




**Peace talks cannot happen**




**ELECTRIC**  
TWO-WHEELER BUYERS CAN AVAIL  
SUBSIDY OF UP TO RS 10,000



**Krithy Shetty: If not acting, I'd probably have done something in FASHION**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

**There is nothing linking Congress activists to the attack on BRS MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy's residence which took place on Thursday. BRS Working President KT Rama Rao is in a hurry to face by-polls. However, he will be unhappy regarding by-polls. The Congress will wage a legal fight against the HC verdict regarding defected BRS MLAs. Gandhi is technically a BRS MLA. He became the PAC Chairman as per rules**



**B Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief**

**DON'T MISS...**

**Several villages submerged in...**

The Yeleru flood battered the Pithauram constituency as several villages were in the flood water on Thursday also and crops in thousands of acres submerged in the flood water. Though the Yeleru flood water slightly receded on Thursday there is no respite for the ordeal of flood victims as several villages were in flood water on Thursday as well. Several villages in Jagampeta, Kirilampudi, Pithapuram, Gollaprolu, Yelawaram and Peddapuram were inundated. Sources said that about 11000 families were affected by the Yeleru flood...

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**Tenure of arbitral tribunal can be...**

The Supreme Court on Thursday held the fixed tenure of an arbitral tribunal to pass an award can be extended even after the expiry of term, saying the courts must strive to give "meaningful life" to a law to "avoid cadaveric consequences" leading to "unworkable scenarios". The top court was dealing with conflicting judgements on the issue by several high courts. Few high courts, including the Calcutta High Court, while interpreting the provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, had held that an application...

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**Bahrain secures \$16.65m...**

The Bahrain Economic Development Board (Bahrain EDB) has secured investment commitments valued at USD 16.65 million from three leading India-based companies across the sectors of manufacturing, renewable energy, and ICT. The announcements were made during Bahrain EDB's ongoing week-long visit to Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, designed to strengthen bilateral economic ties and attract foreign direct investment to Bahrain, it said in a statement. H E Noor bint Ali Alkhalifa...

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**Praggnanandhaa, Vaishali star in...**

R Praggnanandhaa set the tone on the top board as the Indian mens team blanked Morocco 4-0, while the women romped home against Jamaica, conceding just a draw in the process, in the first round of the 45th Chess Olympiad here. With world championship challenger D Gukesh taking a break in the opening round, Praggnanandhaa delivered the goods against Tissir Mohamed out of a Sicilian defense game while Vidit Gujrathi, Arjun Erigaisi and P Harikrishna also pulled off comfortable wins...

-SPORTS

## Priority for MSMEs: CM

Promises steps to establish MSME Parks with farmers' participation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has said that the State government will prioritise Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), recognising their vital role in creating employment opportunities.

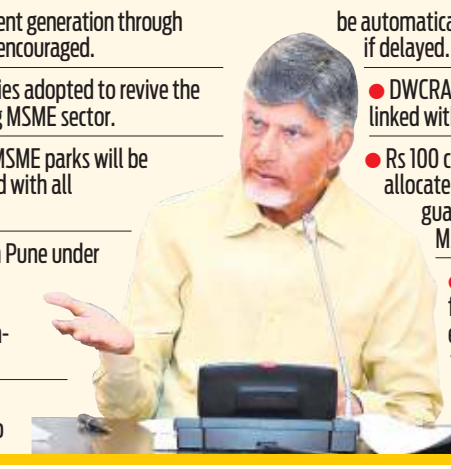
During a review meeting on MSMEs and the Department of Food Processing at the State Secretariat on Thursday, the Chief Minister expressed his belief that with proper government support, MSMEs can deliver significant results. He also announced plans to revive this sector, which has faced several challenges, by introducing new policies. The Chief Minister stated that the long-pending MSME parks would soon be completed and equipped with all necessary facilities. He emphasised the importance of farmers having a stake in these parks, suggesting that farmers who own land could establish MSME parks on their properties, similar to the development model followed in 'Amaravati'.

After being informed by officials about a similar system in Pune, the Chief Minister instructed them to study the policy and implement an improved version in the state. He also urged officials to streamline the process of granting industrial permits, proposing a policy where permissions would be automatically granted if delayed beyond a certain

time frame.

The Chief Minister further directed officials to link 'Dwcra' groups with MSMEs and stressed the need to release long-pending incentives to industries. He also highlighted the need to modernise 'Auto Nagars' to provide service facilities for electric vehicles. A sum of Rs 100 crore was announced as a credit guarantee for MSMEs.

Chandrababu Naidu also pointed out the promising opportunities in the state's food processing industry, particularly in horticulture and aquaculture. He noted the growing demand for organic farming products and instructed officials to promote organic farming practices. Ministers and department officials attended the review meeting.



- Employment generation through MSMEs is encouraged.
- New policies adopted to revive the struggling MSME sector.
- Pending MSME parks will be completed with all facilities.
- A policy in Pune under study for possible implementation.
- Industrial permits to be automatically approved if delayed.
- DWCRAs groups to be linked with MSMEs.
- Rs 100 crore to be allocated as credit guarantee for MSMEs.
- Organic farming to be encouraged for the benefit of future generations

## New MSME Policy soon: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister for MSME, SERP, and NRI Empowerment, Kondapalli Srinivas, has announced the imminent implementation of a new MSME policy to promote micro, small, and medium enterprises across the State. Addressing the media at the Secretariat on Thursday, he said a review was conducted under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, with key decisions aimed at strengthening MSMEs.

The Minister criticised the previous government for halting MSME-related policies and alleged that around Rs 1,500 crore in incentives remained unpaid. He highlighted the formation of the MSME Development Corporation in 2018 and the utilisation of central funds during the 2014-19 period. Srinivas also announced plans to establish District Industries Centres (DICs) in all new districts and set up 50 more industrial parks under public-private partnerships.

## CM's APPEAL TO CENTRE



## Declare heavy rains, Budameru floods in city a national calamity

Central team meets Naidu after loss assessment exercise

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has urged the Centre to declare the recent heavy rains and Budameru floods as a national calamity. A Central team, which visited the State to assess the flood damage, met with the Chief Minister at the Secretariat. Describing the situation as an unforeseen disaster, Naidu emphasised the immense loss and hardship caused by the floods. He called for the Centre's generous support in assisting those affected.

The Central team, formed to evaluate the extent of the damage, toured the State before meeting the CM. During this meeting, Naidu highlighted that this disaster should not be viewed in the same light as previous floods.

He remarked, "Record-breaking rainfall and sudden floods have severely disrupted lives. Properties have been damaged, and farmers are in distress, with their crops sub-

**FLOOD DAMAGE:** Record-breaking rainfall and floods caused severe damage to properties, crops, and infra.

**RELIEF EFFORTS:** The government deployed drones, fire engines, and full machinery for relief operations.

**PUBLIC TRUST:** The Central team noted that despite hardships, people trusted the govt's response.

**PERMANENT SOLUTION:** Flood victims requested a lasting solution to Budameru flooding after 60 years.

merged. In addition to the loss of life and property, the scarcity of drinking water and food has caused significant suffering," he said, urging the central team to ensure adequate aid.

The Chief Minister noted that 50 cm of rainfall had been recorded within two days, an unprecedented figure in the history of the Krishna barrage.

Continued on Page 2

## 'Swachhata Hi Seva-2024' campaign from Sept 17 to Oct 2

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad chaired the first meeting of the State Steering Committee with Secretaries of various departments at the Secretariat, and with District Collectors via video conference, to discuss the Swachhata Hi Seva-2024 campaign.

This state-wide cleanliness initiative will commence on 17 September for a fortnight and culminate on 2 October, with a curtain-raiser on 13 September.

The Chief Secretary highlighted that the campaign would launch on 17 September, involving all districts and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in efforts to transform Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs).

He directed the organisation of mass cleanliness drives at headquarters in both urban and rural areas, the initiation of Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs, and the holding of Swachh Bharat Cultural Fests across the state. The three pillars of SHS-2024 are:

**Swachhata Ki Bhaagidaari** - Public participation, awareness, and advocacy  
**Sampoorna Swachhata** - Focused on Swachhata Lakshit Ekayi  
**Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs** - Preventive health check-ups and social security coverage.

Continued on Page 2

## Embrace modern tech: I&PR Minister to officials



Information & Public Relations Minister Kolsu Parthasarathy addressing a meeting of field-level I&PR officials in Vijayawada on Thursday.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Information and Public Relations (I&PR) and Housing Department, Kolsu Parthasarathy has urged officers and employees to embrace modern technology and enhance their professional skills.

Addressing a meeting of I&PR field officers at the State Secretariat

on Thursday, the minister emphasised the need for continuous upskilling to meet current demands.

In his remarks, the minister highlighted the pivotal role of the I&PR Department in informing the public about the government's development and welfare schemes.

He stressed the importance of adapting to technological advance-

ments and urged all staff, particularly officers, to improve their expertise.

Minister Parthasarathy also suggested that Himanshu Shukla, Director of I&PR, organise a suitable training programme for employees with experts from relevant fields.

The minister further called for efforts to ensure the timely dissemination of information on welfare schemes through the department's dedicated website, which should be managed more efficiently to enhance the government's image. He stressed the need for wide publicity of these schemes through various media channels to raise public awareness at the grassroots level. Additionally, the minister instructed officials to promptly address any negative news about the government in traditional or social media by contacting the relevant district or state-level authorities to provide accurate information or seek clarification. **Continued on Page 2**

**Expert roped in to retrieve boats at Prakasam Barrage**



## Motor pumps deployed to clear Budameru floodwater

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Minister P. Narayana has announced that officials and workers are working tirelessly to drain stagnant Budameru floodwaters using motor pumps. He assured that by Friday evening, the floodwaters would be pumped out from all affected areas. The minister toured the flood-hit areas on Thursday, overseeing the ongoing cleaning and sanitation efforts. Accompanied by MLAs Bonda Umamaheswara Rao and Kolikapudi Srinivas Rao, he visited Payakapuram, UDA Colony, Journalist Colony, Kandrika, and Ambapuram.

Minister Narayana explained that instructions had been issued to officials to clear minor floodwaters in several locations. He also inspected the flow path of the Budameru from Payakapuram to Mustabada. Special arrangements were made to drain

Minister also inspected the flow path of the Budameru from Payakapuram to Mustabada. Special arrangements were made to drain stagnant water from open spaces between houses.

stagnant water from open spaces between houses. The minister noted that in Vijayawada, water had almost receded in all 32 divisions, with only a few areas still affected.

He also highlighted that workers were cutting through roads in flooded areas to facilitate water drainage. By Friday evening, he reiterated, all stagnant water would be cleared, and the cleaning and sanitation work in all divisions would be completed, bringing normalcy back to the flood-affected areas.

## Changes in exam pattern from next academic year: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh on Thursday implemented changes in the examination system from Class 6 starting in the 2025-26 academic year, aimed at enhancing students' capabilities. He stressed that failing under the CBSE examination system can have a profound impact on students, often leading to mental health challenges, as society tends to view such students as failures. Minister Lokesh urged officials to make thoughtful and well-considered decisions within the education sector.

The minister further instructed officials to take necessary measures to improve both teachers' and students' abilities in line with the upcoming changes to the examination system. These reforms will



begin in Class 6 in the 2025-26 academic year.

Minister Lokesh criticised the YSRC government for its handling of educational reforms, citing the introduction of TOEFL without having adequate teachers to instruct it, and the adoption of the IB syllabus without providing proper teacher training.

## Talks to end deadlock turns non-starter

WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA OFFERS TO RESIGN

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In a dramatic turn of events, the proposed talks to resolve the RG Kar hospital impasse between agitating junior doctors and the Bengal government never took off on Thursday after protestors refused to enter the meeting venue following the state's rejection of their demand to live telecast the meeting.

Disappointed at the talks not fruitfully, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she was "ready to relinquish her chair for the sake of the people" but wanted return of normalcy in state-run health care sector which remains crippled on account of the 'cease work' of the junior doctors persisting for over a month. "I do not care for my chair and am ready to resign for the sake of the people," she said, regretting her failure to get the protestors to the dis-



ussion table. Expressing similar disappointment at the talks falling through and transferring responsibilities for it on the shoulders of the state administration, the agitating doctors said they would continue their agitation but remain open for talks.

Banerjee, who waited for the medics to join the meeting for two hours and 10 minutes, later told reporters that the meeting couldn't be live-streamed as demanded since the issue remains sub-

justice before various courts including the Supreme Court.

"What the Supreme Court can, we can't. There are concrete directions from courts against making discussions on sub-judice matters public. We had placed three cameras to record meeting proceedings, which we could have shared with doctors with the apex court's permission," Banerjee said after leaving Nabanna Sabhaghar, the meeting venue at the secretariat.



# Expert roped in to retrieve boats at Prakasam Barrage

## Minister Ramanaidu praises scuba divers' efforts amid delays

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Water Resources, Nimmala Ramanaidu, has provided an update on the ongoing operation to remove sand boats stuck at the Prakasam Barrage gates on the river Krishna. During an inspection of the site on Thursday, the minister explained that a diving team had been deployed to cut the boats, but the rigid structure of the vessels had slowed the process.

He stated that one of the boats has been cut by 70 per cent, with an additional 10 metres still to be cut before it can be divided and removed. Despite the challenges, efforts are being made to expedite the extraction process. He praised the relentless work of Becham Infra and the scuba divers, although their initial attempts were not fully successful.

Minister Ramanaidu noted that the boats, each weighing over 120 tonnes, are too heavy to lift without first being cut into smaller pieces.

While Becham Infra and the divers have encountered difficulties, progress is now being made, with the divers working around the clock.



The minister further informed that the government has enlisted the expertise of Abbulu from Kakinada, who previously led the successful retrieval of a sunken boat in the Godavari River at Kachuluru. Abbulu and his team are set to assist in the current operation at Prakasam Barrage. "Abbulu and his team will soon arrive at the Prakasam Barrage to aid in the removal of the sand

boats," the minister said. Meanwhile, Minister Ramanaidu mentioned that local boats will also be used in the operation. The scuba divers, who have been working tirelessly for 24 hours to cut the boats into smaller pieces underwater, are now seeing positive results.

The Water Resources Department has developed four plans for the removal of

the boats, with the latest plan, implemented by Sealyan company divers, focusing on cutting the vessels into manageable parts underwater.

Minister Ramanaidu reiterated that the government will continue to rely on the expertise of Abbulu and his team to ensure the successful removal of the remaining boats, highlighting his past success at Kachuluru.

## NI-MSME and AU host intl meet

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NI-MSME) and Andhra University Incubation Council (a Hub) hosted the International Conference on Environmental, Economic, and Social Sustainability (EESS 2024) today. The conference aimed to promote sustainable practices among MSMEs, aligning with India's commitment to achieving its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Net Zero targets by 2070.

Prof. G. Sasibhushana Rao, Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, inaugurated the event, releasing the Book of Abstracts and highlighting the university's commitment to sustainability. "Our vision for a green campus is not just about beautification but about contributing to the global effort to combat climate change," he said.

Keynote addresses were delivered by notable figures, including Mr. Debajit Das and Mr. Alfred Wahl. Dr. S. Glory Swarupa, Director General of NI-MSME, emphasized the organization's role in promoting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks. "At NI-MSME, we are committed to supporting MSMEs in adopting sustainable practices that align with India's goals

## A sane voice in Indian politics

Sitaram Yechury was a symbol of decency and sanity in Left politics. Flexible in style, yet firm on principles, he was a friendly man who and always seen smiling. One rarely remembers Sitaram with a grumpy face, even though he was very aggressive while opposing Mrs Indira Gandhi during the 1975-77 Emergency. He organised JNU students to demand the resignation of Mrs Gandhi as the Chancellor of JNU and successfully achieved it.

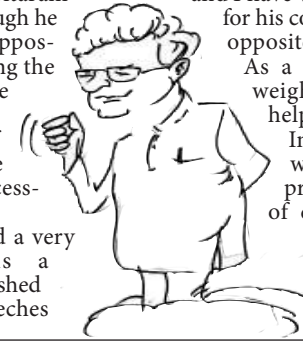
He was always affable and a very persuasive speaker. As a Parliamentarian, he distinguished himself by his insightful speeches

laced with facts and figures and rarely played to the gallery.

As a contemporary in JNU, he was a ubiquitous figure during student union elections and I have watched him with admiration for his commitment although from the opposite camp of Free Thinkers.

As a person, he never threw his weight around and was always helpful to friends. In his passing, India lost an eminent leader who was a sane voice in the prevalent chaos and cacophony of dogma and hatred. May he continue to inspire generations to come.

Lal Salaam, Comrade Sitaram  
-BP Acharya



## Yechury was a stalwart who rose through the ranks: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has expressed grief over the passing of veteran CPI-M leader Sitaram Yechury. Describing him as a stalwart who rose through the ranks to become one of the most respected voices in Indian politics, Naidu highlighted Yechury's intellectual approach to issues and his strong connection with people at the grassroots level.

His thoughtful debates across the political spectrum earned him recognition beyond his party. The CM extended his heartfelt condolences to Yechury's family, comrades, and followers, wishing his soul rest in peace.

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan expressed shock at the demise of CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury, who was receiving treatment in hospital. Kalyan hoped Yechury would recover, and his death came as a deep sadness. Recalling Yechury's start in politics as a student leader with leftist ideals, Kalyan noted his lifelong support for the poor, victims, and workers.

Describing him as a "leftist warrior," Kalyan said Yechury's



passing is a great loss to the poor and working classes. He extended his deepest sympathies to the family.

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also expressed deep shock and sorrow over Yechury's passing. Jagan praised Yechury's commitment to leftist ideals and his tireless efforts towards national progress.

He remembered Yechury's journey from his days as a student leader to his influential roles within CPI-M as a Politburo member and General Secretary. Jagan said Yechury's death leaves an irreplaceable void in Indian poli-

tics and conveyed his deepest condolences to the grieving family and colleagues.

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) State Committee held a condolence meeting for Yechury, who passed away while undergoing treatment at AIIMS in New Delhi. Senior CPM leader and former Rajya Sabha member P Madhu, CPM Central Committee Member MA Gafur, and other party leaders paid rich tributes to him.

CPI state secretary K Ramakrishna also conveyed his condolences to Yechury's family. He remarked that Yechury's death is a significant loss for the Communist parties, recalling his long association with him since his days as a leader at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Ramakrishna noted Yechury's pivotal role, along with CPI General Secretary D Raja and Congress leader P Chidambaram, in forming the UPA government in 2004.

Meanwhile, Congress Party Working Committee (CWC) member Gidugu Rudra Raju, along with TPCC President Mahesh Goud, visited New Delhi to offer condolences to Yechury's wife, Seema Chishti.

## 'Swachhata...

Continued from Page 1

He noted that the Government of India had designed the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign to mobilise citizens through various activities, with this year's theme being 'Swabhav Swachhata - Sanskar Swachhata'. The Chief Secretary directed officials to prepare thoroughly for this year's campaign, which marks a decade of celebrating Swachhata Hi Seva. First observed in 2017, the campaign honours Gandhi Jayanti, with 2 October recognised as Swachh Bharat Diwas. The fortnight-long campaign aims to engage public participation and community involvement in cleanliness drives.

The Chief Secretary urged the adoption of a 360-degree multimedia advocacy plan to highlight campaign activities and best practices, ensuring daily updates, progress reports, and achievements from districts and ULBs. Press conferences, involving the Information and Public Relations Department, should also be held.

The campaign, promoting the theme of 'Swabhav Swachhata, Sanskar Swachhata', emphasises active participation across all state departments and the involvement of citizens to enhance cleanliness and hygiene. The Chief Secretary stressed the need for careful and disciplined execution of SHS-2024, unlike routine programmes.

Special Chief Secretary for Environment, Forest, Science and Technology G. Anantha Ramu, Special Chief Secretary for Municipal Administration Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Chief Secretary for Health, Medical and Family Welfare M.T. Krishna Babu, Principal Secretary for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, and RWS Shashi Bhushan Kumar, Principal Secretary Kantilal Dande, Managing Director of AP Swachh Andhra Corporation Gandam Chandrudu, and other officials attended the meeting.

## Flight test of surface-to-air missile successful

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy and the DRDO on Thursday successfully carried out a flight test of a vertical launched short-range surface-to-air missile off the coast of Odisha.

The missile system successfully tracked and engaged the target, the Defence Ministry said.



"The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy successfully conducted the flight test of the Vertical Launch Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VL-SRSAM) from the Integrated Test

Range (ITR) in Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha," it said.

The ministry said the test aimed to validate multiple updated elements of the weapon system, including the proximity fuse and seeker.

"The performance of the system was meticulously tracked and confirmed by various instruments such as the radar electro-optical tracking system and telemetry deployed at ITR Chandipur," the ministry said

in a statement.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh praised the teams from the DRDO and the Indian Navy for their achievement, stating that this test reaffirms the reliability and effectiveness of the VL-SRSAM weapon system.

Samir V Kamat, the chairman of the DRDO, also congratulated the teams involved, emphasising that the system will significantly enhance the operational capabilities of the Indian Navy and serve as a force multiplier.

## World Suicide Prevention Day observed at Guntur GGH



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Psychiatry at the Government General Hospital (GGH), Guntur, observed World Suicide Prevention Day with the theme "Changing the Narrative on Suicide." The event was chaired by Prof. Dr. N. Uma Jyothi, Head of the Department of Psychiatry and Deputy Superintendent of GGH, Guntur, to raise awareness about suicide prevention.

Dr Uma Jyothi shared her experiences in treating

patients with suicidal thoughts and emphasised the importance of timely intervention and counselling in helping individuals return to normal life. She highlighted the need for continuous mental health support to prevent suicides. Dr. V. Venkata Kiran, Associate Professor and Aarogyasri Chief MEDCO, spoke on the significance of reducing the stigma surrounding suicide. He stressed the importance of open discussions to tackle this complex issue.

Vijaya Lakshmi A., Legal

Advisor for the SAKHI-One Stop Centre for Women and Child Welfare, shared her experiences working with teenagers dealing with relationship and family conflicts, as well as substance abuse.

She noted that regular counselling was essential in resolving these cases.

Siddhartha, founder of the Seven Green Charitable Trust, supported the cause by donating chairs worth Rs 25,000 to the department. He acknowledged the vital role psychiatrists play in addressing mental health disorders and emphasised that mental health is as important as physical health.

The programme was organised under the guidance of Dr. K. Ratna Kishore, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, and was attended by faculty members, post-graduates, and staff of the Psychiatry Department.



Andhra Cricket Association president and Vijayawada MP Kesineni Chinni participating in the ACA Apex Council meeting at the ACA Academy in Mangalagiri, Guntur district, on Thursday.

## Cricket hub to be set up at Mangalagiri: ACA chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) president and Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has announced that the ACA will soon establish a cricket hub at Mangalagiri in Guntur district. He further stated that the association is actively working towards hosting international cricket matches at the ACA Stadium in Mangalagiri.

The ACA Apex Council meeting was held on Thursday at the Andhra Cricket Academy, located within the ACA Stadium premises in

Mangalagiri. Key decisions aimed at promoting cricket in the State were taken during the meeting.

Following the meeting, president Kesineni Chinni addressed the media, confirming that the ACA would allocate necessary funds to upgrade the Mangalagiri stadium's infrastructure to meet international standards. He also revealed that, according to the council's resolutions, the ACA is planning to develop a Sports Hub in Visakhapatnam, in addition to the existing international stadium there.

Chinni further mentioned

that, with the support of Human Resources and IT Minister Nara Lokesh, improvements to roads and parking facilities at the Mangalagiri Stadium would be undertaken.

He expressed confidence that the stadium would soon be ready to host international matches alongside the Visakhapatnam stadium. ACA Vice President Venkata Prasanth, Secretary Sana Satish, Joint Secretary P. Vishnukumar Raju, Treasurer Dandamudi Srinivas, Councillor Gauru Vishnu Tej, and others were present at the meeting.

## Embrace modern...

Continued from Page 1

Parthasarathy also emphasised the importance of sharing success stories related to the government's development and welfare initiatives through the media.

Later in the meeting, the minister discussed matters concerning journalists, including their health scheme and accreditation. He directed that a comprehensive report be prepared on systemic issues such as filling vacancies and providing vehicles, with necessary actions to follow discussions with the Chief Minister.

Himanshu Shukla, Director of I&PR, announced that a new accreditation system would be implemented by 31st October. He also mentioned planned changes to the health scheme for journalists. He urged I&PR officers and staff to work more efficiently and leverage technology to the fullest to raise public awareness about government schemes and programmes.

## CPI(M) veteran Yechury...

Continued from Page 1

Called 'Sita' by his friends, Yechury, the fifth general secretary of the CPI-M who took over the reins of the party in 2015 from party hardliner Prakash Karat when Left fortunes were on the decline, was also hailed as an effective parliamentarian, a pillar of the party and an "unrepentant Marxist" with a pragmatic streak.

A soft spoken and popular leader who had friends across the political spectrum, Yechury was also a Rajya Sabha MP for 12 years from 2005.

"Saddened by the passing away of Shri Sitaram Yechury ji. He was a leading light of the Left and was known for his ability to connect across the political spectrum," Modi said in a post on X. Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi said Yechury was fierce in his determination to protect India's diversity and was a powerful champion of secularism, and noted that they had worked closely together

during 2004-08 to begin with. "The friendship that had been established then continued till his very end," Gandhi said in a statement.

The CPI(M), in a statement, described Yechury's death as a big blow for the Left, democratic and secular forces.

"The untimely demise of Sitaram Yechury at this crucial juncture in our national politics is a big blow for the CPI(M) and a grievous loss for the Left, democratic and secular forces."

BJP leaders and Union ministers also paid tributes to Yechury, one of the Left's most recognised faces, and said his contributions to public life would always be remembered. Several chief ministers condoled Yechury's death, with West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee saying it was a loss to national politics.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan described Yechury as an unparalleled leader of the Communist movement, and said his death was an irreparable loss for the nation, especially during

its time of crisis. Yechury, through his clear political stands, while in leadership positions, was not only a guide for the party, but also for the Left front and Indian politics, the CPI-M veteran said.

Yechury's family has donated his body to AIIMS for teaching and research purposes, the hospital said in a statement. A polyglot and prolific writer, Yechury was known for his skills at alliance building and was also one of the main building forces of the INDIA bloc, the opposition's alliance against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the recent Lok Sabha elections.

"In the recent period, Sitaram Yechury devoted a lot of his time and energy towards forging a broad unity of the secular opposition parties, which took the shape of the INDIA bloc. In both the period of the United Front government and later the UPA government, Sitaram was one of the key interlocutors for the CPI(M), which was supporting these coalitions," the CPI(M) said in its statement.

## Declare heavy rains, Budameru...

Continued from Page 1

He further explained that while the Prakasam Barrage is designed to handle a maximum flood of 11.90 lakh cusecs, the recent rains brought in 11.43 lakh cusecs, marking a near-record flood. Naidu commended the efforts of ministers and officials who worked on the ground, stating that they remained in Vijayawada, operating from the Collector's office like a Secretariat, to provide reassurance to the people. "We deployed the entire machinery into action and instilled confidence in the public," he said.

Naidu added, "We promptly deployed drones to deliver food, and fire engines were used to clean roads and

houses. From the Chief Minister to junior staff, flood relief operations were carried out with the intensity of a war effort. The crop loss is considerable, and it is crucial to extend help to tenant farmers affected by the disaster. Roads and irrigation systems have also been heavily damaged. Only with a substantial relief package for the flood victims and farmers, who have lost everything, can recovery be possible. This disaster must not be treated as a routine occurrence," Naidu explained.

Anil Subramanyam, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and leader of the Central team, shared his observations from the flood-affected areas with the Chief Minister. "Despite the extensive floods and hardships,

the people have great faith in the government.

Government initiatives have brought them comfort, and we witnessed no dissatisfaction or anger. The public believes the government will provide the necessary aid. The use of drones in relief efforts was particularly innovative. During our field visits, we observed significant crop loss and damage to infrastructure. Many affected by the Budameru floods, which have occurred after nearly 60 years, have requested a permanent solution to this issue," he informed the CM.

The central team pledged to convey the issues raised during their visit to the Centre and to work towards ensuring sufficient assistance for the state.



# Comprehensive measures in place for flood relief ops

VMC Commissioner thanks everyone who contributed in flood relief operations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra has expressed gratitude to everyone who supported the flood relief efforts, acknowledging their contributions in helping Vijayawada city recover swiftly. He said the VMC has demonstrated remarkable resilience and efficiency in addressing the recent flood crisis affecting the region. The VMC has successfully implemented comprehensive measures to mitigate the impact of the floods and expedite recovery efforts, he added.



HM Dhyanachandra

Vijayawada witnessed heavy rainfall which led to the Budameru flood. The increase in the water level was primarily due to the reverse flow of water from rural areas located downstream, and was caused by the obstruction of natural flow.

This obstruction is mainly due to the presence of weed plants, which blocked the smooth passage of water. Additionally, there was a substantial deposition of silt in Budameru which originates from the peripheral areas and accumulates in the rivulet, further exacerbating the obstruction and contributing to the increased flood levels, he said.

"With 60,000 cusecs of water from the Budameru Rivulet entering the city, numerous areas have been inundated due to the flooding of River Krishna. More than 50 per cent of the city was submerged in the flood," he said.

Meanwhile, he said the VMC faced a major challenge as 60 per cent of the workers are from these areas and half of the city was in floods. As many as 32 out of the 64 wards were affected by the floods. Five drainage pumping stations, besides the KL Rao head water works which supplies drinking water to the entire city, were inundated and damaged, he said.

"The VMC staff worked around the clock, responding to complaints from the CMO call centres. The 24/7 service was a lifeline for many flood-affected citizens, offering quick solutions to their problems and the VMC addressed complaints received via social media, including drone footage shared by residents. This swift response helped prevent the spread of diseases and ensured effective relief operations," he explained. Dhyanachandra said that

for those still residing in the flooded areas, essential supplies have been provided through significant logistical efforts. The VMC has deployed 50 tractors to deliver food, water, and other necessities. Drinking water has been supplied using 230 tankers, he said.

To manage water removal from affected areas, 352 oil engines were hired for draining water. As many as 462 vehicles operated for clearing garbage, desilting the choke points at different areas for a free water flow. This extensive deployment helped to pump out excess water and alleviate flooding in critical locations, he added.

Furthermore, he said over 8,973 people have been mobilised, with significant support from the State government. These individuals have been actively engaged in rescue, sanitation, and other relief operations, ensuring that the affected regions receive the necessary aid and attention. Around 110 fire engines were deployed for cleaning the streets and houses in the flood-affected areas, Dhyanachandra explained.

## KVP condoles death of Yechury

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Congress party senior leader and former MP KVP Ramachandra Rao and Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) vice-president Kolanukonda Shivaji have condoled the death of CPM leader Sitaram Yechury.

In a message here on Thursday, KVP Ramachandra Rao said: "I am deeply saddened by the demise of Sitaram Yechury, a Communist stalwart and a good friend of mine. I am fortunate to be his colleague for many years in Rajya Sabha. I still remember his command over the subject and the respect he gathered from even the treasury benches whenever he rose to speak on a subject."

"It is a great loss to the Nation in general and CPM in particular. The vacuum created by his death is hard to fill. Deep condolences to his family members and his colleagues comrades," Ramachandra Rao said.

APCC vice-president Kolanukonda Shivaji also condoled the death of Yechury. In a message here on Thursday, Shivaji said he had observed the struggles which Yechury led for four decades. "He dedicated his life for the sake of farmers and workers," he said. Shivaji conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family.

# Need to prioritise youth employment, public welfare: MP

## Discusses implementation of Centrally-sponsored schemes in district



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

MP M Sriharat emphasised the need for public representatives and officials to work diligently to make Visakhapatnam district the top in the country. He stressed the importance of adopting comprehensive development policies that prioritise employment for the youth and public welfare. "We must ensure that the Central government schemes are properly utilised and their benefits reach the deserving," Sriharat said, highlighting the need for greater awareness about these schemes among the public.

Speaking at the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee meeting held at the Collectorate on Thursday, Sriharat reviewed the implementation, challenges, and coordination of various Centrally-sponsored schemes in the district. "It is our responsibility to ensure that the funds provided by the Centre are put to effective use. Every penny should be spent in a way that

the intended beneficiaries receive full advantages," he added.

Sriharat reviewed the implementation of various Centrally-sponsored schemes, including MGNREGA, PMAY, and Digital India. He highlighted the need for coordination between officials and representatives to ensure the smooth implementation of these schemes. "We must focus on skill training for youth as part of our employment initiatives and pay special attention to education," he said. He also urged authorities to promote the Prime Minister's Suryagarh scheme to ensure its benefits reach as many people as possible.

While reviewing the progress of construction works under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, the MP stressed the need to complete pending projects. "Housing is a basic necessity. We must ensure that every eligible person has a roof over their head," he said. Additionally, Sriharat suggested plans to remove silt from Meghadri Gedda and

Gambhiram reservoirs to prevent future water management issues.

Addressing the need for better healthcare infrastructure, he urged authorities to increase the number of beneficiaries under the ICDS schemes and proposed the construction of 170 permanent buildings. "It is crucial to speed up appointments of Asha workers, establish generic medicine centres, and set up skill development centres to empower people," he said.

MLC Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao, MLAs Palla Srinivasa Rao, Gana Babu, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, and Pancharakla Ramesh Babu voiced their concerns during the meeting. District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad provided an overview of the district administration's efforts in implementing the schemes. The meeting was attended by TDP district president Gandi Babji, District Revenue Officer K. Mohan Kumar, Zilla Parishad CEO Satyanarayana, and other key officials from various departments.

# Ganta Srinivasa Rao slams YSRCP for criticising Pawan

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a scathing critique, senior TDP leader Ganta Srinivasa Rao has lashed out at the YSR Congress Party for attacking actor-politician Pawan Kalyan, despite his significant contributions to flood relief efforts.



"The irony is glaring. Pawan Kalyan has announced a donation of Rs. 4 crore to support flood victims, yet YCP leaders continue to criticise him," Rao said.

Rao drew a comparison between Pawan Kalyan and YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. "Pawan doesn't have illegal wealth worth lakhs of crores like Jagan, yet he donat-

"Instead of focusing on the flood victims, they are preoccupied with visiting party leaders in jail."

Rao warned that Jagan's lack of focus on critical issues could lead to his political demise. "If Jagan continues to ignore relief efforts and attacks those genuinely helping, he risks becoming irrelevant in the annals of history."

In a mocking tone, Rao questioned the Chief Minister's understanding of basic geography. "Jagan doesn't even know the difference between a river and a stream. I don't know who's writing his speeches, but people are laughing when he refers to Budameru as a river."

# Artistes getting ready for annual Srivari Brahmotsavam

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD is gearing up to showcase a spectacular cultural fete with artistes hailing from across the country, during the forthcoming annual Srivari Brahmotsavam from October 4-12. There will be special cultural programmes on the day of Garuda Seva, October 8.

Among the 450-odd festivals which are observed in Tirumala all through the year, the annual Brahmotsavam stands out with its grandeur attracting thousands of pilgrims.

Special feature of the Brahmotsavam fete is the daily Vahana Sevash wherein the processional deity Sri

Malayappa Swamy, in different alankarams, blesses the devotees along the Mada streets on various carriers. Adding gaiety to this divine spectacle are the cultural teams from across India displaying their enchanting art forms.

Apart from the South Indian States, artistes from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Gujarat, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh have also geared up to present their artistic skills in front of Vahana Sevash during the ensuing annual Brahmotsavams at Tirumala under the aegis of the All Dharmic Projects of TTD.

# Industrialist donates 1.55 cr to CMRF

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Industrialist Vikram Narayana Rao met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday at the Secretariat and donated Rs 1,55,55,555 to

the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to help those affected by the flood in the Krishna districts. Narayana Rao handed over the cheque to the Chief Minister.

Later, Narayana Rao told

the media that he had provided the assistance on behalf of his family members as he was a resident of Vijayawada, Ajithsingh Nagar. He said he was very upset and extended support to the people.



# NTR district suffers losses worth Rs.1,200 cr

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Srijana has briefed the Central team, led by Joint Secretary of the Union Home Department, Anil Subrahmanyam, on the severe damage caused by record heavy rains and floods in Krishna River and Budameru Rivulet in Vijayawada and surrounding areas. She informed the Central team that the district has incurred a damage loss more than Rs.1,200 crore.

Collector elaborated on the damage to Central team



The Central team visited the district on Thursday to assess the flood-affected regions. During their visit, the team visited a photo exhibition detailing the floods, the government's assistance, and the damage incurred by various departments.

Dr Srijana explained that the district recorded 26 cm of rainfall in 24 hours, leading to over 11.43 lakh cusecs of water

flowing into the Prakasam Barrage. Also, around 40,000 cusecs of flood from the Budameru Rivulet inundated 32 out of 64 corporation wards, including areas in Ibrahimpatnam and G Kondur mandals, she said.

Further she explained that large-scale relief operations were launched on September 1, providing food, drinking water, milk, medicines, biscuits, and other essentials, with helicopters and drones assisting in the efforts.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLC Jupudi Prabhakara Rao has warned the TDP coalition government that YSRCP will launch a protest if it proceeds with the privatisation of medical colleges. Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Thursday, the former MLC expressed concern that Naidu's current plans could result in the privatisation of newly established medical colleges and revealed that there were

# Stop privatisation of medical colleges: YSRCP

attempts to stop the construction. He also highlighted that a letter was written to reject 50 approved seats in the Pulivendula Medical College. Jupudi Prabhakara Rao reiterated that if the government does not reconsider its stance on the privatisation of medical

colleges, the YSRCP will launch protests to protect the rights of students, particularly those from SC, ST, and BC communities, ensuring that they are not deprived of medical education opportunities. He highlighted that 17 medical colleges were established to

make medical education more accessible to underprivileged students under the leadership of YSRCP Chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. In contrast, he noted that during Chandrababu Naidu's tenure, even with 14 years in office, no new government medical college was established. He further mentioned that the efforts of the previous YSRCP government have resulted in 2,550 new medical seats being made available, raising the total to nearly 5,000 seats.

# Delay in construction of EMRS leaves students, staff in crisis

At present, there are only four classrooms, one principal's room, 10 toilets, and two dormitories for 400 people

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

The delay in constructing the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) in Kotikapenta in Pachipenta mandal has pushed students and staff to the brink, forcing them to confront severe hardships and risks. The school's transit campus in the Tribal Welfare Ashram School for Boys, Saraivalasa, is inadequate to accommodate the growing number of students. Despite government promises, the project remains unfinished, leaving the transit facility struggling to accommodate 356 students and 30 staff members.

"We are facing immense difficulties due to the lack of infrastructure," said a teacher, speaking anonymously. "We have only four classrooms, one principal's room, 10 toilets, and two dormitories for all 400 people. We conduct classes in the corridors and sometimes in the open. Girl students and women faculty are forced to go

"We are facing immense difficulties due to the lack of infrastructure," said a teacher, speaking anonymously. "We have only four classrooms, one principal's room, 10 toilets, and two dormitories for all 400 people. We conduct classes in the corridors and sometimes in the open. Girl students and women faculty are forced to go to nearby bushes to relieve themselves as the toilets are in terrible condition."

The challenges extend beyond infrastructure. Two teachers, Arthi and Mahesh, lost their lives while crossing a local stream, highlighting the dangers faced by staff. "We stay in rented accommodations in nearby villages and cross the dangerous Rayimanu stream to get to school. There's no proper transportation or medical facility for either students or staff," added the teacher. Despite these difficulties, EMRS Kotikapenta has achieved impressive academic results, including 100 per cent

pass rates in the past three years and securing eight Dakshana Foundation scholarships.

Deputy Director of the Tribal Welfare Department, M. Rukhmangadhaya, attributed the delay to administrative reasons and a lack of funds. "Though the construction started in 2020, it was not completed yet due to various administrative reasons and a deficiency of funds."

District Collector Shyam Prasad recently visited the site, urging contractors to expedite the project. "I hope they will complete the construction in the next couple of months," Rukhmangadhaya added.

# Poet Molla's bronze statue to be unveiled tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The bronze statue Atukuri Mollamamba, popularly known as Kummara Molla, which was arranged on the premises of the Tummalapati Kshetraya Kalakshetram in Vijayawada will be unveiled by Maharaja of Mysore and Parliament Member representing Mysore, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar on September 14. The statue unveiling function was to take place on September 4, however, due to the recent heavy rains and floods, it was postponed to September 14.

NTR District Kummari Shalivahana Sangham president Bonmina Srinivasa Rao, and Vijayawada city president B Durga Prasad released a brochure here on Thursday. While speaking to the media, they said that on the occasion of Molla's bronze statue unveiling, a meeting would be organised at the Kalakshetram in the chair of Rajamahendravaram MP and BJP Andhra Pradesh president Daggubati Purandeswari.

# GITAM launches technology incubator

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to foster deep-tech innovation and entrepreneurship, GITAM Deemed to be University is establishing an Inclusive Technology Business Incubator (iTBI) focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has sanctioned Rs 4.57 crore for the project.



Investigator and Head of the Computer Science and Engineering department at GITAM School of Technology. "We plan to support 50 startups and commercialise at least 20 products by 2026."

The iTBI will provide 24x7 access to advanced AI and ML facilities for faculty and students, promoting groundbreaking research, high-impact publications, patents, and products ready for the marketplace. Prof Raja P

Pappu, Dean of GITAM School of Business, and Vikas Srivastav will work closely with the Principal Investigator to ensure the project's success. "This iTBI has the potential to catalyse innovation across various sectors," Prof Pappu added.

Lauding the effort, GITAM In Charge Vice-Chancellor Prof Y Gowtham Rao stated, "This initiative will strengthen GITAM's leadership in technology and entrepreneurship, positioning us as a key player in driving AI and ML advancements."



# Several villages submerged in floodwater from Yeleru

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The Yeleru flood battered the Pithapuram constituency as several villages were in the flood water on Thursday also and crops in thousands of acres submerged in the flood water.

Though the Yeleru flood water slightly receded on Thursday there is no respite for the ordeal of flood victims as several villages were in flood water on Thursday as well. Several villages in Jagampeta, Kirlampudi, Pithapuram, Gollaprolu, Yeleswaram and Peddapuram were inundated.

Sources said that about 11000 families were affected by the Yeleru flood in the region. Officials said that the Yeleru and the Pampa rivulets flood water badly affected 234 villages in 20 mandals in Kakinada district. Crops including paddy, maize, cotton, black gram and ground net, were submerged in the flood waters in more than 60,000 acres. Fish ponds in 32 acres were also damaged as flood water gushed into the ponds. As many as 50 irrigation tanks were also damaged in the floods.

Sources said that 143 houses collapsed and the R&B roads to a length of 225 KMs also damaged due to the heavy floods as per the preliminary assessment. Interestingly, the land purchased by Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan in Pithapuram constituency to construct a house was also submerged in the flood water.



Though the Yeleru flood water slightly receded on Thursday there is no respite for the ordeal of flood victims as several villages were in flood water on Thursday as well. Several villages in Jagampeta, Kirlampudi, Pithapuram, Gollaprolu, Yeleswaram and Peddapuram were inundated.

The relief operations in the Yeleru flood-hit areas are in full swing as 40 NDRF personnel and 34 SDRF personnel were taking part in the relief operations using 17 boats. As many as 110 army personnel and 51 expert swimmers were also deployed to the flood-hit areas

to carry out relief operations, official sources informed. Meanwhile, the famous tourist places Rajiv River Beach road, and Pushkar ghat were inundated in the flood water in Yanam. The police are not allowing people to go to these places. MLA Jyotula Nehru and RDO Sitaram visited the flood-

hit Rajupalem village in Kirlampudi mandal and distributed essentials. The MLA said that essentials including rice were being distributed to the victims by going to the flood-hit villages on a tractor. Meanwhile, several villages in the Konaseema district were also under flood water. The residents of Shivayalanka and K Yenugupalli Lanka were inundated by the Godavari flood water and the villagers used boats to come out of the villages. The flood water was overflowing on the Yeduru Bedam causeway and Appanapalli causeway disrupting vehicular traffic.

# Extend crop loans to farmers liberally: DC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has directed the NABARD and UBI officials to extend crop loans to the farmers and tenant farmers extensively. The Collector also asked them to reschedule the loans to farmers in the flood-affected areas.

Collector Nagarani here on Thursday presided over an emergency DCC bankers' meeting with UBI and NABARD officials on the rescheduling of loans to the farmers who have suffered losses in the flood-affected



areas and the granting of crop loans to farmers and tenant farmers. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that

9,918 farmers have lost crops in 5,297.32 hectares in 94 villages in June in West Godavari district due to heavy rains and floods.

She said that 6,050 farmers lost their crop in 3,454.89 hectares in 122 villages in July and August and 963 horticulture farmers lost their crop in 238 hectares. The State Government has decided to suspend the loans of all the farmers who have lost their crops for two years and extend crop loans to the farmers and tenant farmers extensively.

A new joint liability, JLG group has been formed and it has been ordered to grant loans

on the surety of the group, the Collector revealed. Moreover, Collector Nagarani asked the bankers to grant loans to the dairy farmers without delay in the livestock-related PKCC loans as per their eligibility.

DRO J Udaya Bhaskara Rao, UBI Regional Head T Sangeeta Kumari, District Lead Bank Manager A Nagendra Prasad, NABARD Director T Anil Kant, District Agriculture Department Officer Z Venkateswara Rao and District Animal Husbandry Department Officer Dr K Murali Krishna were among those who attended the meeting.

# Addanki RTC depot to get 10 new buses

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar said that 10 more new buses were allocated to Addanki RTC depot to start services to Hyderabad and Bangalore and announced that the Addanki RTC bus depot would be developed as a model depot.

Minister Gottipati Ravikumar inaugurated new Super luxury bus services from Addanki to Hyderabad in Addanki on Thursday. He ceremoniously performed pooja and launched the new bus today in the Addanki bus depot and later planted a sapling.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the APSRTC was ruined by the previous Jagan Reddy Government. In the new government, under the leadership of Chief Minister



Chandrababu Naidu, new RTC buses are being inducted into its fleet to better serve the people to travel comfortably. "New buses will be induct-

ed in the place of the old buses that have completed more than 13 lakh km. To provide better services to the passengers, 10 more new buses were allocated to Addanki Depot.

These new buses will be operated on the Hyderabad and Bangalore routes," the Minister asserted.

He said that 1500 buses had been allocated to various depots across the State within three months of the formation of the coalition government in the state. Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar announced that the bus services would soon be restored for the students, students and people of rural areas who study in cities, adding that the RTC Depot at Addanki will be developed in all ways with the cooperation of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

"Electric buses will also be allocated to Addanki Depot in the coming days and the NDA government aims to make the depot an ideal depot. RTC officials and TDP leaders were among those who attended the programme.

# Pawan Kalyan's land inundated

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The land purchased by Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan in Pithapuram constituency was inundated by the Yeleru flood water.

The Pawan Kalyan's 3.5 acres of land is located at Y Junction, beside NH 216, near here. The land is in three to four feet of floodwater of Yeleru. Pawan Kalyan announced that he would construct a house there.



# Four killed as container truck overturns, falls on car

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a ghastly road accident, four persons were killed and two others injured when a container truck overturned and fell on the car in which they were travelling at Bhakarapet in Chandragiri mandal on Thursday.

Police said that a tomato-laden heavy container truck was going to Chennai from Kalakada village. The container truck driver lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a curve. The truck overturned and fell on the car.

Four persons travelling in the car were crushed to death while two others suffered grievous injuries and were admitted to the GGH here where their condition is said to be very critical.



It took more than two hours to lift the container truck from the road under which the car was stuck. A huge crane was used to lift the heavy container truck. The truck driver fled the scene

after the accident. The identity of the deceased is yet to be established, the police said. The passersby said that the container truck driver drove the vehicle at high speed and in a reckless manner.

# BDCC reviews rain situation

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The Bankers District Consultative Committee (BDCC) here on Thursday resolved to declare the incessant rains that caused losses to standing crops as a natural calamity and to submit a report accordingly to the state-level committee and the State government.

Chaired by the District Collector Shan Mohan, the committee reviewed the situation arising out of the incessant rains since August 30 and the resulting floods. It also resolved to reschedule crop loans and to sanction new loans, to the farmers who sustained losses in the present calamity subject to the policy decision of the state committee and state government. The preliminary estimates

showed that crops in 18,000 hectares, horticulture crops in 82 hectares, aquaculture tanks in 32 hectares in Kirlampudi, Jagampeta, Pithapuram, Gollaprolu, Peddapuram, Pedapudi and Tallarevu mandals were badly affected.

Collector Shan Mohan said the assessment of crop losses would be taken up from tomorrow and asked the Bankers to come forward to help the farmers tide over the crisis by sanctioning loans liberally. Joint Collector Rahul Meena, DRO Dr Tippe Naik, district consultative committee convenor and Union Bank of India Regional Manager Sai Manohar, Lead District Manager Ch SV Prasad, NABARD AGM Somunaidu and coordinators of various banks took part in the deliberations.



# Severe sand shortage hits district, leaves builders in crisis

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A severe sand shortage has struck the district, with both Bheemili and Aganampudi depots running out of stock, leaving house builders in a precarious situation. The crisis has been exacerbated by the absence of official sand reserves across the district, forcing contractors to seek supplies from neighboring districts. "There is no sand available at either depot. The situation is critical for builders who need sand for ongoing construction projects," an official from the mines department revealed.

The shortage has been attributed to the previous government's setup of depots for sand sales, leading to price hikes and recurring issues of artificial shortages. "For years, we faced issues with sand availability. The artificial shortage created a crisis, driving up prices," said a contractor from the city. The sudden withdrawal of an infrastructure company, which managed the district's sand sales, has further complicated the situation. "The sudden withdrawal by the company left us without a reliable source. We are now scrambling for alternatives," commented a local contractor.

Despite efforts to resume sand sales under the leadership of the district collector, the Bheemili depot's stock was depleted within 40 days, fueling public anger.

# Three burglars arrested; Rs 10.78 L booty recovered

PNS ■ ELURU

The police arrested three burglars and recovered gold jewellery and silver ornaments worth Rs 10.78 lakh.

SP KP Shiva Kishore told the media here on Thursday that on May 29, 2024, three trio broke open the doors of the house of the complainant at Tallapudi village in Pedapadu police station limits and decamped with gold jewellery and silver ornaments.

The victims lodged a complaint with the Pedapadu police station and a case was registered under Cr. No. 119, 2024, U/S 457 and 380 PC. A special team was formed led by Sub-inspector K Subha Sekhar to investigate the burglary.

The police team, on a tiff off, conducted a checking of vehicles at Kalaparru toll



plaza. The three burglars were going on a motorcycle. After seeing the police, they started fleeing. The police chased them and arrested the three burglars P Venkata Reddy, Ch. Venkata Reddy and Sk. Allah Bakshi. The police recovered gold jewellery weighing 82 grams, and silver ornaments weighing 4.756 kg. The trio confessed to the crime and they were produced before the court.

# No possibility of by-polls

We will win in case they are held: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that he doesn't think there will be by-elections due to the defection of some BRS MLAs to the Congress. If there are by-elections, they will be in the Congress account, he said.

Arikepudi Gandhi is technically a member of the BRS and became the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) as per rules. "While respecting the decision of the High Court regarding defections, we will look for legal alternatives. We will proceed regarding party changes as per the Constitution. We will induct leaders if they come to us liking our policies and governance. BRS leaders are not in a position to play the role of the opposition. The people gave them zero seats in

Parliament. BRS leaders are looking at us as they do not have any confidence in their leadership," Mahesh said.

Speaking to the media after meeting AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge on Thursday in New Delhi, Mahesh said that he came to New Delhi to seek the blessings of Kharge. Kharge is a leader with long political experience. Kharge asked me to strengthen the Congress by including members from all communities, he said.

"We will strengthen the party at all levels. We will try to win more seats for the party in the next elections. We will move ahead with the aim of making Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister," he said.

Mahesh said that the decision on Cabinet expansion is in the hands of the Chief Minister and the high com-

mand. He said that it is common for new committees to be appointed after the TPCC president is changed. A decision will be made regarding new committees after discussing it with AICC leaders. The party will give top priority to Backward Classes in the TPCC Committee. There is a need for the CM to move ahead in coordination with the party, Mahesh added.

He said that CPM General Secretary Sitaram Yechury's death is a huge loss for national politics. "Yechury was a great leader and a Telugu who made his voice heard on the national scene. He is a great soldier who fought for his ideology. My deepest sympathies to Yechury's family who spent his life working for the poor. May his soul rest in peace, he said.

# 13 gamblers held; Rs 13 lakh seized

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

The police raided a gambling den in the forest area of the Boyakonda village on Thursday, and arrested 13 persons besides seizing Rs 13 lakh.

DSP Prabhakar told the media that on a tip-off, a

police team led by SI Srinivasulu conducted a raid on a poker gambling den.

The police arrested 13 poker gamblers and seized Rs 13,81,050 and 20 motorcycles. Some of the poker gamblers, after noticing the police, fled the scene. The arrested were produced before the court.

# 22 kg of ganja seized; 1 held

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The police seized 22 kg of ganja and arrested a drug peddler here on Thursday. Police said that the peddler purchased the ganja in bulk and was selling it in small packets, each packet for Rs 300. He would pretend to be a Swiggy boy and door-deliver the ganja packets. On a tip-off, the police conducted a raid at Maruthinagar here at Kottapalli crossroad and arrested the drug peddler.



# Condolence meeting held for Sitaram Yechury

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) State committee observed a condolence meeting for party general secretary Sitaram Yechury, who passed away while undergoing treatment at AIIMS in New Delhi, at the party state office in Vijayawada on Thursday. CPM senior leader and former Rajya Sabha Member P Madhu, CPM



CPM Andhra Pradesh Committee leaders paying tributes to the party general secretary Sitaram Yechury at the party State office in Vijayawada on Thursday

Central committee member MA Gafoor, State secretariat members Y Venkateswara Rao, Ch Babu Rao and other leaders paid rich tributes to Sitaram Yechury.

During the meeting, the party leaders paid a rich tribute to Sitaram Yechury. Party senior leader Madhu said that the party would overcome the loss of Yechury. The party decided to maintain mourning for one week, he said. Later, he stated that

along with the party senior leader Y Venkateswara Rao, he would attend the last rites of Yechury in New Delhi on September 14.

In a press release, the CPM state secretary V Srinivasa Rao expressed his grief at the demise of Sitaram Yechury. Sitaram participated in many public agitations and organised various struggles across the country, he said.



ACROSS THE STATES



**Ambedkar idol desecrated in UP, BSP leaders protest**

A statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar installed in a village of Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district was desecrated by some unknown persons, police said on Thursday. Angered over the incident, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leaders staged a protest and raised slogans, after which a new statue was installed there. The incident took place in Bahadurpur village under Fefna police station limits on Wednesday night, the police said. The police said they have lodged a case in the matter and initiated investigation. Brijmohan Saroj, Station House Officer (SHO), Fefna, said, "A case has been registered against unknown persons in this matter on the complaint of one Akhilesh Kumar." On receiving information about the incident, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leaders and supporters of the area reached the spot in large numbers and began sloganeering. On the other hand, Deputy Superintendent of Police Shyam Kant also reached the spot with police force. The SHO said a new statue has been installed at the spot.



**Mayawati has 'contract' to support RSS, BJP: Cong**

The Congress on Thursday hit back at BSP supremo Mayawati for her attack on Rahul Gandhi, saying she has taken a "contract" to support the RSS and the BJP and it is, therefore, necessary to finish her off politically. Unorganised Workers & Employees Congress Chairman Udit Raj alleged that whenever Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi attacks the RSS and the BJP, Mayawati feels the pain. His remarks came a day after the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president alleged that Gandhi was making misleading statements about reservation and said his own party did not let the Bill on SC/ST reservation in promotions pass during its 10-year rule at the Centre. The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister also claimed that when not in power, the Congress talks about the "neglected" classes of SC, ST and OBC but when in power, it works "against" their interests.



**Assam: 2 die as cops open fire during eviction drive**

Two protestors were killed when police personnel opened fire to disperse a mob that attacked them during a drive to evict alleged encroachers in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district of Assam on Thursday, an official said. Several officials and security personnel were also injured in the mob attack, which led to the policemen opening fire, he claimed. A team from Sonapur circle office and the police went to Kochutoli village in the district to evict Bengali-speaking Muslim villagers who had previously been removed from the encroached land but had again returned, he said. The villagers, including women, attacked the officials and policemen with sharp weapons, sticks and stones, resulting in injuries to a magistrate and over 20 police personnel, the official said, adding that a police vehicle was also damaged in the incident. The police had to open fire to disperse the mob. Two encroachers were injured in the firing and taken to Sonapur district hospital where they succumbed to their injuries, he said.

**'Peace talks cannot happen without Russia, Ukraine on board'**

PNS ■ GENEVA

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said India is among the few countries that have the ability to talk to both Russia and Ukraine to find a solution outside the battlefield but asserted that negotiations cannot happen without the two parties on board.

Jaishankar, who was in conversation with Ambassador Jean-David Levitte at Global Centre for Security Policy, a think tank, here was answering a question about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin and to Ukraine to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy when he reiterated India's stated position of finding a solution outside the battlefield.

After elaborating on how Modi's visit took place over the last two months, Jaishankar said, "We're not going to get a military solution; there has to be a diplomatic one, and negotiated one" and added that it is for the parties to decide the terms of negotiation.

In a veiled reference to the West's unilateral efforts to discuss the end of the Russia-Ukraine war, said, "You know, a negotiation cannot be one party and all its supporters coming together and the other party is not in the room, then it's not a negotiation."

Jaishankar, who reached Geneva after a two-day visit to



**Doval meets Putin in St Petersburg**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Thursday met Russian President Vladimir Putin amid renewed efforts to find a solution to the Ukraine conflict.

The meeting took place on the margins of a conclave of national security advisors of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) nations in St Petersburg.

In the talks, Putin hoped that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Russia's Kazan next month to attend the annual BRICS summit.

The Russian President also proposed a bilateral meeting with Modi on October 22 on the sidelines of the BRICS summit to analyse bilateral engagement and to discuss



"future-oriented" actions.

"We are waiting for our good friend Modi and best regards to him," the Russian media quoted Putin as saying in the meeting with Doval.

On Wednesday, the NSA held wide-ranging talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu and discussed important issues of "mutual interests".

It is understood that Modi's talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on August 23 figured in the talks between the two NSAs.

Germany, said, "The would be a few countries who have the ability to talk in both places, who can, who are not seen as in one country as being in the other party. I think these countries have a possibility today," he said, giving examples of Saudi Arabia and UAE.

A time has arrived when there should be a realisation that the continuation of Russia-Ukraine conflict is hurting both countries and it should end soon, he said, and mentioned how the Ukraine conflict actually tells how "interdependent and globalised and tightly woven" the world is.

The war had an immediate impact on fuel prices creating a disturbance in the global economy and global finance and had collateral consequences on other societies, he said and pointed out how many of the consequences of this (Russia-Ukraine) conflict were actually felt far away and gave Sri Lanka's example.

The amount of fuel came down by half because of the cost of fuel and "so, a lot of the crisis in Sri Lanka was actually a secondary or tertiary consequence of what was happening in Ukraine," he explained.

He also drew attention to the happenings in the Middle East, in Gaza because "it's affecting shipping as the Houthis targeting of shipping has big consequences. It has radicalisation implications."



**Rahul committed 'rashtradrroh' with foolish remarks in US: BJP**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday upped the ante against Rahul Gandhi, saying the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha has committed "treason" with his foolish remarks in the US.

"Rahul Gandhi has committed 'rashtradrroh' (treason) in the US. The entire country is hurt by the kind of image of India he has projected in the US," BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra told a press conference at the party headquarters.

The Lok Sabha MP said Gandhi's "arrogance" of being the leader of opposition is reflected in Parliament and his "foolishness" in the US.

"When caste is pitted against caste, religion is pitted against religion and harsh comments are made about Sikhs in a foreign country, it is called 'rashtradrroh'," the BJP spokesperson said.

Patra said people who do not know how to project India in the right perspective in a

foreign land and consistently try to defy "our motherland" should not be taken very seriously.

"Everyone knows who is a 'panauti'? 'Pappu' and 'panauti' go together. Whatever Pappu has touched, it suffered destruction... He is the biggest 'panauti' of the Congress," the BJP leader said in an apparent reference to Gandhi.

Patra said the Congress has been suffering defeats in elections since Gandhi came at the helm.

"Take it in writing, the Congress will not rise so long as he (Rahul Gandhi) is there. The rocket will not launch because there is no fuel in it," the BJP leader added.

Patra alleged that the Congress' sole objective was to make Gandhi prime minister "at any cost".

For this, they are ready to even divide the country and pit people against each other, he alleged, adding, "But, remember Rahul Gandhi cannot be launched".

**Delhi court grants bail to 'middleman' Chauhan**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to "middleman" Vinod Chauhan in a money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja granted the relief to Chauhan, who was accused of transferring cash sourced through alleged kickbacks given by the "South Group" to the AAP, for the party's poll campaign in Goa.

Chauhan was given bail on a personal bond of Rs 10 lakh.

He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in May.

On June 28, the ED filed a supplementary chargesheet against Chauhan in the case.

He was the 18th person to be arrested by the ED in the case, in which the federal agency had also taken into

custody Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supreme Arvind Kejriwal, his party colleague and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, AAP MP Sanjay Singh, BRS leader and former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao's politician daughter K Kavitha, several liquor businessmen and others. The ED had mentioned Chauhan's alleged role in the case in an official document submitted before a court in relation to Kavitha's arrest.

The agency had earlier alleged that of the Rs 100-crore bribe money given to the AAP in connection with the Delhi excise policy by the "South Group" -- consisting of Kavitha and some others -- an amount of Rs 45 crore was used for the party's Goa Assembly poll campaign.

**Dhankhar slams Rahul for remarks in US**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said there was nothing more condemnable and intolerable than one in constitutional position becoming part of enemies of the nation, in an apparent attack on Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi over his remarks made in the United States.

Dhankhar's assertion came a day after the BJP hit out at Gandhi over his meeting with US lawmaker Ilhan Omar and others during his visit to the country, alleging that the Congress leader is indulging in "dangerous and mischievous" activities by reaching out to people abroad who are known for their anti-India stand.

**Bio-E3 policy will usher in bio-revolution in India: Singh**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government's Bio-E3 policy marks a crucial step in positioning India as a global bio-economy leader and is set to spark a "bio-revolution" in India similar to the IT revolution in the western world, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Thursday.

The Bio-E3 policy was formally launched last month and aims to facilitate sustainable and efficient utilisation of biological resources for innovation, scaling-up and bio-manufacturing of specialty chemicals, enzymes, bio-polymers, functional foods, smart proteins, veterinary products, precision bio-therapeutics and services.

Speaking at the Global Bio-India Summit 2024, Singh said the policy marks a crucial step in positioning India as a global bio-economy leader.

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for

Science and Technology also highlighted the importance of the Global Biotech platform, which brings together a diverse range of stakeholders, including start-ups, SMEs, large industries, research institutes, and international bodies.

Underscoring the wide range of opportunities in sectors like bio-pharma, bio-energy, and bio-industries, which are rapidly evolving and contributing to the nation's bio-economy, the minister said the Bio-E3 policy focuses on biotechnology for economy, employment, and the environment. This policy, he said, is poised to usher in a "bio-revolution" akin to the IT revolution in the western world, supporting areas such as bio-based chemicals, climate-resilient agriculture, and carbon capture.

Singh said the policy will not only drive innovation but also contribute significantly to India's green transition, supporting the

global fight against climate change. The minister outlined the creation of biotech hubs across India, which will foster collaboration between start-ups and established companies, bridging the gap between research and commercial manufacturing.

These hubs are expected to generate employment, particularly in tier two and tier three cities, and contribute to regional economic development, he added. He projected a significant growth trajectory for India's biotech industry, which has expanded from 10 billion dollars in 2014 to 100 billion dollars in 2020, with the expectation that it will reach 300 billion dollars by 2030. Singh attributed this progress to the government's support under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which has been instrumental in fostering an environment for biotech innovation.

PNS ■ PURNEA (BIHAR)

Political strategist-turned-activist Prashant Kishor on Thursday said Jan Suraj, which is set to become a political party in less than a month from now, will contest "all 243 seats" in the Bihar assembly polls due next year.

Addressing a press conference in Purne district, Kishor said the party will be formed on October 2 "with active support of at least one crore people of the state, which would leave no need for any alliance". "Let me make it clear that Jan Suraj will contest all 243 seats, not one less," said Kishor, who has in his earlier avatar handled poll campaigns of leaders such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Aam Aadmi Party founder

**Jan Suraj to contest all seats in Bihar, says Prashant Kishor**

Arvind Kejriwal. A known critic of the much touted prohibition law in Bihar, the IPAC founder said the new party would "scrap the ban on liquor within an hour of forming its government".

"The prohibition law is nothing but a sham (dhakosla) on part of Nitish Kumar," he said.

He criticised the current prohibition as ineffective, claiming that it has led to illegal home deliveries of alcohol and deprived the state of Rs 20,000 crore in potential excise revenue.

Kishor accused politicians



and bureaucrats of benefiting from the illegal liquor trade.

The 47-year-old said he is a believer in "kabiliyat ki rajniti (politics of merit)" and would not shy away from

speaking against prohibition "like other parties which fear that doing so may cost them votes of women".

Kishor said he saw Nitish Kumar and his predecessor Lalu Prasad as responsible for Bihar's plight though Congress and BJP too shared the blame.

"The Congress turned a blind eye towards the misdeeds of Lalu Prasad since his RJD was a valuable ally of the previous UPA government. It helped him remain in power though the RJD never had a majority in assembly", recounted Kishor.



**Seven dead as wall of 400-year-old fort collapses on house in MP**

PNS ■ DATIA (MP)

Seven persons were killed after a wall of a medieval-era fort adjacent to a house collapsed on Thursday due to heavy rains in Madhya Pradesh's Datia town.

The incident took place around 4 am in Khalkapura area, said an official.

As the wall collapsed, nine persons in the adjacent house were trapped under the debris. While two were rescued, seven died, said Datia district collector Sandeep Makin.

The fort, called 'Rajgarh', is believed to be 400 years old, and once housed a museum which was later shifted elsewhere, said a local resident.

The State Disaster Emergency Response Force (SDERF) team took part in the rescue operation that lasted more than six hours, the collector said.

The two injured persons are undergoing treatment at a

local hospital, he added. Expressing grief over the incident in a post on X, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh each for the kin of the victims.

The SDERF team reached the spot quickly, but precious lives could not be saved despite strenuous efforts because of the narrow lane where the house is situated, the CM said.

As per collector Makin, five of the deceased belong to one family, while the other two belong to another family.

The deceased were identified as Niranjan Vanshkar (55), Mamta Vanshkar (45), Shivam (20), Suraj (17), Radha (23), Kishan Vanshkar (55) and Prabha (50).

Congress MLA from Datia, Rajendra Bharti, criticized the administration for the "slow" rescue operation, claiming that it was unprepared to deal with such situations.

**Tenure of arbitral tribunal can be extended even after its term**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday held the fixed tenure of an arbitral tribunal to pass an award can be extended even after the expiry of term, saying the courts must strive to give "meaningful life" to a law to "avoid cadaveric consequences" leading to "unworkable scenarios".

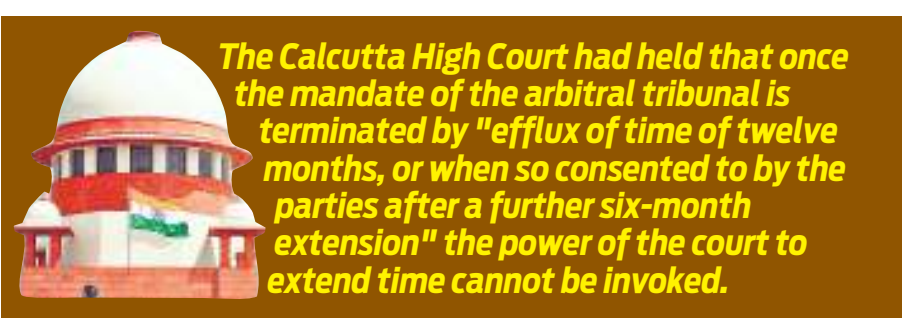
The top court was dealing with conflicting judgements on the issue by several high courts.

Few high courts, including the Calcutta High Court, while interpreting the provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, had held that an application for extension of

time can only be entertained if it is filed before expiry of the tenure or mandate of the arbitral tribunal.

The Calcutta High Court had held that once the mandate of the arbitral tribunal is terminated by "efflux of time of twelve months, or when so consented to by the parties after a further six-month extension" the power of the court to extend time cannot be invoked.

However, the high courts of Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Bombay and Madras took a contrary view and held that an application for extension of time limit for arbitral award can be filed by a party even after the expiry of the term of twelve



months or the extended period of six months.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and R Mahadevan settled the legal position and held that the plea for extension of time for an arbitral

tribunal can be made even after the expiry of its 12 month or 18 month tenure.

"We hold that an application for extension of the time period for passing an arbitral award under Section 29A(4) ... is

maintainable even after the expiry of the twelve-month or the extended six-month period, as the case may be," it said.

The court, while adjudicating extension applications, will be guided by the principle of suf-





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Ayushman bhav!

The Union Cabinet extends Ayushman Bharat to senior citizens Above 70; a move that would benefit six crore people

In a significant move the Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme to all citizens above 70 years of age, regardless of their income or social standing. The Cabinet's decision fulfils a key promise made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign. This move is expected to transform healthcare for senior citizens, providing much-needed relief to millions who have been struggling with rising medical costs and insufficient insurance coverage. Since its launch over five years ago, Ayushman Bharat has provided healthcare access to millions across India, covering hospitalisations and treatments for families that otherwise couldn't afford medical care. However, data has shown that nearly every fourth person admitted to hospitals under this scheme has been a senior citizen, highlighting their disproportionate need for medical support. Out of over one crore admissions, 24% were of citizens aged 60 and above, demonstrating how essential this safety net is for the elderly.



The latest decision to extend coverage to all citizens over 70 is particularly significant as this age group is often neglected by private insurers. Most health insurance companies either refuse to offer policies to those above 70 or charge prohibitively high premiums. Even when insurance is available, pre-existing conditions are often excluded for the first two to three years, leaving many senior citizens without immediate access to treatment for serious ailments like heart disease, kidney issues, and diabetes. With the new policy, six crore people over 70 years of age are expected to benefit, receiving health insurance coverage up

to Rs 5 lakh per year. This applies on a family basis, ensuring that elderly individuals, even those abandoned by families or facing financial hardships, can now access free or affordable medical care. The extension of Ayushman Bharat to all citizens above 70 comes at a critical time. Procedures like dialysis, heart surgeries, and cancer treatments are not only expensive but also frequent among senior citizens. The new policy provides a safety net for seniors who have, until now, been forced to bear these expenses themselves or rely on insufficient public health programs. Rs 5 lakh coverage under Ayushman Bharat will lift much of this financial burden, enabling families to access quality healthcare without worrying about their savings. Apart from the direct medical benefits, this policy could have far-reaching social implications. India's senior citizens, especially those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, often face neglect and abandonment when they become ill. This policy not only promises improved healthcare outcomes but also offers dignity and security to millions of older Indians at a time when they need it most. As this initiative rolls out, its impact on families, communities, and the healthcare system at large will likely be profound, marking a significant leap toward inclusive and accessible healthcare for all.

### PICTALK



Visitors at the Taj Mahal during rain, in Agra.

# Resignation shakes Trinamool Congress



SIDHARTH MISHRA

Jawahar Sircar's resignation from Rajya Saha highlights growing discontent in Bengal over the State's response to crimes against women

Trinamool Congress Member of Rajya Sabha and former Chairman of Prasar Bharati Jawahar Sircar has resigned both from parliament and the party. Sircar tendered resignation to protest the 'mishandling' of the trainee-doctor rape-cum-murder case at RG Kar Medical in Kolkata. The resignation is significant as Sircar is part of 'Kolkata Bhadrak' which has so far remained steadfast in its support of West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee. The move also indicates that the West Bengal assembly passing a 'very stringent anti-rape law' bill has not cut much ice with the people, who so far have resisted condoning the errors committed by the Mamata government in the matter.

The West Bengal bill, which has now been referred by the Governor to the President, has also not found much echo outside the state. The Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2024, passed by the West Bengal Assembly is not the first of its kind. In the past five years, Andhra Pradesh (Disha) and Maharashtra (Shakti) passed similar bills with a death penalty clause against the rapists but they are still to bring any change in the matter. All these bills were preceded by Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 through which Capital Punishment for rape made its entry into the Indian Penal Code.

This followed the public outrage after the brutal gang rape and murder of a woman on a moving bus in Delhi on December 16, 2012, which shook the collective conscience of the nation. Parliament passed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 to allow the death penalty in rape cases where the accompanying brutality leads to death or leaves the victim in a persistent vegetative state. Whatever name you may give Aparajita, Disha or Shakti, these bills are meaningless as long as cases about rape remain pending in the courts for years together. In 2022, com-



bined with those brought in the previous years, courts had around 2 lakh cases for trial. However, trials could be completed in only a little over 18,000 cases, which was less than the number of incidents as well as police charge sheets filed that year. Finally, the conviction rate of 27.4% in rape cases means seven out of every 10 accused persons were acquitted. So just making the laws doesn't help. Speaking at a function some months back, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud had quoted BR Ambedkar saying, "However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those responsible for its functioning happen to be a good lot." Maker of the Constitution in the concluding speech before the Constituent Assembly had said, "However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The Constitution can provide only the organs of the State such as the Legislature, the



THE WEST BENGAL BILL, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN REFERRED BY THE GOVERNOR TO THE PRESIDENT, HAS ALSO NOT FOUND MUCH ECHO OUTSIDE THE STATE

Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics." If the rapes are not stopping in this country or if the anti-rape laws are not proving to be effective in punishing the rapists, it's a failure of culture more than the law. Our society is not very forthcoming in the accommodating the woes of a rape victim, and in most cases, the survivor and the family are subjected to terrible humiliation. Those tasked with implementing the Constitution have to possess the spirit of public service rather than political expediency. There is a recent case study carried out by the Uttar Pradesh Police in Ghaziabad district which reiterates the aforementioned premise. There is an existing government policy for establishing Pink Police Outposts under every police station. The rules have been there but not much work has been done beyond the customary launching of the programme with much fanfare. However, Ghaziabad Police last year

decided to implement the programme in mission mode, and 20 Pink Booths exclusively manned by female police personnel were established in September 2023. A year later the results were for all to see. The mere presence of a force for women's safety had its impact. According to the data released by Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems of Uttar Pradesh Police, crime against women which included dowry deaths, dowry-related cases, molestation, rape and kidnapping came down by approximately 24 per cent. The biggest fall of over 36 per cent was in dowry deaths thus at least securing women inside their homes. If such an initiative by Ghaziabad Police can achieve such results one is sure at the state government level such steps can be taken more effectively. One is not sure how effectively have these pink police outposts been functioning in West Bengal, where the government has just brought a more stringent anti-rape law. (Sidharth Mishra is the author & president Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Madam — The news on Niti Aayog's response to future public health crisis (12-9-24) recommending a legislation is strange. Legislations cannot solve these problems. The status of healthcare, access to nutrition and hunger relief puts India at a shabby bottom line in the global index. Without improving these factors planning to face a likely pandemic can only be an act of humour. Healthcare is made a commodity as understood from levying GST on availing medicines, medical devices and even on life and health insurance policies. Productivity of the nation depends on the productivity of its people. A sane idea would be to improve the health condition of the people by offering the best healthcare to all in the public healthcare institutions. If done so it would take care of major issues connected with pandemics. We have many legislations not implemented with enough seriousness. Therefore Niti Aayog should get down to understand the ground realities and plan accordingly.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

### CHIP MAKING IN INDIA

Madam—Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that resilience of supply chains is critical for the economy. During his speech at the SEMICON 2024 conference the PM made a pitch to boost investments in domestic manufacturing of semiconductors. A Year ago the Union Cabinet had approved a production linked incentive(PLI) scheme for semiconductor and display board, production in the country. Heavy surge in sales of electronic devices during the pandemic and the indefinite closure of giant chip companies during the lockdown had in fact given rise to a crisis of scarcity of semi conductors in the global market. These chips are in fact the 'life' of millions of products in our daily life, ranging from automobiles to fridges and washing machines to computers and smartphones and so on. Insufficiency of these chips had slowed down the produc-

### Differently abled deserve a better deal



18th place finish, with 29 medals, is a testament to this shift, showcasing their growing impact in sports and society. The Paralympics not only highlights athletic achievements but also emphasizes the right to participate in sports as a fundamental human right. Athletes like Avani Lekhara, Sumit Antil, and 17-year-old Sheetal Devi have become global icons, demonstrating that perseverance can lead to greatness. Their success is supported by initiatives like Khelo India and the Sports Authority of India, ensuring that they receive the same recognition as their Olympic peers, such as Neeraj Chopra and Manu Bhaker. This triumph inspires both the 2.66 crore disabled individuals in India and able-bodied people, showing that true strength comes from within. Learning from these athletes can benefit all sports and help reshape perceptions worldwide.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

### REWRITING HISTORY AND SCIENCE

Madam — Should we trust the BJP or the facts proven by history and science? Some pseudo-nationalist leaders in India have cultivated a loyal following that supports their every claim, no matter how questionable. For instance, Madhya Pradesh's Higher Education Minister Indir Singh Parmar recently claimed that Indian ancestors, not Christopher Columbus, discovered America. He also asserted that students have been taught "wrong history," alleging that the Indian hero Vasulun reached America in the 8th century and built temples in Santiago. Such statements reflect a broader attempt to reshape both history and science. Previously, leaders have made bizarre assertions, here's even a claim that Rishi Kanad tested an atomic bomb millions of years ago. Despite the absurdity of these claims, experts remain silent, as dissent is neither allowed nor encouraged in this new system.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

M Pradyu | Kamru

## The erosion of local cultures and the rise of digital colonisation

We are increasingly relying on digital platforms which have a huge impact on local cultures and thought processes. This raises critical concerns about the future of our cultural identity



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

There was a time when people from a village knew each other. A minute change in a person's behaviour shall bring to the attention of others. Children were safe in that society. Every town or every place in our country has a uniqueness in its culture, traditions, language, food habits, products produced, and even a story to tell. Colonisation, both external and internal, characterised by the exercise of control by one group over another, has profoundly impacted rewriting history. The motivations behind it have been many, encompassing economic profit, territorial expansion, religious conversion, and geopolitical power, among other considerations. In earlier times, it was foreigners who intruded into the local community; now, the movement of native people from one place to another has changed the demographic profile of a region. For many individuals, the consequences of colonialism have been devastating, resulting in the deliberate destruction of cultural customs, the exploitation of individuals, and the forced



displacement of populations. The cultural erasure caused by colonisation is one of its most enduring impacts. Colonizers often portrayed their own cultures as superior, leading to the suppression of indigenous languages, religions, and customs. In that process, we even lost the local economies that were thriving in our society. Even the different dialects spoken by people of a state or region have been lost because of outside interaction. This has even been reflected in the literary works created during the time. Unfortunately, with colonisation, we made our society a homogeneous one. This can be observed when we travel across the country. The uniform way we built our infrastructure in our cities has made every city look the same. Until the late 90s, every place

in our country was known by some unique geography, a specific market, or even the presence of a person. Nevertheless, colonialism has also led to the exchange of knowledge, culture, food habits, concepts, and technology between the native and colonised populations. In the 21st century, the internet has brought about a new type of colonisation that has begun infiltrating our society. This new form of colonisation is known as digital colonisation. The term "digital colonisation" refers to the dominance of numerous multinational technology businesses, the majority of which are based in the United States and a few wealthy nations, over the digital infrastructure and data of the entire world. For all of our day-to-day requirements, we began to rely more on digital platforms, reducing the amount of personal interaction. This new digital culture has infiltrated even the remotest parts of our country. These digital titans prioritise everything in our lives, including what we should buy, who we should be friends

with, where to study, which course to study, and even where to give birth. This can potentially destroy local traditions and languages, as most language formats used today are designed to suit digital platforms. People started believing blindly whatever is available on digital platforms. The addiction is so severe that the auto and taxi drivers of Delhi-NCR, who had excellent navigation skills earlier using the brain, have shifted to Google Maps. Global IT giants promote a universal digital culture for various reasons, many of which are tied to their business models and growth strategies. Although this digital culture promotes global connectivity, information accessibility and collaboration, it also has the potential to obscure regional diversity and traditional lifestyles. The concentration of power in the hands of a few tech companies, cultural erasure, and privacy are all concerns raised by the dominance of these corporations. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN

## DIPLOMATIC BOOST TO SEMICONDUCTORS

India and Singapore are building a resilient semiconductor supply chain



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Domestic politics may be a key issue for the ruling NDA alliance, however, it has not taken away Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on constantly working on fine-tuning India's foreign policy. PM Modi recently was in Brunei a first for any Indian Prime Minister on a bilateral state visit, to a country located strategically in the South China Sea. Brunei's visit was topped by the PM's visit to Singapore, an important technology ally for India in the region. India and Singapore will be entering into the 60th year of diplomatic relationship next year and both countries have decided to upgrade their existing bilateral partnership to a Comprehensive strategic partnership, which will in turn expand the areas of cooperation.

One of the key focus, during PM Modi's visit to Singapore was expanding the digital cooperation between the countries. The joint statement released read "Both Prime Ministers welcomed the signing of the MoU on cooperation in the field of Digital Technologies and affirmed common interests in data, AI and cybersecurity. Building on this, both Prime Ministers agreed to deepen collaboration in the digital space, including in facilitating trusted cross-border data flows, cybersecurity, and the interoperability of digital systems." A crucial element of the partnership was a demonstration under the trade trust framework. Singapore is home to many large Technology companies, many of whom have regional headquarters in the island state, with the business geography, spread all across Asia primarily India.



Advance technology manufacturing and semiconductors formed another crucial element of the PM's visit. The statement read "Both Prime Ministers agreed to explore cooperation in the area of critical and emerging technologies. Both Prime Ministers agreed that advanced manufacturing, particularly in developing resilient semiconductor supply chains, can be a new pillar of bilateral cooperation.

Both Prime Ministers welcomed the signing of the MoU on the India-Singapore Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership. Immediately after the PM visited Singapore the US government also announced a new partnership with India to explore supply chain opportunities in India. Funded under the International Technology Security and Innovation (ITSI) Fund, created by the CHIPS Act of 2022 (CHIPS Act) of the US, it allows the department to spend some money on developing a trusted supply chain ecosystem with partners and allies. A US State Department press release read, "The initial phase includes a comprehensive assessment of India's existing semiconductor ecosystem and regulatory framework, as well as workforce and infrastructure needs. The state anticipates that key Indian stakeholders, such as state governments, educational institutions, research centres, and private companies, will participate in this analysis steered by the India Semiconductor Mission. The insights gained from the assessment will serve as the basis for potential future joint initiatives to strengthen and grow this critical sector. The United States and India are key partners in ensuring the global semiconductor supply chain keeps pace with the global digital transformation currently underway. Manufacturing of essential products ranging from vehicles to medical devices relies on the strength and resilience of the semiconductor supply chain."

This week India also hosted SEMICON a global conference that attracts investments in the Indian semiconductor ecosystem. India is trying to attract investments for a crucial component of most modern equipment and machinery called chips. The recent visits by the PM to Singapore and the Memorandum of Understanding with the US may provide the much-needed kickstart for India's semiconductor ecosystem.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

## India's Paralympic journey of resilience and triumph



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Through sheer determination and perseverance, para athletes have steadily overcome the odds, earning global recognition and bringing glory to the nation



The Paris Paralympics unfolded as a captivating display of athletic excellence, particularly for the Indian contingent. It was a spectacle, with each athlete embodying a harmonious blend of strength, determination, and skill – almost like poetry in motion. As an avid follower, I found myself engrossed in nearly every performance, regardless of the challenging (IST) time difference that saw events commence under the glowing silhouette of the Eiffel Tower. On the rare occasions when I could not watch live, social media provided timely updates, fuelling my enthusiasm and admiration for these remarkable athletes.

Their tenacity and commitment to realizing their dreams on the global stage were evident as they competed and excelled across multiple disciplines, leaving an indelible mark on the world of sports. India delivered its best-ever performance at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, achieving a historic 29-medal haul that included seven gold, nine silver, and 13 bronze medals. This outstanding achievement surpassed the 19-medal tally from Tokyo 2020, where India had won five golds, and marked a significant milestone as the country crossed the 50-medal mark in its Paralympic history. A record 84 para-athletes represented India across 12 disciplines, including the debut participation in para-cycling, para-rowing, and blind judo. Among the shining stars, Avani Lekhara became the first Indian woman to win two golds at the Paralympic Games, defending her title in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 shooting event with a world-record score. Meanwhile, India saw its first-ever one-two finish in athletics, with Dharambir and Parnav Soorma clinching gold and silver in the men's club throw F51 event. Dharambir also set a new Asian record of 34.92m. In athletics, several Indian para-athletes etched their names in the record books.

Praveen Kumar set an Asian record en route to winning the high jump T64 title, securing India's sixth gold medal – their highest total at the Paralympics. Javelin thrower Sumit Antil made history as the first Indian man to defend his Paralympic title, winning gold in the men's javelin throw F64 with a stunning throw of 70.59m, breaking his record from Tokyo 2020 not once but



INDIA BEGAN ITS PARALYMPIC JOURNEY IN 1968, OVERCOMING NUMEROUS CHALLENGES SUCH AS LIMITED RESOURCES, INADEQUATE FACILITIES, AND LOW PUBLIC AWARENESS. DESPITE THESE HURDLES, INDIAN PARATHLETES GRADUALLY ROSE TO PROMINENCE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

three times. Mariyappan Thangavelu, with a bronze in the high jump T42 class, became the first Indian to win medals at three consecutive Paralympic Games, having previously won gold at Rio 2016 and silver at Tokyo 2020. Preethi Pal secured India's first-ever medal in a track event at the Paralympics with a bronze in the women's 100m T35 race and won another bronze in the 200m, becoming India's most successful athlete at the Games with two medals. The track events also saw Deepthi Jeevanji become the first intellectually impaired Indian athlete to win a Paralympic medal with a bronze in the women's 400m T20 class. India's achievements extended beyond the track and field to other disciplines. In archery, armless archer Sheetal Devi briefly set a world record in the ranking round and later teamed up with Rakesh Kumar to achieve a world record score in the compound mixed team qualification event. It was a perfect example of poetry in motion.

At just 17, Sheetal made history as India's youngest Paralympic medalist by winning a bronze in the mixed team event. Moreover, India's dominance in archery was further confirmed when Harvinder Singh became the country's first-ever Paralympic archery champion. The outstanding performances by Indian para-athletes at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games underscored India's emergence as a formidable contender on the global stage. Originating in 1948 with a sports event for World War II veterans with spinal injuries, organized by Sir Ludwig Guttmann in Stoke Mandeville, England, the Paralympics evolved into an international event in 1960 in Rome with 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since then, the Games have grown significantly, challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusivity, while celebrating the exceptional talents and resilience of athletes

with disabilities. India began its Paralympic journey in 1968, overcoming numerous challenges such as limited resources, inadequate facilities, and low public awareness. Despite these hurdles, Indian para-athletes gradually rose to prominence on the global stage. A pivotal moment came in 2004 when Devendra Jhajharia won India's first Paralympic gold, setting a world record in the F46 javelin throw. This achievement heralded a new era for Indian para-sports, culminating in 35 medals across 12 Paralympic Games. The Paralympics exemplify India's commitment to inclusiveness, reflecting a broader national strategy to promote equity in sports. Government initiatives such as the 'Target Olympic Podium Scheme' (TOPS), 'Khelo India,' and increased funding for para-sports provide athletes with special abilities access to advanced training facilities, coaching, and financial support. To foster a more inclusive sports ecosystem, India regularly hosts events like the National Para Games and Para Athletics Championships, enhancing visibility and opportunities for para-athletes. What is needed is corporate sponsorships and media coverage which are crucial in transforming societal perceptions of disability, empowering athletes and promoting social inclusion and awareness. Globally, several countries have successfully promoted inclusiveness through sports.

The United Kingdom, for example, has been a pioneer in fostering an inclusive sports culture. Looking back at the success of Team GB at the London 2012 Paralympics, where they ranked third with 120 medals, which stemmed from years of investment in para-sports proves this point.

The UK government, along with organizations like the British Paralympic Association, provided substantial funding, advanced training facilities, and comprehensive

support for athletes.

The extensive broadcasting and marketing of the London 2012 Paralympics also helped transform public perceptions of disability, inspiring a new generation of para-athletes. Similarly, Australia has excelled in promoting inclusivity in sports through the Australian Paralympic Committee, which focuses on talent identification, athlete development, and grassroots inclusivity.

Further, Japan's efforts during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics highlighted its commitment to accessibility, with significant investments in inclusive infrastructure, such as accessible public transport, venues, and accommodations, demonstrating a strong commitment to para-sports.

Moreover, the Paralympic Committee's 'ImPOSSIBLE' program, an educational initiative by the Agitos Foundation, was introduced in schools across Japan to educate children about the Paralympic values of courage, determination, inspiration, and equality, fostering a culture of inclusivity from a young age. In India, the road to achieving inclusiveness in sports has been long and challenging, but progress is evident.

The success of para-athletes at the Paralympics 2024 has helped break down barriers and challenge stereotypes, paving the way for a more inclusive society. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that people with special abilities have equal access to sports and the opportunity to compete at the highest level.

The future of Indian para-sports looks promising, as it is a powerful reminder that success in sports is not limited by physical ability but defined by determination, skill, and the spirit to overcome adversity. WE CAN is the catchword.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views expressed are personal)

## Ozone Therapy: A holistic approach to enhancing health and wellness

Ozone therapy's ability to complement and enhance conventional therapies makes this old treatment a modern-day tool

We live our healthiest when we can balance the demands life places on us with opportunities that heal our bodies. Ozone therapy is emerging as a key wellness treatment that is a transformative addition to conventional medical practices with a multitude of health benefits. The growing concern over managing lifestyle diseases finds a hopeful answer in ozone therapy with doctors appraised of the latest and most effective practices. Developed over 100 years ago in Germany, this complementary medical treatment is proving to be a highly effective integrative treatment that is pocket-friendly and safe for several clinical conditions. Ozone therapy, with judicious doses of ozone administered by a



MILHI SHAH

doctor, brings powerful antioxidant capabilities to restore tissues and body fluids.

**Harnessing Ozone's Power:** Ozone therapy involves the administration of ozone gas (O<sub>3</sub>), a reactive form of oxygen, into the body to stimulate healing and improve overall health.

Ozone therapy enhances traditional medical treatments, offering a synergistic approach to health and wellness, where

pain and the side effects of conventional treatment are alleviated by it. It has shown promise in managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and autoimmune disorders. For instance, in diabetes management, ozone therapy can improve oxygen utilisation and glucose metabolism, helping stabilise blood sugar levels. In cardiovascular ailments, ozone therapy can enhance blood circulation and reduce oxidative stress, improving heart health.

**Pain Alleviation** Ozone therapy's analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties make it effective in pain management. Conditions like arthritis, fibromyalgia, and musculoskeletal injuries often cause chronic pain that is dif-

icult to manage with traditional methods. Ozone therapy can alleviate pain by reducing inflammation and promoting tissue repair.

For example, in arthritis, ozone therapy helps decrease joint inflammation and improves mobility. Compared to conventional pain management techniques, ozone therapy offers a less invasive option, with fewer side effects.

**Detoxifying with Ozone** Ozone therapy supplies the body with potent oxygenation, increasing the life-giving gas' availability for cells, and improving their functioning and energy production. The resulting detoxification eliminates toxins, harmful free radicals and waste from the minutest units of our bodies. The result: Rejuvenated,



healthy and energetic selves. Stress Reduction Ozone therapy can aid in stress reduction by increasing oxygen delivery to tissues, promoting relaxation and a sense of calm. This is particularly beneficial in our fast-paced world where stress is a common issue.

**Athletic Performance:** Ozone therapy's unique restorative abilities are also extremely relevant to meeting the high performance and health needs of athletes. The increased oxy-

genation provided by ozone therapy improves endurance, enhances recovery, and boosts overall performance.

**Skin Rejuvenation:** The skin, the body's largest organ, is happiest when we have healthy cells and tissues. Ozone therapy, in promoting healthy cells, leads to several skin benefits. It is effective in treating skin conditions such as acne, eczema, and fungal infections due to ozone's antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

Ozone therapy promotes skin healing by increasing oxygen supply to the affected areas. Additionally, it has anti-ageing benefits. By improving blood flow and stimulating collagen production, ozone therapy can enhance skin elasticity and reduce wrinkles, resulting in a

more youthful and vibrant appearance.

**Multiple Ozone Therapy Applications:** Ozone therapy can be administered in various ways, including rectal insufflation, intravenous ozone mixed with saline, and major autohemotherapy. These methods help activate cellular circulation, enhancing overall health. With over 20 different applications, ozone therapy offers versatile treatment options for a wide range of disorders, promoting healing and well-being through improved oxygen utilization and cellular function.

**The Science of Ozone Therapy:** The scientific reason ozone therapy works is its ability to stimulate the mitochondria, the energy powerhouse of the tiniest units of our

bodies - cells. By providing a fresh supply of oxygen, ozone therapy boosts cellular health, bodily functions and energy production. Ozone therapy also helps neutralise free radicals, reducing oxidative stress and preventing cellular damage. Ozone therapy is safe when administered correctly and has been supported by numerous studies demonstrating its efficacy and safety. Ozone therapy's ability to complement and enhance conventional therapies, combined with its wide range of applications, makes the centuries-old treatment a modern-day tool in the quest for holistic health and wellness.

(The writer is trustee of Biseri Charitable Trust and president Ozone Forum of India; views are personal)



IN BRIEF



Tata Power arm to set up 200 fast charging stations

Tata Power Renewable Energy arm Tata Power EV Charging Solutions and Tata Motors have signed an initial pact to set up 200 fast-charging stations for electric commercial vehicles in all metros cities, a statement said on Thursday. The strategic move expands their ongoing collaboration, in providing sustainable mobility solutions, with a focus on easy charging solutions for small electric commercial vehicles, the statement said. Tata Power EV Charging Solutions under the MOU will set up 200 fast-charging stations for electric commercial vehicles in all metros cities viz. Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata. Tata Motors and Tata Power will provide exclusive charging tariffs for Tata Motors' electric CV owners, resulting in lower operating costs and increased profitability for its customers, the statement said. Electric commercial vehicle users, across the country, will soon benefit from access to almost 1000 strategically located fast chargers, with the planned expansion of the charging network.



Gold drops Rs 250; silver surges Rs 2,000 per kg

Gold prices declined Rs 250 to Rs 74,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday, while silver rates surged to reclaim the 87,000 level, according to All India Sarafa Association. On Wednesday, the precious metal or pure gold (99.9 per cent purity) ended at Rs 74,600 per 10 grams. However, silver price rallied Rs 2,000 to touch a two-week high of Rs 87,000 per kilogram on Thursday. The silver metal had finished at Rs 85,000 per kg in the previous session. In the past three sessions, the white metal has surged Rs 3,200 per kg. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also declined by Rs 250 to Rs 74,000 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 74,250 per 10 grams. Traders said the silver continued its strong trend for the third-straight session owing to strong industrial offtake leading to a jump in the prices of the metal.



DGCA orders special audit of flying training units

Aviation watchdog DGCA has ordered a special audit of flying training organisations in the country amid recent accidents involving training aircraft. The audit of flying training organisations (FTOs) will be conducted in three phases from September to November 2024. It will cover 33 FTOs. "This audit aims to thoroughly assess the safety standards, operational procedures, and systemic deficiencies within flying training organisations to ensure the highest levels of safety and compliance," DGCA said in a release on Thursday. The regulator said the move follows a series of recent training aircraft incidents that have sparked concerns regarding the compliance of FTOs with respect to the established aviation regulations and safety protocols. The last such special audit was conducted in 2022. "The audit will scrutinise each FTO's adherence to DGCA's regulatory standards, including aircraft maintenance, airworthiness, and training operations," the release said.

IIP growth slows to 4.8 pc in July: Govt data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production output decelerated to 4.8 per cent year-on-year in July 2024, mainly due to poor performance of the manufacturing and mining sectors, as per official data released on Thursday.

The factory output growth, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), was revised to 4.7 per cent in June from provisional estimates of 4.2 per cent released last month.

The IIP for July 2024 was 4.8 per cent, as per the data.

During the April-July period this fiscal, the IIP growth was 5.2 per cent against 5.1 per cent in the same period of the preceding fiscal. The IIP grew by 6.2 per cent in July 2023, according to a statement by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.

As per the data, the mining output growth decelerated to 3.7 per cent in July from 10.7 per cent expansion in the

year-ago month.

The manufacturing sector's growth declined to 4.6 per cent in July from 5.3 per cent a year ago.

The power generation increased by 7.9 per cent in July against a growth of 8 per cent in the same month of the last year.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth accelerated to 12 per cent in July 2024 from 5.1 per cent in the year-ago period.

In July this year, consumer non-durables output declined by 4.4 per cent compared to a growth of 8.3 per cent in July 2023.

Consumer durable goods production grew by 8.2 per cent during the reporting month against a contraction of 3.6 per cent in July 2023.

According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 4.9 per cent in July 2024, down from a 12.6 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.



IN FIRST YEAR OF PM E-DRIVE

Electric two-wheeler buyers can avail subsidy of up to Rs 10,000

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electric two-wheeler buyers can avail a maximum subsidy of up to Rs 10,000 in the first year of the PM E-DRIVE Scheme to be rolled out soon, Union Heavy Industries Minister HD Kumaraswamy said on Thursday.

Addressing a media briefing, Kumaraswamy said the subsidy under the PM E-DRIVE Scheme for electric two-wheelers has been fixed based on battery power at Rs 5,000 per kilowatt hour but the overall incentive will not exceed Rs 10,000 in the first year. In the second year, it will be halved by Rs 2,500 per kilowatt hour, and the overall benefit will not exceed Rs 5,000. Addressing the media, Kumaraswamy said e-rickshaw buyers can avail of subsidy benefits of Rs 25,000 in the first year and Rs 12,500 in the second year of the PM E-DRIVE scheme.

"The per kilowatt subsidy for electric two-wheelers is Rs 5,000 for the first year, and in the second year Rs 2,500, for two years, this benefit will be



continued," the minister said.

He clarified that the maximum benefit per two-wheeler will be capped at Rs 10,000 per vehicle in the first year and reduced to Rs 5,000 in the second year.

Currently, popular electric scooters from makers like Ola, TVS, Ather Energy, Hero Vida (Hero Motocorp) and Chetak Bajaj have battery capacities ranging from 2.88 kWh to 4kWh in a price range of Rs 90,000 to Rs 1.5 lakh.

For three-wheelers, including e-rickshaws, Kumara

swamy said, "In the first year, they will get (benefit of Rs 25,000), and in the second year, it will come down to Rs 12,500 per vehicle".

For the L5 category (cargo three-wheelers), they will get a benefit of Rs 50,000 in the first year, and for the second year, it is Rs 25,000, the minister further informed.

Under the scheme, an Aadhaar authenticated e-voucher will be issued by the PM E-DRIVE portal, and it has to be duly signed by the buyer and dealer and uploaded on the portal.



Amazon India creates over 1 lakh seasonal jobs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon India on Thursday said it has created more than 110,000 seasonal job opportunities across its operations network to cater to increased demand during the festive season.

These opportunities include direct and indirect jobs across India in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, and Chennai, among others, a company statement said.

"We have hired over 1.1 lakh additional people to strengthen our fulfillment and logistics network and ensure we can handle the increased demand seamlessly. A number of these associates continue to work with Amazon even after the festive season and many others return year after year to work with Amazon," said Abhinav Singh, VP-Operations, Amazon India. A majority of these new hires have already been onboarded, the statement said. Amazon has hired thousands of women associates, and close to 1900 disabled persons into its existing network, it added.

Investors' wealth surges Rs 6.59 L cr as markets soar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth soared Rs 6.59 lakh crore on Thursday as markets surged to record high levels with the benchmark Sensex breaching the historic 83,000-mark for the first time.

A sharp flag-end rally drove the 30-share BSE Sensex to the 83,000 level for the first time. The barometer surged 1,593.03 points or 1.95 per cent to hit its lifetime intra-day peak of 83,116.19. The index ended at a record high of 82,962.71, up by 1,439.55 points or 1.77 per cent.

Tracking a rally in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged Rs 6,59,895.19 crore to Rs 4,67,36,045.21 crore (USD 5.57 trillion).



"Across the board buying support lifted both benchmark Sensex & Nifty to fresh record highs as falling US bond yields and expectations of a rate cut by the US Federal Reserve in next week's policy meeting fuelled massive optimism," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. Among the 30 Sensex firms,

Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, JSW Steel, Adani Ports, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the biggest gainers.

Nestle emerged as the only laggard from the blue-chip pack. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.32 per cent and the smallcap index

climbed 0.79 per cent.

All indices ended in the positive territory. Metal surged 3.05 per cent, telecommunication (2.61 per cent), power (2.02 per cent), auto (1.99 per cent), utilities (1.93 per cent) and commodities (1.85 per cent).

"The bulls took charge towards the end of the day and lifted the indices to a new high, mirroring the bullish global trend. The rate-cut optimism across the globe (ECB & US Fed) has provided a positive impetus to the global market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

A total of 2,335 stocks advanced while 1,612 declined and 122 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Govt notifies NaBFID is a public financial institution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has notified the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) as a public financial institution under the Companies Act.

This will help the government fortify the nation's infrastructure finance structures.

In a notification issued on September 10, the Corporate Affairs Ministry said that in exercise of the powers, Section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013, the Central Government, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, hereby notifies National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development as a "public financial institution".

The move will enhance the bank's capacity to finance large-scale infrastructure projects, thereby bolstering the country's infrastructure development. NaBFID, a specialised Development Finance Institution (DFI), was set up in 2021, by an Act (The National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Act, 2021).

BOARD OF TRADE MEET TODAY

Exporters to raise bank credit issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The exporters will raise the issue of declining bank credit in the Board of Trade (BoT) meeting tomorrow in Mumbai, an industry official said on Thursday. Headed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, the

board includes participants from various states, Union territories, and senior officials from the public and private sectors.

While exports grew by 15 per cent in the rupee terms between 2021-22 and 2023-24, the outstanding credit in March 2024 dropped by 5 per cent over the same month in 2022, according

to exporters. Apex exporters body Federation of Indian Export Organisation (FIEO) has said the export credit growth is not keeping pace with rising exports of the country.

The Interest Equalisation Scheme, which expired on June 30, was extended on a monthly basis till this month-end.

OIL PRICES FALL

Petrol, diesel price cut if decline sustains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Price of international crude oil - the raw material for making petrol and diesel - dropped to a three-year low before marginally recovering but a revision in domestic petrol and diesel rates is likely only if lower rates are sustained, industry sources and officials said.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell below USD 70 per barrel on Tuesday - the first time since December 2021 - but gained thereafter after Hurricane Francine hit

crude supply in the Gulf of Mexico. Brent rose above USD 71 a barrel on Thursday while West Texas Intermediate advanced to trade near USD 68.

Petrol and diesel prices - which have been on a freeze for over two years now barring a pre-election reduction earlier this year - will be revised if the declining trend sustains, they said.

Oil Secretary Pankaj Jain speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event here, said the oil companies will be taking appropriate decisions



on reducing fuel prices if international oil prices were to settle lower on a sustained basis.

Industry sources said the three state-owned fuel retailers are making good profits on

petrol and diesel but want the trend to continue before deciding on a revision.

"They don't want a situation where they cut prices and are faced with a situation where international prices rise," an official explained.

Brokerage Emkay Global Financial Services in a note said it expects Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to cut petrol and diesel prices before elections in Maharashtra.



Sebi asks infra institutions to ensure minimal data loss

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday asked stock exchanges and other market infrastructure institutions (MIIs) to ensure that the Recovery Point Objective (RPO) -- the maximum period for which data loss is tolerable due to a technical glitch or disruptions -- is near zero.

In market parlance, a recovery point objective (RPO) of near zero means that an institution should aim for almost 100 per cent availability of their data and applications.

Further, MIIs need to have a documented methodology for data reconciliation when resuming operations from Disaster Recovery Site (DRS) or any other site as applicable, Sebi said in a circular.

Additionally, Sebi has asked MIIs -- stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories -- to collaborate in developing a standardized definition of 'near zero data loss' and submit

the same to it after taking approval from their respective Standing Committee on Technology.

In addition to a Disaster Recovery Site, all stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories must have a Near Site (NS) to ensure near-zero data loss.

"MIIs shall ensure that the Recovery Point Objective (RPO) - the maximum tolerable period for which data might be lost due to a major incident - shall be near zero," Sebi said.

The regulator said that staff at the DRS should have the same level of expertise as those at the Primary Data Center (PDC). The DRS must be able to operate independently with its own trained staff, without relying on the PDC staff.

Bahrain secures \$16.65 m investments from India

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Bahrain Economic Development Board (Bahrain EDB) has secured investment commitments valued at USD 16.65 million from three leading India-based companies across the sectors of manufacturing, renewable energy, and ICT.

The announcements were made during Bahrain EDB's ongoing week-long visit to Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, designed to strengthen bilateral economic ties and attract foreign direct investment to Bahrain, it said in a statement.

HE Noor bint Ali Alkhalifa, Minister of Sustainable Development, Chief Executive

of Bahrain EDB, said, "We at Bahrain EDB are proud to welcome these companies to our business-friendly island nation, further underscoring the robust economic and commercial ties between India and Bahrain that have been traced back 5,000 years to the Dilmun and Indus Valley civilizations.

"This cumulative investment reflects the strength and competitiveness of Bahrain's value proposition and fast-growing reputation as a key regional hub for leading manufacturing and niche technology firms seeking a trusted international destination for expansion."

In the statement, Bahrain EDB said that among the Indian companies, Chemco is gearing up for its third expansion in Bahrain since it first announced its plans to set up its factory in Bahrain in 2013, with an aim of augmenting its rigid packaging production capacity at Bahrain International Investment Park (BIIP), incorporating fully automated production lines to meet the growing demand in



Bahrain's Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. Additionally, Bhageria Industries is investing in Bahrain with plans to develop an 11.40 MW solar project and the third company, an ICT firm, is setting up its regional headquarters in Bahrain, further strengthening the

Kingdom's growing capabilities in technology and AI, it stated.

According to Bahrain EDB, India's FDI stock in Bahrain has grown by 36.6 per cent between 2019 and 2023, adding an average of USD 102 million annually, with total FDI stock reaching USD 1.52 billion in 2023.

The announcements were made during Bahrain EDB's ongoing week-long visit to Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, designed to strengthen bilateral economic ties and attract foreign direct investment to Bahrain, it said in a statement



### Chitrangda and Akshay pair up for Housefull 5

In *Khel Khel Mein*, when Chitrangda Singh shared screen space with her *Desi Boyz* co-star Akshay Kumar, the fans cheered for them. While many manifested to see the new pair in a full-fledged film, it seems this might happen soon. According to sources, Chitrangda has been roped in for *Housefull 5* and will be sharing screen space with Akshay Kumar.

The source reveals that Chitrangda plays a very important role in the story. She will be flying to London soon to shoot for a 2-month-long schedule. A portion of the schedule will also be shot on a cruise. *Housefull 5* goes on floors from 15th September and will have a 45-day long marathon schedule in London.

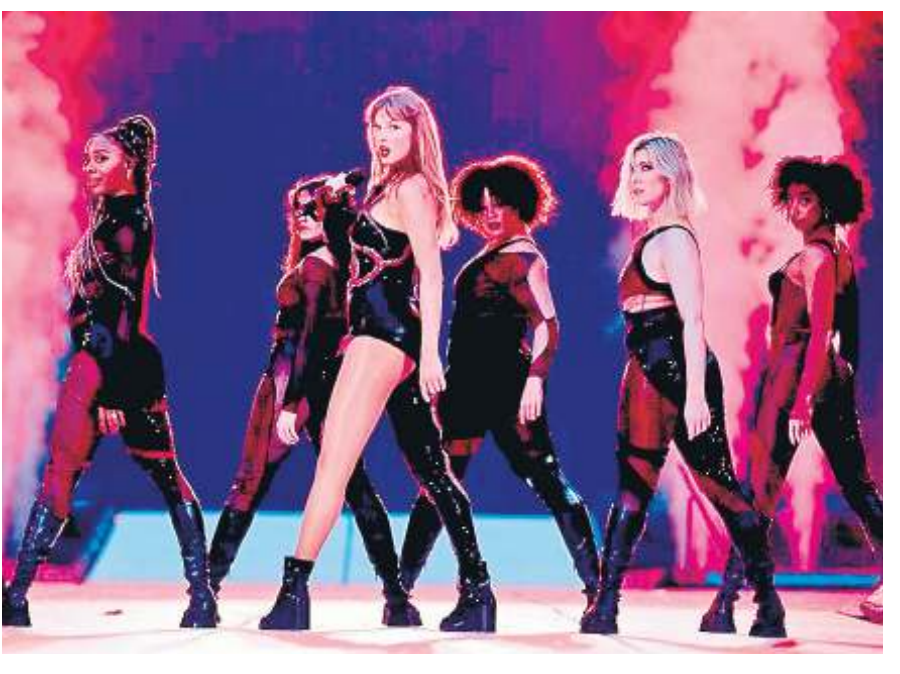
While the audiences will get to witness Akshay and Chitrangda's magical chemistry on-screen in *Housefull 5*, the film flaunts an exciting ensemble. The film also stars Abhishek Bachchan, Riteish Deshmukh, Dino Morea, Chunky Pandey, Fardeen Khan, Sanjay Dutt, Nargis Fakhri, Sonam Bajwa, Jacqueline Fernandez and others in important roles. Directed by Tarun Mansukhani and produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, *Housefull 5* is slated to release on June 6, 2025.



### MTV VMAs: Taylor Swift's moving homage to 9/11 victims

Taylor Swift won big at the 2024 MTV Video Music Awards. This year's annual musical event took place on September 11 in New York City. Taylor Swift won the Best Collaboration award for her song *Fortnight*, featuring Post Malone, off her album *The Tortured Poets Department (TPDP)*. When the singer took the stage to address the audience and deliver her acceptance speech, she remembered the victims of the 2001 terrorist attack on New York's Globe Trade Center, which shocked the globe 23 years ago. "Waking up this morning in New York on September 11, I have just been thinking about what happened 23 years ago—everyone who lost a loved one and everyone that we lost. And that is the most important thing about today. And everything that happens tonight falls behind that," she said.

Meanwhile, the 2024 VMAs winner's list shows Taylor Swift as the clear winner. The singer, who revealed her current album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, during the Grammy Awards on February 4 and released it on April 19, won seven trophies at the 40th MTV Video Music Awards on September 11 in New York's UBS Arena. Swift surpassed Beyoncé as the most-awarded solo artist in the history of the award presentation after winning three Moonmen on Wednesday night. The *Cowboy Carter* hitmaker had previously held the record with 26 VMAs, but Taylor's golden streak propelled her to the top with 30 triumphs.



### 'I was locked and then dropped from Sacred Games'

Actor Vijay Varma, who is currently enjoying the popularity of the Netflix series *IC 814*, has revealed that he was dropped from Anurag Kashyap's *Sacred Games* after being cast for a role. However, he stated that he had not lost faith.

Vijay Varma gained the recognition he deserved after playing Moeen in *Zoya Akhtar's Gully Boy*. That's when the offers started coming in for him.

"There were no offers until about post-*Gully Boy*. Casting directors did believe in me, but I was not given a chance for a long, long time," said Vijay in an interview.

"In some auditions, I was on the waitlist, in the top five, in the in the top two and then I was locked and then I was dropped! I was locked in *Sacred Games*; I did my costume measurements and then I got dropped. Stuff like that has happened, but some part of me kept the faith and belief. Work started coming in after *Gully Boy*, but I think I was so starved for work that I took a lot of it after the film," said the actor.

Vijay also spoke about getting typecast with negative roles post-*Darlings*. He said, "When *Darlings* happened, I couldn't imagine myself in that role and then a series of roles happened where I was playing extremely devious, atrocious, or devious men. A part of me wanted to break it, but I couldn't possibly do it myself. I found great support in filmmakers, who said they had seen me like that and wanted to offer me something new."



### Vir Das returns to International Emmys

The International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences has announced Vir Das as the host for the International Emmy Awards set to take place on November 25, in New York City. This marks a momentous occasion for Das, who won an International Emmy Award in 2023 for his acclaimed Netflix comedy special, *Landing*.

Das's return to the International Emmys is not only a celebration of his impressive career but also a fitting culmination of his journey with the awards. His win in 2023 followed two previous nominations, highlighting his exceptional talent and the global recognition of his work. Hosting the prestigious ceremony is a significant milestone that underscores his remarkable achievements in comedy and entertainment, also making history as the first Indian talent to do so.

On the heels of his Emmy win, Vir Das has continued to captivate audiences with his diverse and dynamic performances. His recent role in Prime Video India's *Call Me Bae* has garnered outstanding reviews, further solidifying his reputation as one of the foremost voices in comedy.

Additionally, Das is preparing to tape his next special in Mumbai this October which will also be one of his biggest shows, taking place at the iconic NSCI dome in Mumbai, which houses over 5000 people.

Vir Das expressed his excitement about hosting the International Emmys, stating, "Returning to the International Emmy Awards, this time as the host, is a deeply personal and exhilarating moment for me. The Emmys have always been a beacon of excellence and a celebration of diverse stories from around the world. Having won an Emmy last year for *Landing*, I feel a profound connection to this event and am incredibly honored to play a central role in it. I look forward to celebrating the remarkable achievements of my peers and bringing a touch of humor and joy to this prestigious night."



### VICKY VIDYA KA WOHL WALA VIDEO BRINGS SURPRISE

Mark your calendars for October 11, 2024, as the trailer for *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video* is set to take you on a delightful journey filled with family drama, 90s nostalgia and a dash of humour and suspense. This family entertainment extravaganza, directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa—famed for hits like *Dreamgirl* and *Dreamgirl 2*—features the talented Rajkumar Rao and the charming Triptii Dimri.

Following the success of *Srikanth* and *Stree 2*, Rajkumar Rao is back to enchant audiences with another compelling role, while Triptii Dimri continues to captivate with her vibrant presence. Together, they promise to deliver a film that evokes the colourful, heartwarming essence of the 90s, complete with a fun twist involving a missing CD.

In addition to the trailer launch, the makers also released the first motion poster, showcasing Rajkumar Rao and Triptii Dimri alongside the entire *Vicky and Vidya* family. One of the biggest surprises of the trailer was Mallika Sherawat. The actress, who is known for films such as *Murder* and *Pyaar Ke Side Effects*, has a prominent role in the Rajkumar Rao and Triptii Dimri-led film.

The event was attended by Rajkumar Rao, Triptii Dimri, Archana Puran Singh, Archana Patel, Rakesh Bedi, Mukesh Tiwari, Tiku Talsania, Mubeen Saudagar, Jaswant Singh, Producer Bhushan Kumar, Shiv Chanana, Vipul D Shah, Ashwin Varde & Vimal Lahoti along with Raaj Shaandilyaa and music composer Sachin Jigar.

The collaboration between industry giants Bhushan Kumar & Krishan Kumar, Shobha Kapoor & Ekta R Kapoor, Vipul D Shah, Ashwin Varde & Rajesh Bahl and Raaj Shaandilyaa & Vimal



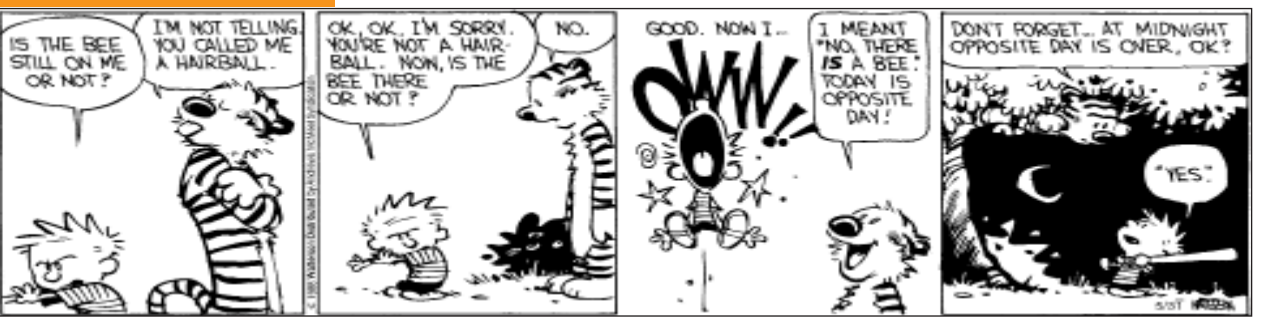
Lahoti has set the stage for a film that is sure to leave a lasting impression. Gulshan Kumar, T-Series, Balaji Telefilms and Wakaoo Films, in association with Kathavachak Films, presents *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*, a Wakaoo Film production, coming to theaters near you on October 11, 2024.

### FUN

#### ARCHIE



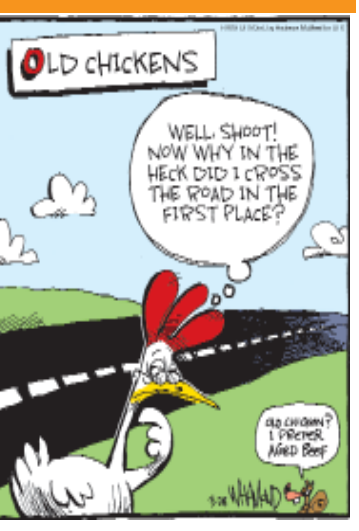
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



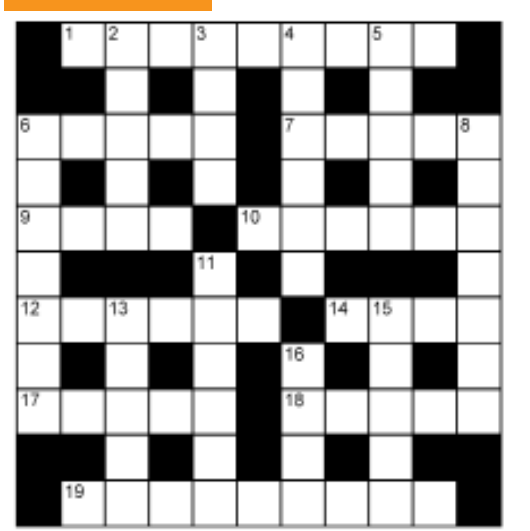
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU



**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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

**ACROSS**

- Hair on the upper lip
- Fortunate
- Boggy land
- A rower pulls these
- Cold region around the North Pole
- Quantity
- Wicked
- Used a car
- Helped
- A holder for mail

**DOWN**

- An American film award
- Speaks out loud
- Ridiculous
- A body organ
- A large spotted wild cat
- Preserved in vinegar
- Six-legged creature
- A gas layer high above the Earth
- TV recorder
- Two matching items

**SOLUTION**

C	E	M	E	T	E	R	Y	
H	A	I	R					
A	N	I	A	L	L	O	G	
L	E	S	T					
L	I	S	T	E	N			
P	O	N	S					
O	U	R	E					
I	A	W	L	E	R			
N	O	I	S	E				
T	S	A	V	E				
N	E	C	K	L	A	C	E	

#### GINGER MEGGS





TRAVELOGUE

Embarking on a journey to the mountains, *The Pioneer* connects with a passionate mountaineer, **Sunith Kumar Kokku**, for our exclusive segment of Travelogue, taking us through his expedition that's beyond conquering peaks.

AARTI SREENATH  
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**W**hen you think of Russia, what comes to mind? Towering Kremlin structures, the bustling streets of Moscow, or perhaps an ice-cold glass of vodka? But what if we told you there's much more to this vast country than its popular clichés? This is exactly what Sunith Kumar Kokku, a passionate mountaineer from the Medak District of Telangana, discovered during his recent expedition to the picturesque yet lesser-known region of Pyatigorsk in Russia. For him, climbing the

## BEYOND VODKA AND MYTHS:

# A journey to summit of Mt Elbrus

world's highest peaks isn't just a hobby—it's a purpose. His mountaineering journey began as he recovered from tuberculosis, which was diagnosed in 2013. The mountains became his sanctuary, providing him with strength, peace and a renewed purpose in life. On August 17, 2024, he achieved a significant milestone by summiting Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe and Russia, standing at 5,642 meters. This climb is part of his lifelong quest to complete the Seven Summits of the world,

including Mount Everest. But this expedition wasn't just about conquering a peak; it was about breaking stereotypes and discovering the hidden gems of Russia. He laughs as he debunks one of the most common misconceptions about Russians—that they drink vodka at every meal. "We thought we'd be greeted with vodka for breakfast, but that couldn't have been further from the truth. Russians prefer cognac! It was quite the cultural surprise." Their adventure began in Pyatigorsk, a quaint town nestled in a valley of mineral springs. "It's a hidden gem, especially for Indian travellers. You won't find many reviews about it, even on TripAdvisor," he shares, highlighting the region's underrated beauty. The town, steeped in history, provided the perfect backdrop for the group as they prepared for their climb. One of the highlights of his journey was visiting an ancient mineral lake, now a sulfur lake, that dates back to Russia's monarchic era. "During the war, they converted it to sulfur so the enemy couldn't access it for water. It's fascinating how these lesser-known places hold such deep historical significance." The climb was rigorous and demanded every ounce of physical and mental endurance. Sunith and his group spent days acclimatising, climbing smaller peaks around Terskol before attempting the summit of Elbrus. "Each day was a test of endurance as we carried 10-15 kilos of gear in harsh, freezing conditions." Despite the challenges, there were moments of camaraderie and cultural exchange. "We played card games and shared laughs with the locals, even though we struggled to communicate through Google Translate. They taught us basic Russian phrases and we shared a bit of Indian culture in return." Reflecting on his time in Pyatigorsk, he admits that the vegetarian food options were limited. "For me, it was mostly raw tomatoes and potatoes with olive oil," he laughs, while his non-vegetarian friends enjoyed

hearty meals of beef and chicken. "It wasn't about the food for me; it was about the journey itself." His passion for mountaineering extends beyond adventure. Through his climbs, he seeks to raise awareness about tuberculosis and mental health. His previous climbs, including Kilimanjaro and Stok Kangri, have been milestones in his recovery from TB and his dedication to spreading awareness about these issues. Music plays an essential role in his travels. His playlist includes John Mayer's discography and Assamese artist Bishrut's *Upahar* and *Penekoi*, along with classic rock from the '80s and '90s. "It provides the perfect backdrop to my adventures." In addition to conquering new peaks, he collects hats from every trek, each one a memento of his journey. After summiting Elbrus, he returned with a Rasputin-style furry hat, adding it to his growing collection of 250 hats. Though he only began travelling seriously at the age of 22, Sunith's childhood was filled with tales of adventure from his father, who served in the Indian Air Force. "He travelled to places like Cherrapunji and Delhi. His stories inspired me and now it's my turn to explore." One of the more unnerving moments of Sunith's Russian adventure was a five-hour delay at immigration. "It felt like something out of a *Cold War* movie," he recalls, laughing now, but at the time, it was quite unsettling. For him, summiting Mount Elbrus was more than just another tick off his Seven Summits bucket list—it was a journey of self-discovery and breaking down stereotypes. As he puts it, "Every time we faced extreme cold or strong winds, we just took one step at a time. That's what keeps me going, both in climbing and in life." Through his journey, Sunith Kumar inspires others to push past their boundaries, proving that no summit—whether in life or on the world's highest mountains—is too difficult to conquer, one step at a time.

REVIEW

# Stark visuals amplifying action, heighten thrill in Berlin

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**B**erlin, helmed by Atul Sabharwal, showcases a star-studded ensemble including Aparshakti Khurana, Ishwak Singh, Rahul Bose, Anupriya Goenka and seasoned actor Kabir Bedi. In the dynamic and politically tumultuous setting of New Delhi in the 1990s, the movie strives to introduce a fresh and original perspective to the spy thriller category, custom-made for the Indian audience. *Berlin* showcased at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM 2024) at Hoyts Cinema, further expanding its list of achievements.

PLOT

Taking place in New Delhi, India, in 1993, Berlin revolves around a deaf-mute young man, Ashok Kumar (played by Ishwak Singh), who is believed to be a spy from another country. An expert in sign language, Pushkin Verma (played by Aparshakti Khurana), is called upon to interpret for the government during his questioning. As the enigma unravels, the distinction between culpability and innocence becomes unclear, and the interpreter of sign language becomes entangled in a perilous web of lies and political scheming. Pushkin's perceptions of spies, bureaucrats, and the nation undergo a transformation as he becomes more deeply involved in the case.

HIGHLIGHTS

Most of the action takes place in an interrogation room where Khurana and Singh engage with each other, while Bose manages the situation from the outside. Even with some imperfections and an unfulfilled climax, *Berlin* is a truly original storyline that stands out in recent Bollywood films. Maybe this is because the movie examines spies from a unique perspective, seeing them as both humans in their good and bad aspects. Other topics include individuals with disabilities, their solitude and their worth. The movie doesn't pretend to have a better understanding of disabled people's problems, despite showing some sympathy. The movie also explores male friendships slightly without coming off as overly masculine, preachy, or emotionally pretentious. Clearly, a talented ensemble enhances the film's quality.

DRAWBACKS

Regrettably, *Berlin* never reaches its full potential. The start of this mystery story is promising, leaving you curious about where it will lead. However, the tension is disrupted by some unnecessary scenes. Soon, the mystery becomes clear and the reveal no longer surprises you. Additionally, the frequent back-and-forth exchanges in the scenes contribute to the



overall lack of fear in the run-time.

PERFORMANCES

Aparshakti Khurana, as the sign language expert, has brought out a character that's certainly something out of his comfort zone. In some places, his character does reflect a slight reflection of his character of Jubilee. However, he is beyond a doubt the backbone of the film.

Ishwak Singh, on the other hand, gives an outstanding portrayal of a man who is both deaf and mute. Singh, who consistently improves with each project, demonstrates once more his ability to succeed in any task, even something as difficult as playing a deaf-mute character. He is aware that he will not be exaggerated and instead acts subtly while being mindful of his facial expressions. Certainly, he is the greatest aspect of *Berlin*.

Rahul Bose opted for being bold and exaggerated in his approach, yet maintains a solid understanding, bringing considerable value to the situation. Anupriya Goenka, despite being the crucial final link in a significant project, unfortunately doesn't have many responsibilities. But of course, isn't she the mystery girl? So to know about her character, you gotta watch the film.

Meanwhile, Kabir Bedi as the bureau chief is another best aspect of the film, who creates his own impact in the story.

TECHNICAL ASPECT

The camera angles skillfully capture the interrogation, keeping the story's pace. The cinematogra-

phy showcases stunning close-ups and carefully composed scenes that emphasise the central storyline.

VERDICT

Khurana and Singh unite to form a quite formidable pair. It goes without saying that Rahul Bose always impresses. *Berlin* is accurately described as impressive. Yes, it definitely has its imperfections and can be a bit foreseeable at times. However, *Berlin* still stands out and is deserving of praise as a film.

Written and Directed by: Atul Sabharwal

Produced by: Umesh KR Bansal, Atul Sabharwal and Manav Shrivastav

Cast: Aparshakti Khurana, Ishwak Singh, Rahul Bose, Anupriya Goenka and Kabir Bedi

Streaming on: Zee5

Rating: 3.2/5



## Myth busting olive oil

Olive oil is a common ingredient in kitchens worldwide, valued for its delicious taste and positive health effects. It is considered an essential component of Mediterranean cooking and diet, often regarded as the key to making dishes both delicious and healthy. Among the many oils available, olive oil stands out for its nutritional benefits and versatility. It can be used in a wide variety of dishes, from dressings to roasted cabbage even in baked goods like banana bread. Its applications are diverse, making it a staple in many recipes.

Buying olive oil becomes simple if you know the different variants available in the market which will help you make an informed decision. At the same time there are a few myths that are associated with olive oil so let's debunk them as well.

**Myth: Olive oil only means extra virgin olive oil**

**Truth:** It's a common misconception that olive oil is only extra virgin, but that's not quite right. There are several types of olive oils available, each with its own unique features and best uses.

**Extra virgin olive oil:** This is the gold standard when it comes to olive oil. It's known for its captivating aroma and robust flavour, which can elevate any dish. It's perfect for salad dressings, drizzling over vegetables, or using in low-heat cooking like sautéing. You can even use it on bread as a butter/ghee substitute or for roasting and grilling. If you're looking for a gourmet touch to your meals, extra virgin olive oil is your go-to.

**Olive oil for Indian cooking:** The oil is ideal for everyday Indian cooking—think curries, deep-frying koftas or shallow-frying cutlets. It blends seamlessly into your cooking without overpowering the flavour of your spices or condiments.

**Classic olive oil:** With a rich flavour and a high smoke point, classic olive oil is great for speciality cooking. Use it for making pizza, pasta, or any dish where you want a rich olive oil flavour but also need a higher smoke point.

**Myth: Very green colour indicates high-**

**quality extra virgin olive oil**

Colour is not the sole factor to gauge whether Extra virgin olive oil is good or not. A lot depends on the climate in which olives are grown, soil condition, country of origin etc. A connoisseur must gauge the flavour, taste, aroma apart from colour also to understand whether extra virgin olive oil is good or not.

**Myth: Extra virgin olive oil is expensive and not worth the cost**

While extra virgin olive oil might be more expensive than other cooking oils, it's important to consider the value it brings. With its captivating aroma and flavour, presence of antioxidants & rich MUFA profile olive oil is a worthwhile investment. Additionally, it gives a gourmet touch to your meals by adding a distinct taste of olives.

**Myth: There is no olive oil available which is suitable for Indian cooking**

It's a popular belief that olive oil cannot be used for everyday Indian cooking, but it can be. A product called olive oil for Indian cooking is specially designed to enable consumers to use it for all types of cooking be it tadkas, curries, shallow frying or deep frying. The high smoking point & neutral aroma of the oil ensures that the spices and condiments used at the time of cooking remain intact.

**Myth: Smoking point & aroma of all olive oils is the same**

Well, this isn't true. Extra virgin olive oil has a captivating aroma & flavour and can work wonderfully for low heat cooking recipes due to its low smoking point. You can use it for grilling, sautéing, roasting or on your bread toast as a substitute for butter whereas, on the other hand, we have Classic olive oil, which has a rich flavour and aroma and comes with a high smoking point suitable for speciality cooking. The third category is olive oil for Indian cooking, which has a neutral flavour & aroma and comes with a high smoking point, and it is perfect for all types of Indian cooking.

(The author, Vishal Gupta, is the Managing Director, of Borges India Private Limited.)



# PRAGGNANANDHAA, VAISHALI STAR IN INDIA'S STRONG START AT OLYMPIAD

PTI ■ BUDAPEST (HUNGARY)

Praggnanandhaa set the tone on the top board as the Indian mens team blanked Morocco 4-0, while the women romped home against Jamaica, conceding just a draw in the process, in the first round of the 45th Chess Olympiad here.

With world championship challenger D Gukesh taking a break in the opening round, Praggnanandhaa delivered the goods against Tissir Mohamed out of a Sicilian defense game while Vidit Gujrathi, Arjun Erigaisi and P Harikrishna also pulled off comfortable wins to start off confidently on Wednesday.

In the womens section, R Vaishali and Tania Sachdev scored fine victories in the first time control itself. However, on the other two boards there was stiff resistance as Divya Deshmukh had to sweat hard for a much-needed victory while Vantika Agarwal was forced to concede a draw in the endgame against her rival. It was business as usual for the top guns despite the occasional hiccups. Top seeded United States also won 3.5-0.5 against Panama. Wesley So was the



lone American who was unable to force matters and had to be content with a draw. Armenian-American Levon Aronian came out of an early mishap to turn the tables and ensure smooth sailing for the American team into round two. As many as 99 teams in the open section started off with wins giving them all two points

each. A total of 182 teams were paired while 15 teams were still grappling to reach Budapest. Praggnanandhaa was up against a Sicilian by top Moroccan Mohamed who had only himself to blame after the opening got over. The Indian teen had a stronghold on the king side that he utilised to the fullest to take the first point home for

the team. Not very far behind was Gujrathi who was clearly in his elements. He also got an opening advantage out of a King pawn game against Jacques Elbilal as he knocked down a pawn and never looked back. Erigaisi may have had to work harder but the Indian youngster, who is currently

ranked number four in the world, was never far from winning his game. Harikrishna faced some initial resistance from Anas Mosyad in a closed Sicilian but his superior understanding of the structure gave him the vital point. The second round will see the Indian men clash with a spirited Iceland. In the womens competition,

Vaishali had no trouble in converting her position with black pieces as D Harika was rested on the top board. Tania Sachdev was in command right through and despite a little mess-up, she did not let the advantage slip through her hands playing on board four.

On the second board, there were some serious issues for Divya Deshmukh but the recently-crowned world junior girls champion proved her mettle out of an equal position. The same, however, was not the case with Vantika as she was forced in a drawn queen and pawns endgame. The womens event features 178 teams as of now with 19 still awaited to join the extravaganza from round two onward.

Indian results round 1: R Praggnanandhaa beat Tissir Mohamed; Jacques Elbilal lost to Arjun Erigaisi; Vidit Gujrathi beat Quakir Mehdi Pierre; Anas Moayad lost to P Harikrishna. **Women:** R Vaishali beat Adani Clarke; Divya Deshmukh beat Rachel Miller; Raehanna Brown drew with Vantika Agrawal; Tania Sachdev beat Gabriella Watson.



## Harmanpreet's brace hands India 3-1 win over Korea in ACT hockey

PTI ■ HULUNBUIR (CHINA)

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh scored a brace as defending champions India beat Korea 3-1 to register their fourth consecutive win at the Hero Asian Champions Trophy here on Thursday.

Paris Olympics bronze medallist India had defeated China 3-0, Japan 5-0 before thrashing last years runner-up Malaysia 8-1. Already assured of a semifinal berth, India will play arch-rivals Pakistan on Saturday in their last league match in the six-team competition. The top four teams from the league stages will qualify for the semifinals scheduled on Monday, while the final will be played next Tuesday.

India continued their fine form and struck twice early in the first quarter to take a 2-0 lead. Arajjeet Singh Hundal, who scored a brace against Malaysia, scored the first goal in the eighth minute before Harmanpreet, regarded as one of the worlds best dragflickers, converted two penalty corners in the ninth and 43rd minutes. Korea's lone goal was scored by Jihun Yang in the 30th minute from a penalty corner.

As has been the case in the tournament so far, the Indians started on an aggressive note with Arajjeet handing his side the lead with a brilliant strike after being fed by Sukhjeet Singh. A minute later, the promising Raj Kumar Pal, who struck a hat-trick against Malaysia on

Wednesday, earned a penalty corner for India and captain Harmanpreet converted the chance with a powerful dragflick.

Indias reserve goalkeeper Suraj Karkera was impressive under the bar, denying Korea on a few occasions in the second quarter.

After an impressive first quarter, the Indians seemed to have gone into a shell in the next 15 minutes as Korea dominated the proceedings with continuous forays on the rival citadel.

The Indian defence stood tall until Korea pulled a goal just at the stroke of half-time through Yang whose effort went into the net after getting a deflection from Manpreet Singhs stick from a penalty corner opportunity.

The Koreans secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 35th minute but India defended bravely. India secured their second penalty corner two minutes later but wasted the chance.

The holders managed to restore their two-goal lead in the 43rd minute when Harmanpreet scored with a powerful low flick to the left of the Korean goalkeeper Jaehan Kim.

At the start of the fourth quarter, Jarmanpreet Singh conceded a penalty corner but the Indian defence was up to the task.

Thereafter, the Indians controlled the proceedings and did not let Korea create any scoring opportunity.

## Virat Kohli played a big role in turning the cricket around: Ricky Ponting

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Australian great Ricky Ponting hailed former captain Virat Kohlis "big role" in revolutionizing Test cricket in India and said the countrys batters dont fear the big stage anymore, evidence of which is their success in challenging conditions overseas.

Ponting also lauded the contributions of former head coach Rahul Dravid, who stepped down from the post after guiding India to the T20 World Cup title triumph in June.

"Going back to Kohlis start of captaincy, (he) played a big role in turning the cricket around, and (Rahul) Dravid has continued the same in the recent four years. The influence of someone like that (Kohli) around a team would be great, and theyve got star players," Ponting told Sky Sports.

Under Kohlis captaincy, India became the first Asian side to win a Test series



in Australia, besides recording some memorable wins elsewhere. With his aggressive captaincy, Kohli made everyone believe that the Indian team can win overseas as well, and his confidence rubbed on the side even when he was not around. During the last Test series in Australia in 2020-21, Kohli left for India after

the first match due to the birth of his daughter Vamika. But India, under the captaincy of Ajinkya Rahane, battled injuries and the absence of key players to eke out a historic 2-1 series win.

"They won a game at the Gabba, which just doesnt happen. I think their batters adapt to overseas batting

conditions very well.

"I dont think theyre as daunted by the Gabba or the Optus Oval as they maybe once were. Maybe it is a selection thing, or they just dont fear the big stage anymore," observed Ponting.

During Kohlis tenure, India won 40 matches and lost 17, with 11 ending

in draws out of the 68 Tests they played.

This time around, Kohli will tour Australia under longtime India colleague Rohit Sharmas captaincy. "Their fast-bowling depth is great. The leadership in the last 6-7 years has been strong."

Ponting also praised the Indian Premier League for producing players who like to play fearless cricket.

"For the last 10 years being around the IPL, Ive noticed that a lot of the young guys (play aggressively without fear) as the IPL is high-pressure. It is like a World Cup for them.

"Their batsmen are all very aggressive stroke-making players. They are not scared of failing," he concluded.

The Aussies have failed to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy since their last series victory in 2014-15 at home. The Indians have claimed the title on four successive instances since then, winning twice each at home and away.

## Mbappé rejects mediation offer in \$60M financial dispute with PSG

AP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappé is not ready to compromise with Paris Saint-Germain.

The France superstar rejected a mediation offer by the French soccer leagues legal commission on Wednesday in his dispute with his former club over wages and bonuses. PSG officials and Mbappés representatives met in Paris after Mbappé asked the commission to get involved. Mbappé, who joined Real Madrid this summer on a free transfer, says PSG owes him 55 million euros (\$60 million).

In a statement to The Associated Press, Mbappés representatives said the player asked the commission to take note of the non-payment of three months salary and the last third of a loyalty bonus.

"The eventuality of a mediation was mentioned this morning," the statement read. "This possibility was rejected during the meeting by the players representative. A mediation would be useless to record a lack of payment that would be seen from a simple analysis of the players payslip."

PSG, which said it was pleased with the two-hour hearing at the commission on Wednesday, said in a statement it recalled that Mbappé had formerly made "clear, repeated public and private commitments that must be respected, having been afforded unprecedented benefits by the club over seven fantastic years in Paris." PSG has argued that it does not owe money to the World Cup winner under an agreement when Mbappé was sidelined ahead of the 2023-24 season - following his decision not to prolong his contract with the club - with the player allegedly stipulating that he would



relinquish bonuses over his reintegration into the team.

"To avoid its payment obligation, the club seeks to demonstrate the existence of a secret agreement that would justify it. But the club fails to demonstrate the existence of such an agreement," Mbappés representatives said.

PSG said that the leagues legal commission recommended "mediation between the parties," which the club said it had been seeking for months. The French league did not respond to a request for comments from the AP.

The players representatives did not say what action they will now take. In light of the current deadlock, its likely the case will ultimately be settled by an employment court. Mbappés relationship with PSG ended amid deep tensions during his final season at the club. PSG felt let down by Mbappé after offering him the most lucrative contract in the clubs history when he signed a new contract in 2022. But Mbappé was frustrated because he felt promises to sign key players were not kept. When he signed the new deal, he was paraded in front of

fans holding up a jersey with 2025 on it. Mbappé was reportedly annoyed about this because the contract was until 2024 with the option for an extra year.

Mbappé stunned PSG in June last year by informing the club he would not take the option for an extra year. With his contract effectively into its final year, it put PSG in the position of needing to sell Mbappé to avoid losing him for free when the contract expired. His PSG career could have ended in the summer of 2023 amid a tense transfer standoff. After telling the club he would not extend his contract for an extra year, Mbappé was left off a preseason tour to Japan and South Korea and forced to train with fringe players. PSG said it would rather sell him than let the player leave for free in 2024, but he rejected a 300 million euro move to Saudi team Al-Hilal.

PSG left Mbappé out of the teams opening league game of that season as the standoff continued but eventually let him return to the lineup after "constructive and positive talks" between the two parties, PSG said at the time.

## Chopra, Sable spearhead Indian challenge in Diamond League season finale

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

Javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra will have lofty expectations to live up to, while for steeplechaser Avinash Sable, it would be an opportunity to make up for a disappointing Olympics, when the star-studded Diamond League season finale begins here on Friday, featuring the best of world athletics.

The showpiece is spread over two days for the first time and the field features top athletes from all continents, including an unprecedented number of Olympic medal winners, who will be vying for the top honours in 32 disciplines.

Pole vault world record holder Armand DuPlantis, American sprint queen ShaCarri Richardson, and superstar

hurdler Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone are among the big names who will light up the King Baudouin Stadium here. National record-holding 3000m steeplechaser Sable, after finishing 11th in the Olympic Games, will be in action on Friday in his maiden appearance in the DL season finale.

Chopra, who added a silver to his Olympic medal tally in Paris following a historic gold in the Tokyo Games, will be aiming to end his season on a high on Saturday.

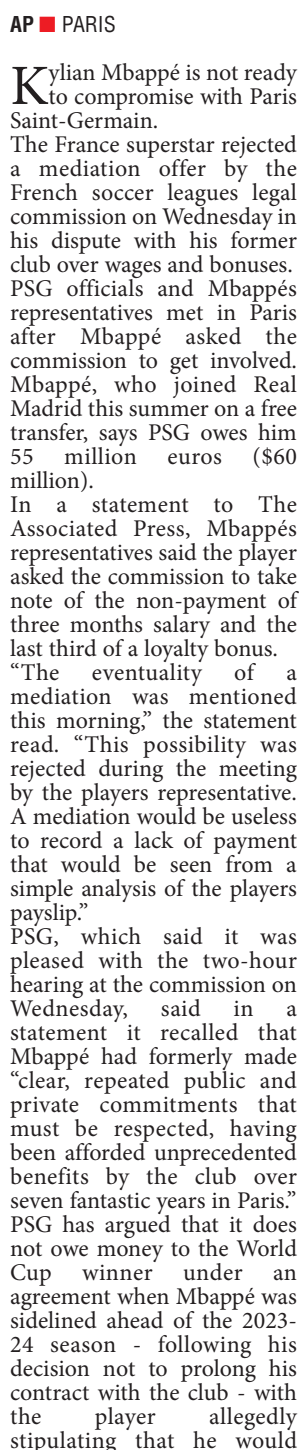
It is for the first time that a DL finale features two Indians. Sable finished 14th in the overall Diamond League standings with three points from two meetings. But four athletes ranked higher than him — Lamecha Girma



(injured) of Ethiopia, Geordie Beamish of New Zealand, Ryuji Mura of Japan and Hillary Bor of the USA — pulled out, allowing him to sneak into the top 12 cut-off. Five meetings out of the 14 in the DL series across the world this season had mens 3000m steeplechase event. The 29-year-old Sable had finished sixth with a national record time of 8:09.91 — bettering his own earlier mark

— in the Paris leg of the Diamond League on July 7. He was 14th at the Silesia leg with a time of 8:29.96 on August 25. Chopra, on the other hand, made the DL final cut after finishing fourth in the overall standings with 14 points from his two second-place finishes in the one-day meets held in Doha and Lausanne.

Each Diamond League season finale champion is awarded a Diamond Trophy, USD 30,000 prize money and a wild card for the World Athletics Championships. The runner-up gets USD 12,000. Chopra skipped the last series meet in Zurich last week. The 26-year-old finished two points behind Czechias Jakub Vadlech. Grenadas Anderson Peters and German star Julian Weber took the top two spots with 29 and 21 points respectively. Chopra has been struggling with his fitness this season and is expected to meet a doctor to rectify a groin injury that has affected him all season and came in the way of his quest to hit the 90m mark. He had won the Lausanne leg in 2022 and 2023 and finished second behind Vadlech in the winner-takes-all finale in Eugene, USA, last year.



Singh Cheema (mens 10m air pistol), Anish and Vijayveer Sidhu (mens 25m rapid-fire pistol), Shreyasi Singh and Rajeshwari Kumari (womens trap), Maheshwari Chauhan (womens skeet) and Anant Jeet Singh Naruka (mens skeet).

**THE INDIAN SQUAD:**

**Air Rifle Men:** Divyansh Singh Panwar, Arjun Babuta  
**Air Rifle Women:** Sonam Uttam Maskar, Tilottama Sen  
**50M Rifle 3P Men:** Chain Singh, Akhil Sheoran  
**50M Rifle 3P Women:** Ashi Chouksey, Nischal Air Pistol Men: Arjun Singh Cheema, Varun Tomar Air Pistol Women: Rhythm Sangwan, Surbhi Rao  
**25M Rapid Fire Pistol Men:** Anish, Vijayveer Sidhu  
**25M Sports Pistol Women:** Rhythm Sangwan, Simranpreet Kaur BrarTrap Men: Vivaan Kapoor, Bhowneesh MendirattaTrap Women: Rajeshwari Kumari, Shreyasi Singh Skeet Men: Anantjeet Singh Naruka, Mairaj Ahmad KhanSkeet Women: Ganemat Sekhon, Maheshwari Chauhan.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rhythm Sangwan will be the only Indian shooter to compete in two events in the season-ending ISSF World Cup Final here after double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker opted for a three-month rest following her exploits in the Paris Games.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) on Thursday announced a 23-member Indian squad for the tournament that will be held across rifle, pistol and shotgun categories from October 13 to 18 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

The squad features nine members from the Paris Olympics team which returned with three bronze medals. A total of 11 Indian Olympians will gun for the title of the best shooter of the year along with the worlds best in 12 individual Olympic events. The 22-year-old Bhaker scripted history for India in Paris as she won a bronze each in the womens 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team event (paired with Sarabjot Singh in the latter), and the Indian shooters participating in the prestigious tournament in the national capital will look to carry on the momentum at the familiar range. "We have a strong squad of proven performers for the ISSF year-end and look forward to a strong performance. Expectations from the sport have

## Bhaker rested, Rhythm to compete in two events in ISSF World Cup Final



reached sky-high after the Paris performance..." said Sultan Singh, secretary general, NRAI. Four shooters — Divyansh Singh Panwar (mens 10m air rifle), Sonam Uttam Maskar (womens 10m air rifle), Rhythm (womens 10m air pistol & 25m pistol) and Ganemat Sekhon (womens skeet) have been selected by ISSF directly, while the rest of the members Babuta (mens 10m air rifle), Arjun

Olympic trials rankings. The 20-year-old Rhythm will have Surbhi Rao for company in the womens 10m air pistol competition. Seasoned shooters and Olympians Mairaj Ahmed Khan (mens skeet) and Chain Singh (mens 50m rifle 3 positions) have returned to the team. Besides Rhythm, the other Paris Olympians in the squad include Arjun Babuta (mens 10m air rifle), Arjun

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# Krithy Shetty: If not acting, I'd probably have done something in fashion

Actress Krithi Shetty, for the first time, walked the ramp as the showstopper for ace designer Gaurav Gupta. The actress, who is currently gaining much love for her latest film *ARM*, sat down with *The Pioneer* for a quick chat, sharing her feelings on walking for the designer, what fashion means to her and more around it

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Actress Krithi Shetty has undeniably upswept with her impressive performance in the filmy world so well that one can just not stop adore her for. Apart from her acting skills, one can just not stop adoring her fashion skills.

Well, talking of her and fashion, on Wednesday, Krithi turned as the showstopper and turned heads with her beaded lehenga for fashion designer Gaurav Gupta, showcasing his latest Arunodaya collection at their Hyderabad store.

While the *Uppena* fame was dressed in the intricately embroidered lehenga and dupatta in the shade of wine, the other models were seen dressed in outfits in the monochrome shades.

Krithi, who was pretty excited post-show because she had her much-awaited film that hit the cinemas on Thursday, sat down with *The Pioneer* over a quick exclusive chat.

Did you know the *Custody* star walked as a showstopper for the first time? Well yes! She reveals this to us. "This is my first time being a showstopper," shares Krithi with great exhilaration. "I really feel like it's special and it was meant to be for Gaurav. I've always looked up to his designs for a really long time. It truly feels like a dream come true."

Wait, first walk as the showstopper? Was she even nervous? Well, not because she nailed it! But as we ask her about it, she with an alluring smile on her face says, "You

know what's the funny thing about me; I'm like a little extra when I'm at home. My parents tell me that I have so much practice for this because even when I'm normally at home, I'm always in a ramp walk mode (she laughs out loud). They were like you have already had so much experience with this."

Dressed in a beautiful wine red piece, sharing her excitement, she says, "I truly feel beautiful in this dress because it's refracting so much light and whenever I'm walking, I can feel the light on me, which makes me feel even more special."

During the show, the leading man behind the collection, Gaurav, shared that this line is for someone who is looking out to have something extraordinary for themselves. And the *Bangararaju* star couldn't agree much as she says, "Isn't that perfect! This is lovely for a special occasion. I can totally see a lot of women choosing it for their big day, because I would too. I would choose it for my big day, such as a red carpet or an award ceremony, because it just makes me feel so special."

For the unaware, Krithi's mom is a fashion designer too, thus making her have a special admiration for things around fashion. "I've been into fashion all my life. My mom being a fashion designer, fashion is like my life. If not acting, I'd probably have done something in fashion and experimenting with fabrics. It's a huge part of my life and I think it's all about finding your own style and feeling confident in it. I feel it's also like an artistic expression."

Going ahead, with great elation, the *Manamey* fame spoke about the concept of reusing, recycling, and reweaving of clothes, as she says, "I think it's absolutely amazing because a lot of brands are going sustainable now, which is so lovely for the environment and it's a lovely thing that's happening."

Well, anyone who'd wish to plunder into her wardrobe with her must-haves would find: "Sweatpants, lots of skirts and lots of dresses," she gleefully shares, adding, "I'm more of a girly girl who loves florals and dresses and I think you'll find a lot of dresses in my closet (she giggles)."

As this brings us to the end of this fun chat, Krithi has once again enraptured hearts on the filmy front with *ARM* and also has *Kaantha* with Dulquer Salmaan, *Love Insurance Kompany* (LIK), *Vaa Vaathiyaar* and *Genie* in her kitty. She also shared that she is keen on doing a Hindi movie too!



## ARM: TOVINO THOMAS STEALS THE SHOW WITH THREE DIFFERENT ROLES

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The Telugu audience is also familiar with Malayalam actor Tovino Thomas with the popularity of his films on OTT platforms. His movies *Kala* and *Minna Murali* are well-liked and in the previous year, his Telugu film *2018* was released. His most recent Malayalam movie *ARM* was launched in Telugu under the same title. He took on three distinct characters in the movie, which is helmed by debutant Jithin Lal. The female leads in the movie are Krithi Shetty and Aishwarya Rajesh, with the Telugu version being released by Mythri Movie Makers.

### STORY

Ajay (played by Tovino Thomas) resides in a rural village with his mother (played by Rohini) and does minor electrical tasks. Ajay is often blamed for any lost items in the village due to his notorious grandfather, Maniyan (played by Tovino Thomas), who is a well-known thief. There is a temple in the village where Ajay's ancestors worshiped the deity. Sudev Varma (played by Harish Uthaman) came into the village with the intention of taking the deity and committing theft. He is planning to steal it just like Ajay would do. However, Ajay wanted to prevent Sudev Varma from taking it. What action did he take? What is the background of Kunjikelu (Tovino Thomas) and who is he? What is the origin of the deity and how did it end up in that village? Is Lakshmi's and Ajay's relationship approved by the elders? To get answers to these questions, you must view *ARM*.

### ANALYSIS

It has been for the first time that Tovino Thomas is playing three different roles in a film! The story begins with a period drama with Kunjikelu entering and saving an important person from a kingdom. In return, the King offers whatever one wants and Kunjikelu asked to give him the historic deity as he wanted to take his village. The king obliged. The director started the film with this story on an interesting note. Later, the next generation, Maniyan, enters and his role was well designed.

Whenever Maniyan is on the screen, it is interesting to see his adventure. The director created some interesting scenes with

him especially where he steals the deity from King Fort. Actually Maniyan's character is the highlight of the film and the director narrated his character pretty well. The present day Ajay character is also portrayed well, but the director couldn't write strong opposition characters. He mainly concentrates on these three characters, so other characters are just nominal on the screen. Even the Ajay, Lakshmi love drama is also not up to the mark. There is no strong chemistry or emotion between them. Ajay's mother character, which is played by Rohini, is also a strong one, especially when she appears as young and an adult, when the villagers bashed her father and her son at the same spot.

There are a few scenes dragged and forced also. But the director narrated an interesting story with three generations. In his first, the director comes up with a different kind of story involving three generations. It's a predictable story; if the director could concentrate more on it; it could be a better one.

### PERFORMANCE

When it comes to the performances, Tovino Thomas performed it pretty convincingly. He is outstanding in the roles of Maniyan and Kunjikelu as he showcases the special art form of fighting. Talking of the action scenes, he is simply superb. Ajay's character is quite opposite to the two period characters and he showcases his softness in Ajay. The film belongs to him, as he is seen from the beginning to the end. Krithi Shetty plays one of the female leads and she is cute. Aishwarya Rajesh appears as a cameo and her role is only limited. Rohini plays a key role and she did it well. Harish Uthaman plays the negative role. Surabhi Lakshmi plays an important role and she is also the key for the film. The remaining actors are supported well. The music by Dhibu Ninan is good, especially the background score. The cinematography by Jomon captured the beautiful locations and also the action scenes were captured interestingly. The movie is also released in 3D, so the makers wanted to put some scenes together by hook or crook.

### VERDICT

Finally, *ARM* is a different story where Tovino Thomas steals the show in three roles. The second half is good, with some interesting scenes. This isn't your typical masala movie; if you're searching for something different, you should absolutely watch it.

**Cast:** Tovino Thomas, Krithi Shetty, Aishwarya Rajesh, Rohini, Surabhi Shetty, Basil Joseph, Harish Uthaman and others  
**Cinematography:** Jomon T John  
**Music:** Dhibu Ninan Thomas  
**Producers:** Listin Stephen, Zachariah Thomas  
**Writer:** Sujith Nambiar  
**Director:** Jithin Lal  
**Rating:** 2.5/5



## BJP MP wishes Kalinga big success

Dhruva Vaayu, who earned acclaim with *Kerosene*, is directing the upcoming film *Kalinga*, besides acting as the lead actor in it. Deepthi Kondaveeti and Pruthvi Yadav are the producers. The film is releasing this Friday and at the pre-release event of the film was held, where BJP leader and MP Raghunanandan Rao attended as the chief guests.

"Though everyone is busy with their regular life, watching movies is a part of our culture that helps relieve stress from daily life. After the pandemic, many watched OTT platforms. Now, in the Tamil film industry, many smaller movies are achieving great success. I hope the film *Kalinga* also achieves a

good success and I wish the best for Dhruva and the producers," said Raghunanandan Rao, BJP MP.

The BJP leader attended this film's function because of Dhruva Vaayu. The actor thanked the political leader for gracing the event. "For my story, *Yakub*, with his dialogues, takes it to another level. The highlight of the film is the visuals and the background score. Preethi Sundar has played her dream role in this film," said Dhruva Vaayu about the film. He added that Sanjay's performance is going to be a big surprise. "He will leave everyone stunned, and in the coming days he is going to play big roles," said Dhruva about the other stars.

## VARUN TEJ CONCENTRATES ON MATKA

Actor Varun Tej currently needs a good break in his career at this point in time. He is pinning his hopes on *Matka* directed by Karuna Kumar of *Palasa* fame. The final schedule of this film shoot is going on at RFC.

"There are some important scenes that are canning on this schedule and with this we are going to wrap up the entire shoot," says the filmmaker.

Varun Tej has been working hard for this film, as he will be seen in a different look. According to the makers, the end game begins, as the final schedule of the movie is underway with some key sequences being shot in RFC, Hyderabad.

Dr. Vijender Reddy Teegala and Rajani Thalluri are the producers. The film *Matka* is going to be the most costly and prestigious project for Varun Tej. The story is set against a period backdrop, and it spans a 24-year period, from 1958 to 1982. Varun Tej is fully immersed in his role, showcasing a range of looks that depict his character's evolution from youth to old age. The latest poster features Tej in an elderly get-up, deep in thought while seated. Meenakshi Chaudhry and Nora Fatehi are playing the female leads.



## KAJAL ONBOARDS SALMAN KHAN'S SIKANDAR

Kajal Aggarwal enraptured hearts with *Bhagavanth Kesari*, starring opposite Nandamuri Balakrishna.

Not just this, she was also praised for her performance in the female-centric film *Satyabhama*, proving her prowess of pulling the crowd to the theatres. Kajal, who also enjoys a great following in Bollywood has onboarded a big Hindi project, which stars none other than Salman Khan. Tamil director AR Murugadoss is now working with Salman Khan for the film *Sikandar*. Rashmika Mandanna also plays one of the female leads. Now, the director has offered Kajal Aggarwal an important role in the film. She had earlier worked with director Muragadoss's for the Tamil blockbuster *Thuppaki* which was released in 2012. Now, the same director offered this Hindi film after he was impressed with her work, says a source.

The actress also confirmed doing this Salman Khan film as she replied to a YouTuber, Siddharth R Kannan, where he mentioned Kajal Aggarwal joining the cast of *Sikandar* with Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna.



## TELUGU TV PRODUCERS HELPING FLOOD VICTIMS

The Telugu Television Producers Association has decided to help the flood victims in Telugu states. The association on Thursday said that they desire to help the victims by donating and collecting money from the television producers.

"After seeing the havoc in both the states, we want to help something from us. So, we asked every producer of the TV serial to come forward and help whatever they like. Many producers are willing to help and they donate some money. We will add something to the collected money and hand it over to the respective governments soon," said Prabhakar, who is a producer and actor.

The TV Producers Association president Prasada Rao said that they wanted to help the



flood victims. "There are nearly 250 producers there, but only 60 of them are active. When we asked the producers to respond, many producers came forward and donated some money. We wanted to collect nearly Rs 10 to 15 lakh rupees and we equally distribute the money to both the Telugu States," said Prasada Rao.

He added that they are requesting an appointment of CM or Deputy CM and then handover the cheque to them. He added that nearly 15,000 employees are there in the Television industry and they all helped them at the pandemic time. "Now, the Telugu states are facing some problems due to the floods and we wanted to help the people at these difficult times," said Prasada Rao.