I was unable to hear "CUT"! That truly stayed with me after that. It took me a full day to recover from that scene; in fact, my director became rather emotional as well. I believe I made a personal connection to it, uff."

After *Brinda*, this is the second Telugu web series available for streaming. All of the languages spoken in south India, including Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada, are anticipated to be supported by *Bench Life*. *Bench Life* is eagerly anticipated because of its new-age ideas and thoughtful, playful performances. According to *Devadas* fame, who gained notoriety for this, "I used to look forward to working every day on *Bench Life* sets because of the amazing energy there. However, I made a great friend in Manasa, my director. On the sets, she hardly ever called me by my true name; I was her Isha. In general, things are harder in real life than they appear to be on screens. Our lives are becoming more and more like living in a suitcase. Furthermore, you could not always

find a hit in the industry!"

After seeing the trailer, we realised that *Bench Life* offers a lighthearted viewpoint on the often stressful world of the professional job. The topic of this amusing comedy-drama, directed by Manasa Sharma, is not just the carefree attitude of today's youth; rather, it is about young people discovering new interests and a sense of purpose in the most unexpected locations. "Niharika was there to work; she didn't "pretend" to be a producer or Chiranjeevi Garu's daughter. Being a well-known actress herself, she is fully aware of the other side. I'm looking forward to collaborate with her once more," says the actress, expressing gratitude for Niharika Konidela, her producer.

In conclusion, the *Clap* fame utters, "The show will start discussions across many industries, not only in the corporate realm. In the modern world, who wouldn't want a work-life balance? I occasionally shoot nonstop! This show will make viewers wonder who exactly is on the "bench" and what benefits they are receiving? I can assure my fans that they won't see me as a stereotypically geeky figure."

