



Congress angry with me for participating in Ganesh Puja:
Modi



FASHION FORWARD, PLANET APPROVED



'I can't wait to take on the villainous ROLE NOW!'

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
Revanth Reddy insulted Telangana Thalli. He installed the Rajiv Gandhi statue at the place meant for installing the Telangana Thalli statue. We will shift the Rajiv Gandhi statue to Gandhi Bhavan respectfully if we come to power. Revanth should install the Rajiv Gandhi statue in his Jubilee Hills residence if interested. I am saying on Ganesh Nimajjanam Day that we will certainly remove the Rajiv Gandhi statue installed near the Secretariat
 -KT Rama Rao, BRS Working President

DON'T MISS...

Kolleru sanctuary should be...

CPI leaders have demanded that the government take steps to protect the Kolleru Lake Abhayaranyam by removing the encroachments. CPI national secretary K Narayana, State secretary K Ramakrishna and other leaders visited the flood-affected areas on Tuesday. The CPI leaders visited Peda Yedlagadi, Chinayedlagadi and other affected villages and saw the Kolleru Lake. Speaking on the occasion, CPI national secretary K Narayana lamented that the Kolleru Lake and sanctuary had been encroached upon by the...

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Army starts two-day 'drone'...

The Indian Army on Tuesday started a two-day 'drone-a-thon' to revolutionise the operations and provide tactical superiority in difficult terrains. "In a bold stride towards redefining military capabilities in high-altitude environments, the Indian Army, in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), conducted the highly anticipated HIM-DRONE-A-THON 2", officials said. They said this 'pioneering initiative' the power of cutting-edge indigenous...

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Exports plunge 9.3 pc to \$34.71 bn...

India's exports registered a steepest decline in 13-month falling 9.3 per cent in August to USD 34.71 billion due to global economic uncertainties, while the trade deficit soared to a 10-month of USD 29.65 billion. According to the government data released on Tuesday, imports increased by 3.3 per cent to USD 64.36 billion, which is a record high, due to a significant jump in the inbound shipments of gold and silver. While gold imports more than doubled to USD 10.06 billion in August from USD 4.93 billion...

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New support staff will have different...

India captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said head coach Gautam Gambhir's style is different from his predecessor Rahul Dravid but insisted he shares a good rapport with the new appointee, and the rest of his fresh set of support staff. Gambhir, a World Cup-winning former opener, took charge of India in July during a white ball tour to Sri Lanka, and will now helm the team in its first Test series under his tutelage against Bangladesh, beginning here from Thursday. In Gambhir's first outing as coach...

-SPORTS

Viveka's daughter urges CM to probe Ram Singh case

Former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy's daughter, Sunitha, along with her husband, met Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu at the State Secretariat on Tuesday. They brought to the CM's attention the complaint filed by Vivekananda Reddy's Personal Assistant, Krishna Reddy, as well as an allegedly illegal case filed against them and the then CBI SP Ramsingh. The couple sought an inquiry into the facts of the complaint lodged by Krishna Reddy against them. They urged the Chief Minister to take steps to investigate the case against Ram Singh and to ensure the facts are uncovered through a CID investigation. CM Chandrababu responded positively to Sunitha's appeal and assured them that the case would be thoroughly investigated.

CM announces flood relief

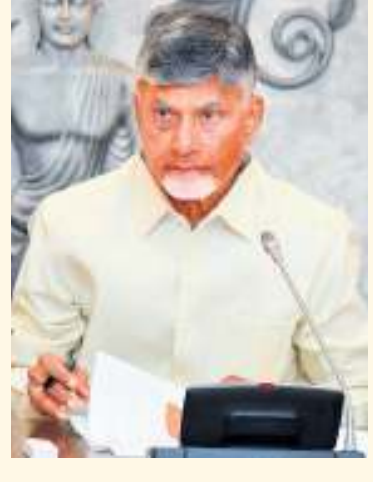
New houses to be built for those who lost their shelter

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has announced a substantial relief package for families affected by the recent floods, following the catastrophic conditions faced during the 100 days of coalition governance. Speaking at a press conference at the Secretariat on Tuesday, the Chief Minister outlined the financial assistance measures for those impacted by the floods.

To offer some relief to those who lost their homes, the Chief Minister stated that new houses would be built for people whose residences were destroyed by the heavy rains and floods. Each household affected by the floods will receive Rs 25,000. Additionally, Rs 10,000 will be allocated to residents of houses that were inundated and to those living on the first floor. Small traders who have suffered due to the floods will receive Rs 25,000 in aid.

Financial support has also been announced for motor vehicles: Rs 3,000 for two-wheelers and Rs 10,000 for three-wheelers (autos). Fishermen whose boats and nets have been partially damaged will receive Rs 9,000, while those with complete damage will get Rs 20,000. Sericulture farmers will be granted Rs 6,000, and compensation of Rs 50,000 will be provided for large cattle. *Continued on Page 2*



Rs 25,000 for each damaged house.
Rs 10,000 for inundated houses and first floors.
Rs 25,000 for small traders.
Rs 3,000 for two-wheelers, **Rs 10,000** for three-wheelers.
Rs 9,000 to **Rs 20,000** for damaged fishing boats.

Rs 6,000 for sericulture farmers, **Rs 50,000** for large cattle.
Rs 10,000 per acre for paddy, **Rs 25,000** for sugarcane.
 Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh for MSMEs depending on turnover.
 Rs 100 per chicken, Rs 5,000 for destroyed poultry sheds.
 Financial aid for crops and livestock, including Rs 25,000 per hectare for cotton.

'Apathy of YSRCP govt a curse for AP'

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu observed that the negligence and irregularities of the previous administration have become a curse for the State. He stated that if the Budameru works had been completed, the State might not have faced this calamity. Naidu claimed that the previous government had completely occupied the lands near Budameru and misused them to the fullest extent. The Chief Minister noted that the State government is now grappling with the severe consequences of this situation. Boats were deployed when the Krishna River was receiving

11.43 cusecs of water due to the floods, and it took nearly 10 days to return to normalcy. "Had the previous rulers been in power, it would have taken six months or more to restore normalcy," he added. Naidu also mentioned that funds allocated for Polavaram and Rs 990 crore from the Panchayat Raj department had been diverted, with the expenditure not properly accounted for. "We now need to clear dues amounting to Rs 1,650 crore for grain farmers and a staggering Rs 10.5 lakh crore in loans," the Chief Minister said.



Roads to be pothole-free within 100 days: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad has directed officials of the Roads and Buildings (R&B) Department to ensure that all roads in the state are free of potholes. He reviewed the implementation of the 100-day action plan with secretaries from the Civil Supplies, Housing, Women & Child, Tribal, and Youth Welfare departments at the Secretariat on Tuesday. During the review meeting with the R&B department, the Chief Secretary instructed that all roads must be repaired and maintained as pothole-free within the 100-day timeline. He emphasised the use of drones to identify potholes on major roads and urged swift action to address them. He noted that the National Highways Authority of India would oversee the maintenance of national highways, while other roads within the state must also be maintained to a pothole-free standard.

The Chief Secretary further clarified that officials, including Assistant Engineers (AEs), Deputy Executive Engineers (DEEs), Executive Engineers (EEs), and

Chief Secretary instructed that all roads must be repaired and maintained as pothole-free within the 100-day timeline. He emphasised the use of drones to identify potholes on major roads and urged swift action to address them. He noted that the National Highways Authority of India would oversee the maintenance of national highways, while other roads within the state must also be maintained to a pothole-free standard.

Superintending Engineers (SEs), must provide certification confirming the absence of potholes on roads under their jurisdiction. Principal Secretary of the Roads and Buildings Department, Kantilal Dande, informed that the tender process would commence shortly, and once tenders are finalised, steps will be taken to repair potholes. *Continued on Page 2*

Justice will be done in Mumbai model case: Home Min Anitha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha addressed the ongoing investigation into the Mumbai model-cum-access case, assuring that the government is committed to delivering justice to the victim and that the probe will be conducted swiftly and following the law. She further clarified that any action against the three IPS officers involved would only be taken after a thorough examination of evidence from the in-depth investigation.

During a visit to Prakasam Barrage, where she, along with Water Resources Minister Nirmala Ramanaidu, inspected the removal of sand boats stuck on the Krishna River, Minister Anitha



expressed concerns about a potential conspiracy behind the incident. She pointed out the danger posed by the boats if the 11.4 lakh cusecs flood flow had caused them to strike the 17-tonne counterweights of the barrage. She acknowledged that the

people of Vijayawada and the government narrowly avoided a major disaster. Minister Anitha criticised the spread of baseless theories on social media and urged the public to act responsibly in the interest of public safety. She questioned how the 50-tonne boats collided with the barrage and suggested possible foul play, calling for an investigation into why these particular boats appeared near the structure, given that there were reportedly 200 boats upstream.

Regarding the actress's case, she stated that her government would take strict action against those involved. She also accused the previous government of demonising innocent people, thereby complicating the situation further.

CM orders release of 'Neeru-Chettu' dues

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has ordered the release of pending dues under the Neeru-Chettu scheme. Ministers Payyavula Keshav, Nimmala Ramanaidu, and Anagani Sathyaprasad met the CM to raise concerns about the outstanding bills related to the scheme. In response, the CM made a key decision to clear the long-pending Neeru-Chettu payments. He instructed the Finance Department.

'AP poised to be nation's energy storage capital'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister for Energy, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, who attended the 'Renewable Energy Investors Meet-2024' in Gandhinagar, said that the Andhra Pradesh government, under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, is committed to ensuring uninterrupted power supply by focusing on renewable energy. He explained that the state is promoting solar and wind power projects to achieve these goals,

CM Chandrababu, Dy CM Pawan greet PM Modi on b'day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan extended birthday greetings to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who turned 74 on Tuesday. "Wishing Hon'ble Prime Minister @narendramodi ji a very happy birthday. I pray for his good health and long life in service to the nation. May our nation continue to prosper under his visionary leadership," Naidu said in a social media post. Pawan Kalyan, in his post wishing the PM, said he was confident that Modi would continue to lead the way for India to reclaim its position as a world leader (Vishwa Guru).

while also planning to adopt electricity storage technologies.

While discussing investment opportunities with both national and international representatives, he highlighted the potential for significant investments and the availability of skilled workers in Andhra Pradesh. Ravi Kumar stated that the minister noted that the State is currently implementing "3.0 reforms," with a strong emphasis on electricity storage systems. *Continued on Page 2*

Atishi to be 3rd woman CM of Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi is set to get its third woman chief minister, after Congress' Sheila Dikshit and BJP's Sushma Swaraj, as AAP leader Atishi has been chosen to succeed Arvind Kejriwal. Dikshit was Delhi's longest-serving chief minister, who held the office for 15 years from 1998 to 2013, while Swaraj's tenure lasted 52 days in 1998. Atishi (43) will be Delhi's youngest chief minister and is also set to become the second current woman chief minister in the country after West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee. Dikshit was 60 years old when she became the chief minister of Delhi, while Swaraj held the post at the age of 46. Atishi currently holds the most number of portfolios in the Delhi Cabinet, serving as the Minister for Finance, Water, Education, Public Works, Power, Revenue, Planning, Services, Law, Vigilance, and other key departments.

SC closes criminal proceedings against 30 army men

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to 30 Army personnel, the Supreme Court on Tuesday closed the criminal proceedings initiated against them by the Nagaland government for allegedly killing 13 civilians in a 2021 botched operation to ambush militants in Mon district for want of prosecution sanction. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and PB Varale noted that the Centre had on February 28 last year declined to grant sanction to prosecute the personnel under section 6 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) of 1958. Section 6 of the AFSPA says, "No prosecution, suit or other legal proceedings shall be instituted except with the previous sanction of the Central Government, against any

person in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act." The bench said, in case sanction is granted at any stage under Section 6 of the AFSPA, the proceedings pursuant to the impugned FIRs may continue and may proceed in accordance with law and be brought to a logical conclusion. "In view of the aforesaid discussions, the writ petition (Criminal) Nos...are allowed. The proceedings pursuant to the impugned FIRs shall remain closed," the bench directed. The apex court closed the proceedings on two separate petitions filed by the wives of the personnel, including a major rank officer, who sought closure of the case lodged by Nagaland police. The top court also refused to

accept the prayer of the Nagaland government to direct the Army to initiate proceedings against the accused personnel on the administrative side. "The said submission does not merit consideration by this court as that would be at the sole discretion of the armed forces whether or not to carry on disciplinary proceedings against its officers. As such, we are not inclined to issue any such directions. The concerned wing of the armed forces would be at liberty to take or not to take any disciplinary proceedings against its officers," the bench said in its order. It also noted that the Nagaland government has filed a separate petition challeng-

ing denial of prosecution sanction by the Centre against the Army personnel in the case and notice has been issued in the matter. The top court made its July 19, 2022 interim order absolute by which it had stayed further proceedings in the FIR registered by the state government against Army personnel belonging to the special forces unit. The wives of the Army personnel had sought closure of the criminal proceedings on the ground that the state government has no jurisdiction to prosecute the personnel due to immunity granted under the AFSPA. Their plea contended that prior sanction from the Centre was needed to initiate any legal proceedings against Army personnel if the area falls under AFSPA.

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Driven to the wall, BRS may go back to its basics!

The political atmosphere in Telangana may take a serious turn if, going by indications, the Bharat Rastra Samiti (BRS), while struggling to keep its flock of legislators from being poached by the 'akarshik' Congress, latches on to 'anti-Andhra sentiment' as a way out of the present maze in which it finds itself.

No doubt, anti-Andhra sentiment had helped BRS (formerly Telangana Rashtra Samithi) in taking the reins of India's youngest state, formed following the bifurcation of combined Andhra Pradesh. The BRS had joined hands with the Congress after having blamed the latter for depriving people of Telangana a state of their own for long. In the initial years, it had an electoral alliance with the Congress for the 2004 Assembly elections of undivided Andhra Pradesh.



The Congress had liberally allotted seats to TRS headed then also by K. Chandrasekhar Rao. But TRS contested 14 seats in addition to the ones allotted by the Congress. The TRS lost 30 seats out of the 56 seats it contested. Still, the Congress accommodated TRS leaders in Central and state cabinets. The honeymoon ended after TRS began to be assertive over the Congress. Then the Congress government in undivided AP, headed by Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy, decided to admit legislators from TRS. As a result, 16 TRS legislators switched their loyalty to the Congress.

The TRS was marginalised further in the 2009 Assembly elections as it got only 10 seats, despite being a partner of the Grand Alliance led by Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

The political scene turned favourable towards the creation of Telangana state following the tragic death of Dr. YSR in a helicopter crash on 2 September, 2009. Soon after the exit of YSR's son and peeved MP YS Jaganmohan Reddy from the party, the Congress veered towards bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh.

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by Congress stalwarts Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi with regard to the creation of new states and gave her nod for the creation of Telangana. Pandit Nehru, on his part, reportedly wanted to continue with then Hyderabad State (erstwhile princely state of Nizams that became part of the Indian Union) following 'Operation Polo' in September, 1948 under the watch of then Union home minister and Deputy Prime



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist
ratnakumarm@gmail.com

Minister Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel).

In absence of Dr. YSR, TRS redoubled its efforts towards bifurcation of AP which yielded results in 2014 with the creation of new state of Telangana. With TRS choosing not to merge with the Congress fol-

lowing bifurcation, the subsequent polls were fought between the Congress that 'granted' Telangana and the TRS, which 'achieved' the new state.

Unlike in the cases of the formation of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal (later Uttarakhand), the prescribed procedure was given the go-by the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre.

The TRS eventually got people's mandate in 2014 and the people of Telangana reposed confidence in KCR for realisation of their own state. He retained power in the advanced polls of 2018. During his rule that lasted a decade, KCR oversaw the decimation of the Telugu Desam Party in Telangana and eventually deprived the Congress of its position of principal opposition party in the Telangana Assembly.

Voters' disenchantment with BRS paved the way for the return of the Congress to power in Telangana. Anumala Revanth Reddy, who had switched to the Congress when TDP was on its last legs in Telangana, was targeted by BRS for the yellow party's Andhra roots. Still, Revanth could attain the Chief Minister's post due to his appreciable negotiable skills with the party's high command in his capacity as TPCC president.

Presently, the practice of admitting BRS MLAs into the Congress fold has resulted in a crisis in the BRS, which is the principal opposition party, starting with 39 members in the Telangana Assembly. Since then, 10 of BRS' have switched their loyalty to the Congress. So, the Congress, in a way, returned the compliments.

The issue of Congress 'granting' the Public Accounts

Committee Chairman post to Serilingampalli legislator Arikepudi Gandhi has hurt BRS' feelings; for, though he had joined hands with the Congress, he could be technically treated as a member from the principal opposition. Traditionally, the post of PAC chairman has always gone to a member of the principal opposition party. Gandhi's nativity has been highlighted by BRS legislator Padi Koushik Reddy (Huzurabad).

Gandhi, who has switched parties thrice since he was elected to T-Assembly in 2014, hails from Krishna district of AP. This flashback on the political screen has reignited regional feelings in political circles. The face-off between the Congress and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi over Gandhi is seen as the subtext of the latter subtly adopting 'anti Andhra sentiment' again.

Quarterly safety audit must for hazardous industries: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad has mandated the conduct of safety audits in hazardous industries across the state every three months without fail.

He emphasised that the 100-day action plan within government departments should be implemented effectively to achieve specific objectives. On Tuesday, he held a review meeting with officials from ITE&C, NRI Empowerment, Tourism and Culture, Cinematography, Industries, Commerce, Labour, Factories, and other departments at the State Secretariat.

Addressing the Industries Department during the meeting, the Chief Secretary insisted



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that safety audits must be conducted quarterly in hazardous industries. He stressed the importance of taking necessary precautionary measures to prevent industrial accidents.

The Chief Secretary also pointed out the need to review

various schemes and programmes introduced and implemented by the previous government. Additionally, CS Neerabh Kumar Prasad discussed several other issues with the officials present at the meeting.

IT Secretary Sourav Gaur

and Tourism In-Charge Managing Director Abhishek Kishore were present, while Principal Secretary S Suresh Kumar, Secretary Dr N Yuvaraj, and Special Secretary Vijayakumar participated virtually.

Rs 110 cr diet arrears to be released

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC Welfare, S. Savitha, announced that the government, under the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu, has decided to release Rs 110 crore in arrears for hostel students' diet charges.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday, the Minister also revealed that Rs 20.52 crore would be released for hostel students' cosmetic charges. Additionally, Rs 10 crore has been earmarked for carrying out repairs to welfare hostels. She further mentioned that the government would allocate Rs 25 crore for students to purchase boxes to store their personal items, dining plates, tumblers, and bedding materials.

The Minister disclosed that the government also plans to enhance educational standards by introducing digital content and establishing SR Sankaran Resource Centres in welfare hostels.

ABSORBING 100 RINL EXECUTIVES

NMDC's move sparks outrage among Steel Plant employees

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The National Mineral Development Corporation's (NMDC) decision to absorb 100 executives from the financially struggling Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), has ignited protests among the plant's employees. Unions fear this move could be a precursor to the plant's privatisation, a prospect strongly opposed by the workforce.

J Ayodharam, honorary president of the CITU-affiliated Visakha Steel Employees' Union (VSEU), expressed firm opposition to the move, stating, "This is yet another attempt to cripple RINL, demoralise its 13,000 employees, and hand it over on a golden platter to Adani or another company." He believes the management's plan to send 500 employees to NSL, push 2,500 into a voluntary retirement scheme, and dismiss 3,000 contract employees is a clear attempt to downsize the workforce and pave the way for privatisation.

The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has been grappling with severe working capital shortages and raw material insecurity,



drastically reducing production. Despite being able to produce 20,000 tonnes daily, the plant is currently producing only 4,000 to 5,000 tonnes per day. Two of the plant's three blast furnaces have been shut down due to a lack of resources, fuelling fears of a complete plant closure.

The disinvestment of RINL has been a contentious issue since January 2021, with unions advocating for a merger with SAIL, India's largest steel producer, as a solution to the company's financial woes. However, NMDC's reluctance to merge has led the unions to shift their demands towards amalgamation with SAIL. A senior union leader noted, "A merger with SAIL would have

been a far better solution than this piecemeal approach of sending executives on deputation."

The transfer of key RINL personnel to NSL has deepened anxieties among the workforce, with many employees concerned about the long-term viability of RINL and their job security. "This feels like the beginning of the end for RINL," said a plant employee. "With key executives moving out and production already at an all-time low, it's hard to see how this plant can survive in the long run."

As privatisation looms large, the fate of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant—and the thousands of livelihoods it supports—remains uncertain.

Roads to...

Continued from Page 1

As part of the 100-day action plan related to the education and higher education departments, discussions were held on the mid-day meal scheme, the academic calendar, skill training programmes, the rating system for various educational institutions, linking ITIs and polytechnics with industries, and providing internships and apprenticeships in collaboration with the Municipal Administration and Urban Development department.

In addition, the review covered the opening of canteens, cleaning of drains, and operationalising Anganwadi centres under the 100-day plan. Regarding the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department, discussions focused on strengthening the village secretariat system, installing LED streetlights, and managing solid waste.

Special Chief Secretary Ajay Jain stated that the housing department has set a target to build 1,25,000 houses under the 100-day action plan. Later, Neerabh Kumar Prasad reviewed the progress of the 100-day action plans for civil supplies, tribal welfare, women and child welfare, and youth welfare departments.

SCR Vijayawada Division launches 'Swachhata Hi Seva 2024' campaign

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Division of South Central Railway on Tuesday launched the fortnight-long 'Swachhata Hi Seva - Swachhata Pakhwada' campaign, which is part of the nationwide Swachh Bharat Mission. The campaign will conclude on 2nd October 2024, coinciding with Gandhi Jayanti and Swachh Bharat Diwas.

The event began with Narendra A Patil, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Vijayawada Division, administering the Swachhata Pledge to officers and staff at the Clock Tower, East Main Entrance, Vijayawada



Railway Station. Following the pledge, a large awareness rally promoting cleanliness, featuring placards, was held from the Clock Tower to Gandhi Waiting Hall on Platform 1, passing through the Divisional Office and Jack & Jill High School.

In addition to the rally, the

DRM, along with Branch Officers, participated in a tree plantation drive and Shramdaan (voluntary labour) at the South Parcel Office of Vijayawada Railway Station. During the Shramdaan, around 100 bags of debris, solid waste, and garbage were collected as

part of a significant clean-up effort.

Speaking to the media, Narendra Patil highlighted that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission. He emphasised that the 2024 'Swachhata Hi Seva' campaign will focus on key areas across the Division, with particular attention given to cleaning railway tracks in urban and semi-urban areas, drains, toilets, and other public spaces. He further mentioned that approximately 500 cleanliness target units (CTUs) have been identified for the campaign, including long-neglected garbage points and difficult-to-clean areas.

CM announces...

Continued from Page 1

Paddy farmers will receive Rs 10,000 per acre, while sugarcane farmers will get Rs 25,000 per acre. The Chief Minister further announced financial aid for MSME sectors affected by the floods. Handloom workers who incurred losses will receive Rs 15,000. MSMEs with a turnover between Rs 40 lakh and Rs 1.5 crore will be given Rs 1 lakh, while those with a turnover exceeding Rs 1.5 crore will receive Rs 1.5 lakh.

For the poultry sector, assistance amounts to Rs 100 per chicken, and Rs 5,000 if the poultry shed is destroyed. Financial aid for cattle includes Rs 50,000 per buffalo, Rs 40,000 per bull, Rs 25,000 per calf, and Rs 7,500 per sheep.

The Chief Minister also announced that those whose carts were destroyed will be provided with new ones. Financial assistance will be given as follows: Rs 25,000 per hectare for cotton, Rs 15,000 for groundnuts, Rs 15,000 for the desalination and restoration of fishing farms per hectare, and Rs 35,000 for turmeric and banana horticulture plantations. Additionally, Rs 15,000 per hectare will be provided for Ragi, maize, sorghum, foxtail millets, and other millet varieties. Regarding vehicle insurance claims for 179 Sachivalayams, the Chief Minister reported a total of 9,088 claims amounting to Rs 71.54 crore, with 2,345 claims settled for Rs 6.1 crore. The outstanding 6,748 claims, totalling Rs 65.29 crore, remain pending.

New excise policy in AP...

Continued from Page 1

The YSRCP government, which had promised a total ban on liquor during the 2019 election, reneged on this commitment, instead selling liquor at inflated prices, driving many into debt. Poor-quality liquor under their tenure, Ravindra added, led to widespread illness, including kidney problems and paralysis. Furthermore, he alleged that YSRCP leaders took control of distilleries, diverting Rs 19,000 crore over the past five years. Many people, according to the minister, became addicted to illicit liquor, non-duty-paid liquor, ganja, and drugs.

After the coalition government assumed power, a Cabinet Subcommittee was established, following the Chief Minister's instructions, to draft a new liquor policy aligned with the promises made before the elections. This sub-committee undertook a comprehensive study, reviewing the best practices from six states regarding public and private liquor shops, as well as joint government-private ventures. Ravindra stated that proposals will be presented to the Cabinet tomorrow, aimed at ensuring the availability of quality liquor at reasonable prices, with liquor

only being sold after undergoing 5 to 6 quality tests.

Minister Nadendla Manohar noted that feedback had been gathered from various organisations at the grassroots level, which has helped shape the new liquor policy, to be submitted to the Cabinet tomorrow.

He criticised the previous YSRCP government for enacting an excise policy that siphoned off state revenue by sharply increasing liquor prices. He highlighted that two GOs, 128 and 129, were issued on the same day, leading to an exorbitant rise in liquor prices. Under the new policy, funds will be allocated for de-addiction and counselling centres, with a focus on attracting investments and creating jobs in the state.

Minister Satya Kumar condemned the previous regime for endangering the middle class by providing inferior liquor for personal gain, resulting in the deaths of thousands. From 2014 to 2019, 36,000 cases of kidney and liver ailments were reported, while the number surged to over 56,000 from 2019 to 2024, a clear indication of poor liquor quality. He also revealed that the previous government raised a loan of Rs 13,000 crore in the name of AP Beverage Corporation.

Thunderstorms likely in north coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are expected in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh from 19 to 22 September, according to the Meteorological Centre on Tuesday.

In its daily weather report, the Centre stated that strong surface winds, with speeds ranging from 30 to 40 km/h, are likely to occur at isolated places across North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next five days.

Light to moderate rainfall is expected at one or two locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

The Southwest Monsoon has remained weak in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema. Rainfall was recorded at a few isolated places across these regions over the past 24 hours, the report added.

Damage to tourist sites to be fixed soon: Kandula



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tourism, Culture, and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh has announced that damaged tourist sites in Vijayawada will be restored. On Tuesday, the Minister inspected the affected areas, including Bhavani Island and Berm Park, as well as other tourist spots in Vijayawada.

Following recent heavy rains and floods, Minister Durgesh confirmed that immediate restoration work will be carried out at Bhavani Island, Beam Park, and other damaged tourist sites. He visited these locations by boat to assess the flood damage personally. The

Minister stated that the restoration efforts will focus on returning the affected tourist sites in Vijayawada and the NTR district to their previous state as quickly as possible. He mentioned that a detailed assessment of the damage is underway, and a full report will be discussed with the relevant authorities to plan and execute the necessary actions. Measures will be taken to revive tourism in Vijayawada.

Tourism Department Executive Director Padmavathy, OSD Chaitra Varshini, DVM Chaitanya, APTDC Executive Engineer Srinivas, and other officials accompanied Minister Durgesh during the inspection.

'AP poised to be nation's...

Continued from Page 1

He expressed the government's aim to make Andhra Pradesh a hub for electricity storage. "Andhra Pradesh will soon be recognised as the energy capital," he said, adding that large-scale battery storage systems, pumped hydro storage, and other advanced technologies will be introduced. He also mentioned that rooftop solar systems and decentralised microgrids will bring power generation closer to the people, enhancing energy security at the local level.

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State Govt aims to reduce HIV/AIDS cases to zero by 2030

Marathon 5K Red Run held to create awareness



Runners participating in the Marathon 5K Red Run organised by AP State AIDS Control Society in Vijayawada on Tuesday

(Photos: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar)

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of an awareness initiative on HIV/AIDS, the Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS) organised the Marathon 5K Red Run on the BRTS Road in Vijayawada on Tuesday. The run was conducted through the Meesala Rajeswara Rao footbridge to BRTS signal point.

APSACS Project Director Dr A Siri and NTR District Deputy Police Commissioner Gowthami Salini flagged off the run at the Meesala Rajeswara Rao footbridge.

Besides district-level winners of the marathon in three categories, various people, especially youngsters, took part in the run.

Speaking on the occasion, APSACS Project Director Dr Siri said that the primary objective of the run is to raise awareness and promote efforts to register HIV/AIDS cases to zero. She said people should not discriminate against HIV/AIDS victims, but show love and affection towards them.

She said there are around 10,000 HIV/AIDS patients in

Marathon 5K Red Run Winners:
Men's category: 1. A Pydappadu (NTR), 2. Ch Suresh (Srikakulam), 3. V Ramesh (ASR District)
Women: 1. L Mary (Visakhapatnam), 2. V Chenna Neela (Bapatla), 3. N Ramya Joy (Bapatla)
Transgender: 1. Mellaka Naresh (Manyam), 2. G Ramesh (Kurnool), 3. G Leelavathi (Kurnool)

the State. By conducting awareness programmes, the State government aims to decrease this number to zero by 2030. Various kinds of programmes are being conducted across the State with this objec-

tion, she explained.

HIV/AIDS is transmitted from mother to child, and also when a syringe is reused on multiple persons, she added.

Dr Siri further said the

national-level Marathon 10K Red Run will take place in Goa on November 10. The winners of the State-level Marathon 5K Red Run will represent the State in the national-level event. She presented cash prizes to the 5K Red Run winners, besides certificates and medals.

APSACS Joint Directors Bhagya Lakshmi, Dr Kameswar Prasad, Dr T Manjula, Deputy Director Dr Chakravarthi, ADM Dr Usha Rani, Coordinators Dr Rajendra Prasad, Adilingam, and others were present.



Swachh Andhra Corporation MD Gandham Chandrudu, Vijayawada Central MLA Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao and Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Dhyanaachandrar participating in the 'Swachhata Hi Seva programme' at the MBP Stadium in Vijayawada on Tuesday

A green start to 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the 'Swachh Bharat' campaign, another step has been taken towards a clean Vijayawada. Under the supervision of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programme commenced with grandeur at the Makinen Basava Punayya Stadium at Ajith Singh Nagar in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Swachh Andhra Corporation Managing Director (MD) Gandham Chandrudu and Vijayawada Central MLA Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao officially launched the programme. They released the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' poster in the presence of Swachh Vijayawada Brand Ambassador Dr G Samaram. Responding to the call of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra, several students and volunteers participated in the programme.

The participants took an oath to keep their surroundings clean. The guests planted trees as a symbol of environmental protection. They then picked up brooms and cleaned the surroundings as part of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign. The guests also flagged off a rally to raise public awareness on cleanliness.



Students and volunteers cleaning the streets at Ajith Singh Nagar in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Gandham Chandrudu highlighted the importance of 'Swachhata' in nature and culture. MLA Bonda Umamaheswara Rao stated that the Swachh Bharat Mission was started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a noble intention. The aim is to transform Andhra Pradesh into a cleaner and more beautiful place. He praised Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's efforts through the Janmabhoomi programme in awakening a sense of cleanliness among the public. "We should keep our homes and surroundings clean and extend that same care to Vijayawada," he said. He also emphasised the importance of planting trees, explaining that plants

absorb carbon dioxide and provide humans with oxygen, thus protecting the environment.

Additional Commissioner (Projects) KV Satyavati, Chief Medical Health Officer Dr P Ratnavali, Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) G Srujana, Deputy City Planner Zubin, Assistant Medical Health Officers, Zonal Commissioners, students from SRK Engineering College, Andhra Loyola College, MK Andhra School, Dr JDMC High School, SPSM School, and Vivekananda Centenary High School, police, and members of CVR Lions Club, DBRC NGO, and Amrutha Hastham Charitable Trust were present at the event.

NTPC Simhadri contributes Rs 1 cr for Anakapalli Indoor Stadium

Contribution aimed at supporting development and enhancing sports facilities in the region



PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

NTPC Simhadri has released the second instalment of Rs 1 crore to the District Collector of Anakapalli for the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Anakapalli Indoor Stadium. This contribution, part of NTPC's strategic activity, is aimed at supporting development and enhancing sports facilities in the region.

Sanjay Kumar Sinha, CGM-NTPC Simhadri, handed over the cheque to District Collector Vijaya Krishnan, accompanied by DGM (HR) Anikumar and K. Prakasa Rao, Manager (HR/CSR). Expressing his thoughts on the initiative, Sinha stated, "NTPC is deeply committed to contributing to the holistic development of the regions we operate in. The redevelopment of the Anakapalli Indoor Stadium is a vital project that aligns with our vision of enhancing infrastructure. We believe

this facility will play a crucial role in promoting sports and youth development in the district."

This contribution brings the total amount released for the project to Rs 1.65 crore. "We are grateful for NTPC's continued partnership in this important project. The redevelopment of the Indoor Stadium will provide state-of-the-art facilities for local athletes and youth, encouraging more participation in sports activities," the Collector said. NTPC Simhadri has consistently demonstrated its commitment to development and environmental protection.

The power plant has invested heavily in pollution mitigation and environmental conservation, spending nearly Rs 1,000 crore on equipment and systems. NTPC Simhadri has planted over seven lakh trees and contributed Rs 6 crore towards conservation of Olive Ridley turtles.

Ganta bats for preservation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant

Challenges YSRCP's performance on steel plant issue over the past five years

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Bheemili MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao stressed the significance of preserving the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant as a key policy, during a beach cleanup drive at Sagar Nagar on Tuesday, marking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday.

Speaking to the media here on Tuesday, Ganta Srinivasa Rao stated, "I resigned for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Now it's your turn to explain what you have done," as he challenged YSRCP's performance on the steel plant issue over the past five years. "If resignations are ineffective, it's your ignorance," he added, noting that 75 resignations had been secured in support of the steel plant cause.

"Governments respond when officials step down," Rao said, accusing YSRCP of hypocrisy by reminding them of their own resignations.



"Why did Jagan resign and call for by-elections? Why did they pledge to resign for special status? Those who speak on resignations need to understand their own history."

Rao credited the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) for blocking privatisation efforts during former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure. "The steel plant is not just an industry; it represents the pride and heart of the Telugu people," he remarked. Rao accused YSRCP of exploiting

his resignation politically, only accepting it after three years, during the run-up to the MLC elections.

Rao vowed to challenge the timing of his resignation in court, opting against accepting a two-month post. "If they continue with this divisive politics, they risk losing one of the 11 seats they currently hold and may end up with none in the next election," he warned YSRCP.

Emphasising the importance of cleanliness, Rao said, "On the call of Prime Minister Modi, Swachh Bharat programmes have been implemented nationwide. Visakhapatnam is now ranked fourth in cleanliness, and we are working hard to make it number one."

He praised the contribution of 200 GVMC employees who assisted in flood relief efforts in Vijayawada, expressing gratitude for their dedication.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The city police have successfully dismantled an online trafficking and prostitution network, leading to the arrest of five individuals and the rescue of three women. The operation targeted a website, findbestclass.com, designed to connect customers with agents and victims.

The police identified Ravada Kamaraju, also known as Deepak, a web designer, as the creator of findbestclass.com. "Kamaraju acted as a middleman," said Police Commissioner Dr. Shankhabrata Bagchi. "His website listed names and phone numbers of agents found on LOCANTO, a website notorious for prostitution facilitation. He

City Police bust online trafficking network, rescue victims

Five individuals arrested

provided detailed information and photos of women, receiving payment for his services, which he then distributed among the agents and victims."

A case was registered at the II Town Police Station. With Kamaraju's cooperation, cyber-crime investigators raided a rented house in Lawsons Bay Colony on September 17. The operation resulted in the arrest of Kamaraju

alongside Badi Ramu, Maturi Ramesh, Mangesh Ramesh Suryavanshi, and Alisha Subhadra. "Kamaraju confessed to his involvement and provided information on 34 agents engaged in trafficking," revealed a police spokesperson. "Based on his details, we were able to rescue three victims and apprehend two additional agents. The investigation is going on to capture the

remaining suspects."

The trafficking network employed a deceptive strategy. They created a seemingly legitimate website, collected women's details from various sources, and lured them to local hotels. Photos and contact information were then displayed on the website, facilitating prostitution through their network of agents for a fee.

Visakhapatnam set to take off with direct Dubai flights

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam is on the cusp of a major aviation milestone, with direct international flights to Dubai poised to take off soon. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, the city is set to join the ranks of Indian cities with direct connections to the Middle Eastern hub. "Discussions are ongoing with various airlines to enhance Visakhapatnam's connectivity, particularly as it is the largest commercial hub in Andhra Pradesh," said O. Naresh Kumar, vice-president of the Andhra Pradesh Air Travellers' Association (APATA). "Efforts to strengthen international flight connectivity have gained momentum since Rammohan Naidu assumed office as the Civil Aviation Minister."

IndiGo and Air Alliance are reportedly in talks to introduce direct flights to Dubai, which would offer a seamless travel experience for passengers heading to destinations like the United States and Europe. Currently, passengers are forced to take indirect routes, which are more time-consuming and costly. "The UDAN scheme is focused on creating a robust aviation ecosystem, ensuring that air travel is accessible to people

across regions," emphasised Rammohan Naidu, highlighting the government's commitment to developing airports in tier-two cities.

Naresh Kumar noted the strong occupancy rate for existing international flights from Visakhapatnam, partly due to visa-on-arrival options for destinations like Malaysia and Thailand. He also mentioned Indonesia's plans for a limited visa-free regime for Indian travellers. K. Vijay Mohan, president of the Tours and Travel Association of Andhra (TTAA), revealed that discussions are advancing for direct flights to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Colombo. "With the upcoming cruise terminal by the Visakhapatnam Port Authority, Visakhapatnam is on track to become a major international travel hub, especially with support from the State government."



Protect natural drinking water sources: Collector

Focus on identifying all water sources, including small streams, canals, and ponds

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has sounded the alarm on the need to protect and restore the district's natural drinking water resources. In a recent directive, he emphasised the urgency of taking robust measures to ensure that future drinking water needs are met seamlessly. "It is crucial that we take decisive action now to safeguard and rejuvenate our water

resources," Collector Harendhira Prasad stated. "I urge local residents and farmers to be actively involved in the conservation and management of these vital resources."

A review meeting held on Tuesday evening saw VMRDA Commissioner KS Viswanathan and Joint Collector K Mayur Ashok lead discussions on restoration and conservation efforts. Officials were instructed to collaborate with technical staff and cluster



officials to prepare cost estimates for the project by October 5. "Our focus is on

identifying all water sources, including small streams, canals, brooks, banks, and ponds," Viswanathan said.

The Collector stressed the necessity for coordinated efforts across departments to address future drinking water needs, highlighting silt removal, canal cleaning, and maintaining overall cleanliness. "We must ensure that canals and ponds are cleaned, and silt is removed to prevent any water shortages," he added.

The Collector also encouraged developing a comprehensive plan to enhance future water resources and exploring CSR funds for restoration projects. The VMRDA Commissioner echoed this sentiment, urging all departments to work diligently on restoration projects.

Encroachments identified during the re-survey include eight acres in Kapuluppada cluster, 11.99 acres in Narava, 1.5 acres in Venkatapuram, and half an acre in Gajuwaka,

Union Minister calls for garbage-free India

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Steel Bhupatiraju Srinivasa Varma has called upon people to keep their surroundings clean and take part in the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programme to make India a garbage-free country.

Swachhata Hi Seva programme was organized at Ambedkar Circle here on Tuesday in which the Union Minister, Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi and MLAs took part. The Union Minister participated in the formation of the human chain as part of the programme and took pledges with the college and school students.

Later the Union Minister, Collector and MLAs swept the road with booms near the railway underpass at Ambedkar Circle. Speaking on the occasion Union Minister Bhupatiraju Srinivasa Varma said the Central and State Governments are organizing programmes in the name of 'Swachhata Hi Seva' to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.

Everyone should take part in the goal of creating a garbage-free India. People and voluntary organizations should participate in large-scale programmes and help keep the surroundings clean. The Union Minister said that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu announced the establishment of the Swachha Andhra



Corporation. The Central government provides garbage vehicles and other required machinery to clean the State clean.

The Union Minister recalled that previously the Central government had undertaken the construction of toilets across the country as a movement and achieved the goals. He felt that without the participation of people, no programme would be successful.

Collector Nagarani said that people could lead a healthy life if the environment is hygienic. She mentioned that littering garbage is not a healthy habit and Swachhata Hi Seva programmes have been undertaken to bring about a change

from such habits. Children should also be taught good habits of not littering garbage in public places.

The Collector announced that large-scale cleanliness programmes are being undertaken in the government offices, gram panchayats and municipalities of the district under the Swachhata Hi Seva programs. She asked the authorities concerned, voluntary organisations and people to work hard to achieve the targets of the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programme being held from September 17 to October 2.

MLA Pulaparthy Ramanjaneyulu called upon people to keep their surroundings clean and hygienic, stating

that unhygienic conditions lead to diseases. He called upon people not to dump garbage on the roads.

Undi MLA K Raghurama Krishnam Raju underlined the need to create awareness among people on maintaining hygienic conditions. He stated that the effluents of septic tanks are released to the agriculture fields which makes the area unhygienic and appealed to the Collector to take steps to prevent the acts.

Joint Collector T Rahul Kumar Reddy, Additional SP V Bhima Rao and Municipal Commissioner K Ramachandra Reddy were among those who took part in the programme.

Kolleru sanctuary should be protected: CPI

PNS ■ ELURU

CPI leaders have demanded that the government take steps to protect the Kolleru Lake Abhayaranyam by removing the encroachments.

CPI national secretary K Narayana, State secretary K Ramakrishna and other leaders visited the flood-affected areas on Tuesday.

The CPI leaders visited Peda Yedlagadi, Chinayedlagadi and other affected villages and saw the Kolleru Lake.

Speaking on the occasion, CPI National Secretary K Narayana lamented that the Kolleru Lake and sanctuary had been encroached upon by the aquaculture mafia which resulted in the flooding of the low-lying areas. Narayana said that the villages of Kolleru Lake areas were inundated because of encroachments. In 1999, the then government declared 77,138 acres up to the 5th contour as Kolleru Lake as a sanctuary, he recalled.

In 2006, when YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the Chief Minister, illegal fish ponds were destroyed in an area of 25,000 acres in Kolleru Sanctuary and the CPI supported the move, he observed. The CPI national Secretary alleged that Kolleru Lake has



been encroached on again including 67 drains like Budameru, Ramileru, Tammileru, Chandraya Drain and Errakalva from above Kolleru Lake, adding that one lakh cusecs of water reaches Kolleru Lake floods and all the flood water merges into the sea through the Uputateru drain.

Narayana pointed out that due to the encroachments, the upper towns and villages are getting flooded and it is the responsibility of the Central and the State governments to clear them.

CPI State Secretary

Ramakrishna demanded that the Supreme Court guidelines should be implemented to clear the encroachments and protect the Kolleru Sanctuary. He announced that the CPI would launch an agitation unless the government responds. In the GO No. 120 which was passed in 1999, 77,136 acres had been declared as Kolleru Sanctuary and protected areas, the CPI leader claimed.

Ramakrishna revealed that he would go to Delhi and explain to the Central government about the encroachments

of the Kolleru Lakh sanctuary. CPI state Assistant Secretary Muppala Nageswara Rao described the Kolleru Lakh as a wonderful sweet water Lake which attracts hundreds of birds. He demanded the Kolleru Lake should be protected up to the fifth contour.

CPI senior leaders including Akkineni Vanaja, Dega Prabhakar, Mannava Krishna Chaitanya, AP Koulou Rythu Sangham state general secretary P Jamalaiah and other leaders were among those who accompanied the CPI leaders.

People should take part in clean environment drive: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has called upon people to take part in the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' programme which is being organised across the district to create awareness among people to make Eluru a 'garbage-free' district.

District Collector Vetri Selvi, Mayor Sk. Noorjahan, MLA Badeti Radha Krishnaiah and other officials took part in the programme organized at the old bus stand area here on Tuesday. A human chain was formed on the occasion. Later they took a pledge to keep the surroundings clean and not to dump garbage on roads.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Vetri Selvi said that everyone in the district should be part of cleanliness and service activities.



"All should be socially conscious about personal hygiene as well as environmental cleanliness. People should be informed about hygiene and health through awareness programs," the Collector mentioned. She called upon people to keep clean and hygienic in all villages, municipalities, government

offices, hostels, schools, and colleges in the Eluru district.

MLA Badeti Radhakrishnaiah Chanti said that sanitation is being carried out in the district efficiently to maintain hygienic environment. He appealed to the people to adopt maintaining hygienic conditions as a lifestyle.

Farmer electrocuted

PNS ■ KADAPA

A farmer was electrocuted when he was switching on an electric motor at his agriculture field at Ulimella village in Pulivendula mandal on Tuesday.

Police said that the deceased farmer Komma Somireddy tried to switch on a motor pump set in his field. He died instantaneously. The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for post-mortem.



Intermediate girl student ends life



PNS ■ ONGOLE

An Intermediate girl student committed suicide by hanging herself to the ceiling in her hostel room here on Tuesday.

Police said that the deceased Vaddimukkala Bhanu (17) was studying Intermediate first year at a private college by staying in the hostel which is located on Mangamuru Road

here. In the wee hours of Tuesday, she committed suicide by hanging to the ceiling fan in her hostel room. The reasons for her extreme step are yet to be ascertained, the police said. The deceased girl belonged to Pachchava village in Jarugumalli mandal. The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for post-mortem.

9th Class student ends life

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

A teenage girl studying in the 9th Class took her own life by hanging herself from the ceiling fan in her hostel room on Tuesday.

The police reported that Pallapu Jayalakshmi, aged 14, was a student at a private school and was staying in the hostel. She was found hanging from the ceiling fan in her room. Jayalakshmi was from Vadlamudi Vari Palem village in Rompicherla mandal.



The Two Town police have registered a case and sent the body to GGH for a post-mortem examination. The reason for her taking such a drastic step is yet to be ascertained, according to the police.

30 passengers injured as lorry collides with RTC bus

PNS ■ KADAPA

As many as 30 passengers were injured when a cement-laden lorry collided with an APSRTC bus at Medarapalli check-post in Ramapuram mandal in Annamaya district on Tuesday.

Police said that the APSRTC super luxury bus was going to Hyderabad from Veluru. As many as 30 passengers, travelling in the RTC

bus, were injured when the lorry collided with the bus. The injured were admitted to the Government General hospitals in Kadapa and Rayachoti.

After the accident, vehicles were stranded on either side of the road for a few kilometres on the Hyderabad bus. The ill-fated bus and the lorry were removed from the road using a JCB and the traffic was cleared.

'Hack AP Hackathon' will bring innovation in power distribution: APEPDCL CMD

Programme to be held at Andhra University on November 24



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Chairman and Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh Eastern Power Distribution Company Limited (APEPDCL), Prudhvi Tej Immadi, announced that the 'Hack AP Hackathon', an initiative designed to foster innovation among start-up companies, will be held at Andhra University on November 24. This 13th edition of the hackathon, organised in collaboration with A-Hub and EPDCL, aims to provide a prominent platform for innovators to address challenges and present creative solutions.

The event's poster was formally unveiled at EPDCL's corporate office on Tuesday evening. "The 'Hack AP Hackathon' is a unique opportunity for start-ups to showcase their innovative solutions, particularly those aimed at solving issues within the power distribution system," he said. "We are committed to supporting these innovators and believe

that their contributions can drive significant advancements in our industry."

The hackathon will feature a range of opportunities for participants, including prizes worth Rs. 6 lakh for exceptional ideas and solutions. CMD Immadi emphasised the inclusivity of the event, inviting not only start-ups but also students, entrepreneurs, professionals, and aspiring innovators to participate. "We encourage everyone to take advantage of this platform. There is no entry fee, and it's a great chance to collaborate with like-minded individuals and bring forward innovative solutions," he added.

Registration for the event is open until 9 pm on November 13. The event's announcement was attended by several key figures, including APEPDCL Director D. Chandram, CGM B. Ramachandra Prasad, A-Hub (AMCubation Centre) CEO Ravi Eswarapu, and AP Transco Retired CEO G. Bhimeswara Rao, all of whom expressed support for the initiative.

Saplings planted along national highway

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A plantation programme has been undertaken to beautify the national highways along with preserving the ecological balance, said RK Singh, Vijayawada Regional Officer, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). He said that NHAI is working hard to provide clean air to the people using the roads and also protect the environment along the national highways.

RK Singh expressed concern over noise pollution and air pollution increasing day by day as the number of vehicles is rising. He said that they are growing plants along all their national highways to reduce noise and air pollution and make the journey comfortable for motorists. During the tree plantation programme organised by NHAI on Chinnava avutapalli - Gollapudi Bypass Road being constructed by Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) at Chinnava Avutapalli near Vijayawada on Tuesday, he said that plants reduce noise, dust, and toxic gases released by the vehicles.

NHAI Vijayawada Project Director V Sridhar Reddy said: "If we protect the environment by growing plants, it is like serving the country. Everyone should plant saplings and keep the surroundings clean."

Computers were introduced in India by Tata Group, not Rajiv: KTR

'We will certainly remove Rajiv's statue from its present spot at the Secretariat area'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Lashing out at Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for stating that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced computers in India, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said that it was the Tata Group which introduced computers in India in 1955.

KTR ridiculed the CM saying that Charles Babbage invented the computer and not Rajiv Gandhi.

Celebrating National Integration Day on September 17 at the Telangana Bhavan, KTR said that the CM installed Rahul Gandhi's father's statue in front of the secretariat instead of the statue of Telangana Thalli. Revanth installed Rajiv Gandhi's statue to raise his stock with Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, KTR said.

"Revanth insulted Telangana Thalli. He installed Rajiv Gandhi's statue at the place meant for the Telangana Thalli statue. We will shift the Rajiv Gandhi statue to Gandhi Bhavan respectfully if we come to power. Revanth should install Rajiv Gandhi's statue in his Jubilee Hills residence if he



is interested. I am saying on this Ganesh Nimajjanam Day that we will certainly remove the Rajiv Gandhi statue installed near the Secretariat," he said. KTR said that the state is facing a medical emergency as people are suffering from all kinds of fevers. However, the CM is focusing only on criticising KCR and the BRS keeping governance aside.

Revanth celebrated Peoples Governance Day on September 17 even though there is no rule regarding that in the state, he added.

He said that Revanth is concentrating on diversion tactics and that Revanth should concentrate on governance at least now. He said the BRS is the main opposition party and

that it will monitor the government till it implements all the assurances it had given to the people. KTR said that some people who don't know history distorted the history of September 17 for the sake of politics and that Revanth wasted nine months criticising KCR. Revanth should implement the '420' assurances given to the people and if possible supply power and Rythu Bandhu funds like the BRS government, he said.

"Enforce the law in Hyderabad. Petrol bunks are not giving petrol as bills have not been paid. There are no chalk pieces in schools and former sarpanches are worried as their bills are not being cleared," he said.

CPI demands Vigilance probe into boats ramming barrage

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPI national secretary Dr K. Narayana has called for a Vigilance investigation into the incident involving sand boats that collided with the gates of the Prakasam Barrage during the recent Krishna River floods. He has urged the Vigilance and Enforcement Department to probe and uncover any potential criminal networks behind the alleged sabotage.

Dr Narayana, accompanied by CPI State secretary K. Ramakrishna and other party leaders, visited flood-affected areas across the combined Krishna and West Godavari districts, starting from Kolleru Lake. They inspected illegal encroachments around Kolleru and later examined the Enikepadu Under Tunnel (UT) and the Prakasam Barrage.

Addressing the media, Dr Narayana stressed the importance of a comprehensive investigation into the circum-

stances surrounding the collision of the boats with the Prakasam Barrage gates. He called for stringent measures against those found responsible and dismissed speculation regarding the potential damage to the barrage gates, questioning the credibility of such claims. Dr Narayana noted that significant damage to the gates would indicate serious issues with the barrage's overall condition and advised against sensationalist reporting.

Furthermore, he pointed out that the Enikepadu UT, built during British rule, was inadequately designed to manage flood discharge effectively. He emphasised the necessity to increase its height and remove accumulated silt to enhance its floodwater management capacity.

Other CPI leaders, including Muppala Nageswara Rao, G. Obulesu, Akkineni Vanaja, Ravula Venkaiah, and P. Jamalaiah, joined him on the visit.



ACROSS THE STATES



Man drowns in Beas after Ganesh idol immersion

A person drowned in the Beas river in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur district on Tuesday and another man is missing, police said here. They said it happened near Choru village when people were taking a bath in the river after the immersion of Lord Ganesh idols. According to eye witnesses, while people were coming out of the river, Soni realised Vinay Kumar was missing and jumped into the water to look for him. He, however, became trapped in the iron bars of an idol and drowned in the river, they said. Soni was fished out by rescuers and taken to the Nadaun hospital, where he was pronounced dead, according to police. Nadaun police in-charge Babu Ram said police were conducting a search operation for Vinay Kumar of Natti village who is feared drowned. Police have registered a case and an investigation is on, he added.



NCC launches its first air wing in Udhampur

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) has launched the first flying Air Squadron in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district to provide ground-breaking opportunities for students of the Union Territory in aviation and related fields, a defence spokesman said. This initiative marks a significant step in enhancing educational opportunities for youth in the region. "Schools and colleges are encouraged to apply for enrollment in the NCC Air Wing," the spokesman said. This new initiative aims to provide a unique and enriching experience for students from schools and colleges across the state. "NCC has launched its first air squadron (flying) in Udhampur. The NCC Air Wing is designed to offer students unparalleled exposure to aviation and related fields, fostering a deeper understanding and interest in these areas," the spokesman said.



7,500 idols immersed in Mumbai on last day

More than 7,500 idols of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Gauri were immersed in Mumbai as of Tuesday evening as devotees in the city and the rest of Maharashtra bid farewell to their beloved elephant-headed deity. No untoward incident was reported anywhere during the immersion, said officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Of the idols immersed in the sea, lakes and artificial ponds in the city by 6 pm, 7,227 were household Ganapatis, 300 belonged to 'sarvajnik mandals' (community groups) and about 50 were of Goddess Gauri. Of these, 2,880 idols were immersed in artificial ponds. The immersion procession of 'Lalbaugcha Raja', a famous 'sarvajnik' (public) Ganesh in central Mumbai who draws lakhs of devotees during the festival, reached Chinchpokli around 6.30 pm while on its way to Girgaum chowpatty or beach.

Sachin Pilot condemns Union Min Bittu's remarks on Rahul

Condemning the recent remarks made by Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu against Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Tuesday demanded an apology from both the minister and the central government. He said the "derogatory" comments on the leader of opposition are "unacceptable". "The language used by Union Minister Bittu against Rahul Gandhi is not befitting. He should apologise because he is a minister. The government should apologise. It is not right to use such a cheap language against the leader of opposition," he told reporters in Rajasthan's Dausa.

Kejriwal to focus on galvanising AAP cadre

Arvind Kejriwal, who resigned as Delhi chief minister on Tuesday, is likely to focus on galvanising the AAP cadre and rebuilding trust among the people before the assembly polls, a senior functionary said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) cadre has "weakened" due to Kejriwal's prolonged arrest on corruption charges, the functionary added. Kejriwal, who is also the AAP convener, is going to hold a massive poll campaigning in Haryana, where the election is scheduled on October 5. He may also hold road shows in places where the party hopes to do well in Jammu and Kashmir where the elections are happening in three phases till October 1, the functionary said. According to a senior party

KOLKATA RAPE-MURDER CASE
CBI status report 'disturbing'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it was disturbed by the findings given in a status report filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the rape and murder of trainee doctor at R G Kar government hospital in Kolkata but refused to divulge the details, saying any disclosure may jeopardise the ongoing investigation.

Seeking a status report from the CBI on its probe into financial irregularities allegedly committed by jailed former principal of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh, the top court, referring to the rape and murder case, said the agency is not "sleeping over" the investigation and it needs to be given time to "unearth the truth."

"What the CBI has revealed in the report is really disturbing. What you are flagging is of utmost concern. We ourselves are concerned, CBI has flagged it for us. We are ourselves disturbed by what we have read," the top court



top court directed that the "valuable" inputs furnished by him should be duly considered by the investigating officer.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, assured the court that the investigating agency will maintain contact with the parents of the deceased junior doctor and keep them informed about the ongoing probe to assuage their genuine concerns.

As the hearing commenced, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the West Bengal

government, sought stopping of the live proceedings in the case. He alleged that women lawyers working in his chamber were facing threats of acid attacks and rape.

"I have great concerns at what is happening. What happens when you livestream matters like this which has huge emotive implications. We are not representing the accused. We appear for the state government and as soon as the court is making a comment our reputation is getting destroyed overnight. We have 50 years of reputation," Sibal said.

The top court assured Sibal it would step in if there were any threats to lawyers and others.

"We will not stop the live streaming of the proceedings. It is in public interest," the bench said.

During the hearing, the apex court took objection to the West Bengal government's 'Rattier Saathi' programme which prescribes night duty avoidance for women doctors and says that their duty should not exceed 12 hours at a time.

HARYANA POLLS

BJP aims for hat-trick
Resurgent Cong poses challenges

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

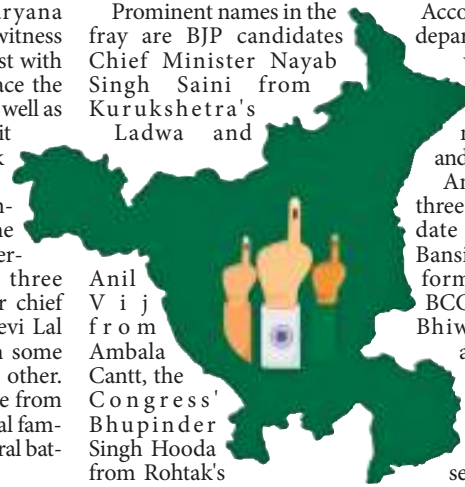
The high-stakes Haryana assembly election will witness a multi-cornered contest with the ruling BJP set to face the anti-incumbency test as well as a resurgent Congress as it looks to script a hat-trick in the state.

Among the 1,031 candidates in the fray for the October 5 polls are several kin of Haryana's three famous 'Lals' -- former chief ministers Bansi Lal, Devi Lal and Bhajan Lal -- with some even taking on each other. The entry of a few more from other prominent political families has made the electoral battle an interesting one.

Besides the BJP and the Congress, AAP has also fielded candidates for the polls. The Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) and Azad Samaj Party are contest-

ing the election in alliance, as are the INLD and the BSP.

Prominent names in the fray are BJP candidates Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini from Kurukshetra's Ladwa and



Anil Vij from Ambala Cantt, the Congress' Bhupinder Singh Hooda from Rohtak's Garhi Sampla-Kiloi and Vinesh Phogat from Julana, JJP's Dushyant Chautala from Uchana Kalan, INLD's Abhay Singh Chautala from Ellenabad

and AAP's Anurag Dhanda from Kalayat.

According to the election department, over two crore voters are eligible to cast their votes in the state -- 1,07,75,957 men, 95,77,926 women and 467 transgender voters.

Among the kin of the three 'Lals', Congress candidate Anirudh Chaudhry, Bansi Lal's grandson and former treasurer of the BCCI, is contesting from Bhiwani's Tosham seat against his cousin and ex-MP Shruti Choudhry, fielded by the BJP.

From the Dabwali seat, Devi Lal's grandson Aditya Devi Lal, an INLD candidate, will take on the JJP's Digvijay Singh Chautala, the great-grandson of the former deputy prime minister.

Rahul playing politics over Agnipath scheme, says Shah

PNS ■ LOHARU (HARYANA)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over the Agnipath military recruitment scheme, saying he is playing politics over the issue.

Shah also alleged that Gandhi and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah have an agenda to release all terrorists after the (Jammu and Kashmir) elections and hold talks with Pakistan.

He was addressing his first rally for October 5 Haryana polls in favour of BJP's Loharu candidate J P Dalal.

Shah lashed out at the Congress for not implementing the 'One Rank One Pension' scheme and said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who implemented it.

"The Agniveer scheme has been implemented. The Congress especially Rahul 'Baba'



Shah lashed out at the Congress for not implementing the 'One Rank One Pension' scheme and said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who implemented it. 'The Agniveer scheme has been implemented. The Congress especially Rahul 'Baba' (Rahul Gandhi) is playing politics,' he alleged.

(Rahul Gandhi) is playing politics," he alleged.

He said the Home department and the state police forces in the country gave 20 per cent reservation to the Agniveers.

"I want to tell Haryana's youth that 'Hooda and company', whose job is to spread lies, are saying what will happen to Agniveers later...but what I say, I do it," he said.

"If any Agniveer returns, he will not be without a job and the BJP takes responsibility for

this," he said. Further attacking the Congress while referring to polls in Jammu and Kashmir, Shah said Rahul 'Baba' and Omar Abdullah have an agenda to release all terrorists after the elections and hold talks with Pakistan.

At the rally, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, party's Haryana in-charge Biplab Kumar Deb, MP Kiran Choudhary and other senior leaders were also present.

SC halts 'bulldozer justice' till Oct 1
Says illegal demolition against ethos of Constitution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There will be no demolition of properties, including of those accused of crime, till October 1 without its permission, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while observing that even one instance of illegal demolition was against the "ethos" of the Constitution.

A bench of Justices B R Gawai and K V Viswanathan clarified that its order will not be applicable to unauthorised structures on public roads, footpaths, railways lines or public places like water bodies etc.

"Stand over to October 1 at the request of the Solicitor General. However, we direct that till the next date, no demolition without seeking leave of this court," the bench said.



"Even if there is one instance of an illegal demolition... it is against the ethos of our Constitution," the top court observed while hearing pleas which alleged that properties of accused were being demolished in several states illegally.

The bench also referred to statements made after the September 2 hearing in the

matter during which the apex court had said it proposes to lay down certain guidelines on the issue that would be enforceable across the country.

"After that order, there have been statements that the bulldozer will continue... and it all depends in whose hands the steering is," the bench said, adding it was refraining from

saying anything further on that.

"Mr Mehta (solicitor general), after these directives are laid down, we will seek your assistance on this glorification and grandstanding... You will assist us on how to stop this. If necessary, we will ask the Election Commission also," the bench said.

Referring to the glorification, grandstanding and justification of the demolition action, the bench said, "Now, whether this should happen in our country... Whether the Election Commission can be noticed so that some kind of a thing can be laid down?"

At the outset, a counsel appearing for the petitioners said even after the September 2 hearing demolition was carried out in the country.

Congress dwindling force in Tripura: CM Manik Saha

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday described the Congress as a "dwindling force" trying to maintain its relevance in the state's political landscape with assistance from the communists.

"The Congress has only three legislators in the state, but they are not united. One MLA is attempting to portray himself as a significant leader by making baseless allegations in the Assembly," Saha said during the inauguration of the state-level Swachhata Seva Campaign 2024 in Gomati district.

The two-week programme, launched on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday, will culminate on October 2.

In the recent Assembly session, Congress MLA Sudip



Roy Barman had accused the state's Tribal Welfare Minister Bikash Debbarma and an officer on Special Duty (OSD) of corruption.

Claiming that the Congress has become a "dwindling force", Saha criticised Roy Barman for forming an alliance with the communists to retain his Agartala seat.

"He is always busy on the phone, but whenever there is a problem, his mobile is off. He is a switched-off leader," Saha said.

Army starts two-day 'drone-a-thon'

PNS ■ LEH

The Indian Army on Tuesday started a two-day 'drone-a-thon' to revolutionise the operations and provide tactical superiority in difficult terrains.

"In a bold stride towards redefining military capabilities in high-altitude environments, the Indian Army, in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), conducted the highly anticipated HIM-DRONE-A-THON 2," officials said.

They said this "pioneering initiative" the power of cutting-edge indigenous technology, focusing on enhancing operational efficiency and tactical superiority in some of the most challenging terrain on the planet through the use of drones within the ambit of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

"Drones are increasingly playing a significant role in modern warfare as seen in recent con-



They said this "pioneering initiative" the power of cutting-edge indigenous technology, focusing on enhancing operational efficiency and tactical superiority in some of the most challenging terrain on the planet through the use of drones within the ambit of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

licts in Ukraine and Israel. The roles are expanding across various domains to include surveillance, logistics, precision strikes,

communication etc. Their growing role reflects their versatility, effectiveness and potential to transform military operations,"

ed for their innovations and participation. Special recognition was given to the winners in the logistics and FPV categories. These products spanned across domains of surveillance, logistics, swarm and FPV (first-person view) operations," they added.

The extreme terrain of Ladakh provided an authentic test-bed for validating the performance and global applicability of these systems, opening doors for India to become a key player in the global drone industry, the officials said.

The event gave an opportunity to the Indian Army to short-list a number of products for potential procurement while improvements were also recommended for a few products.

The event was part of the Indian Army's vision for 2024 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption', highlighting the essential role that drone technology will play in future military operations.

the officials said.

The drone-a-thon is being conducted in Ladakh at altitudes exceeding 15,000 feet, and offers an exclusive platform for over 20 drone manufacturers to showcase a spectrum of drone solutions designed for high-altitude.

"All participants were felicitat-



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PAPER WITH PASSION

First 100 days of Modi 3.0

As PM Modi marks 100 days, his Govt has achieved significant milestones, but new challenges demand nuanced approach

As the Narendra Modi-led NDA Government completes 100 days in office, a reflective assessment reveals notable accomplishments, emerging challenges, and key shifts from its earlier tenures. The Government continues to advance its vision of a "New India," driven by development, global leadership, and inclusive growth. However, the complexities of governance and the evolving political landscape have also introduced fresh hurdles that demand careful navigation. The biggest shift has been in the composition of the Government. Though PM Modi retained his previous cabinet with minor changes but the reliance on allies makes his third term depart from his earlier two terms where he had complete say in governance and policy making. The coalition compulsions led to roll back on 'lateral entry' and rethink on 'broadcast bill.' However, there is continuity in the policies. One of the key achievements of Modi's third term is the continued expansion of India's global footprint. His high profile visit to Ukraine and Russia



where he implored the two sides to "to sit down and talk" won him praise. Besides, furthering his "Act East" initiative got a push through his visit to Singapore and Brunei. Indeed, the government has also taken bold steps in shaping foreign policy, such as balancing its relations with the US, Russia, and China. In its first 100 days the Government approved projects worth Rs 3 lakh crore, focusing on roads, railways, ports, and airways. Capital expenditure was raised to Rs 11.11 lakh crore to spur job creation. Significant efforts were made in the agriculture sector, with Rs 20,000 crore distributed to 9.3 crore farmers under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, while MSP hikes

benefited 12 crore farmers. The GENESIS program was launched to support startups in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, alongside a Rs 2 lakh crore package for youth employment, targeting 41 million over five years. Women empowerment saw the recognition of over 1 crore 'Lakshmi Didi.' On security front, a peace deal was brokered in Tripura, and steps were taken to counter cybercrime with initiatives like the 'Samanvay' platform and a Cyber Fraud Mitigation Center. Despite big ticket announcements and policy decision the Government will have to be mindful of the challenges that must be addressed immediately. Despite a development push, India faces rising inflation, particularly in food prices, affecting the average citizen. The political climate has become increasingly polarised. The government is facing opposition over economic policies, controversial legislative moves like the Uniform Civil Code, and rising social tensions. The upcoming assembly elections, especially in Jammu and Kashmir would be a referendum of its policies. The Government did well to built upon the successes of its earlier terms, but now it faces new challenges that demand nuanced responses. From fortifying India's global position to tackling domestic concerns like inflation, economic growth, and social unity, the Government's approach will be crucial for shaping the future of the nation.

PICTALK



Devotees take part in a procession to immerse an idol of Lord Ganesha at the end of the Ganapati festival, in Mumbai PTI

Kejriwal's resignation: Theatrics at its best

Beneath Kejriwal's impassioned speech lay contradictions, omissions, and questionable parallels aimed at swaying the electorate

Kejriwal's expertise in political charade was on show when he spoke to his party members on 15th September, two days after being released from Tihar jail on interim bail granted by the Supreme Court subject to stringent, limiting conditions. He made this out to be an acquittal when it was only a reprieve and an initial indictment. He started with Vande Mataram, Bharat Mata ki Jai, and Inqalab Zindabad, invoking Hindutva, patriotism, and the anti-government revolutionary sentiment of our freedom struggle. He likened himself to Bhagat Singh by quoting from his diary and drawing parallels with the legendary freedom fighter. He sought the sympathy of the electorate by making out the Central Government to be more cruel than the British rulers and to be wanting to destroy him and AAP. He made himself out to be the Messiah of Democracy trying to save the Constitution, which is why, he claimed, he had not resigned earlier. The coup de grace was his



announcement that over the next two days, he would quit as Delhi's CM and not sit on the CM's chair until and unless the public judges him to be honest. He reminded his audience of the Agnipareekshathat Sita had to undergo, after Lord Rama's 14 years-long exile, to prove her innocence. He was, he said, willing to undergo a similar trial-by-fire to prove his innocence by seeking the public's mandate. Not even once, did he name the BJP or Modi; both were subsumed in the innocuous pronoun "they". It was a masterly performance of demagoguery. In the hoodwinking of the Indian masses, Kejriwal is miles ahead of other politicians. He evokes emotions and

obscures facts, sometimes even twisting them. Consider these omissions and contradictions. If Kejriwal wanted the people's verdict, to assuage his "conscience", he should have resigned much earlier, when he was sent to Tihar. Why do it after the SC has severely limited your powers as CM? Bhagat Singh was fighting for the country's independence and was accused of sedition, Kejriwal for his political survival after being found prima facie guilty of corruption by court. Bhagat Singh was hanged by the British rulers. Gol is unlikely to do that with Kejriwal. The parallel drawn was specious, the basis given — of the undelivered letter to LG — crafty. He boasted of the freebies he has been able to give because of his uncorrupted government — free electricity and free bus travel for women — unmindful of the burden that the honest taxpayer has to bear to fund his vote-buying spree and the damage it does to the national capital's exchequer.

His claim of improved medical care and better government school education would be contested by many Delhi-ites. His mohallaclinics are ministered to by unqualified doctors who visit on an ad hoc basis. Many government schools are short of teachers and have poor infrastructure. As always, he appealed to the emotions of the gullible electorate of the slums, announcing that he would not sit on the CM's chair unless and until the public judges him to be honest by voting him into power in the next assembly elections. Surely, he would have known that, given the serious corruption charges against him, his honesty would be judged not by the common man on sentiment but by erudite judges, well-versed in law, based on concrete evidence admissible in law.

(The writer, a former banker, has turned in his mellow years to column-writing out of his love for nonviolence, social harmony and universal brotherhood; views are personal)



PRADEEP BAJPAI

Madam — The Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's decision to resign to the post is not surprising since the Supreme Court's bail conditions have restricted his access both to the physical office to the CM office and its official authority. But Kejriwal's strategy to face elections and secure fresh mandate in order to get the "certificate of honesty" from the people isn't easy. Last time Kejriwal resigned as CM, he returned to office with a landslide win. Much water, and waste, has flown in the Yamuna since. Over it, hangs almost a decade's worth of anti-incumbency. This can't simply be wished away by replaying the resignation card. AAP has tasted success by getting accorded as national party. While it has a super majority in the Punjab assembly and five seats in Gujarat, Delhi is crucial to further its political base and Kejriwal's ambitions. In BJP, it has a relentless opposition and the party remains in good health. In the other hand, AAP doesn't have this luxury at all. As its principal campaigner, Kejriwal has to deliver big. But he now doesn't enjoy the unblemished image being an accused in multi crore excise scandal. Only time will decide the fate and future of the Kejriwal and his party. But in all this drama, the capital's citizens find themselves lost and unheard. At the end of elections, the national capital will hope to have a normal govt.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

AMIT SHAH CAMPAIGNS IN JAMMU

Madam — Reference: HM shah to wrap up first round of High voltage campaign in Jammu (September 16). The conclusion of HM Shah's high-voltage campaign in Jammu marks a significant moment in the region's political landscape. This campaign has seen fervent discussions on development, security, and local concerns, bringing national attention to the area. However, it's crucial that the energy from this campaign translates into tangible actions that address the everyday struggles of the people.

(The writer, a former banker, has turned in his mellow years to column-writing out of his love for nonviolence, social harmony and universal brotherhood; views are personal)

Myanmar Junta on the backfoot

For the first time, the military junta is losing ground to a powerful alliance of Ethnic Armed Organisations and the People's Defence Force



ASHOK K MEHTA

On 3 September, the palace in Mandalay, (HQ Central Command), the second biggest city in Myanmar after Yangon, faced its first rocket attack. The Southwest Rakhine state could fall shortly with two strategic ports overlooking the Bay of Bengal-Sittwe leased to India and Kyaukphu leased to China- and Manaung left in Junta's possession in Rakhine. Military coups in the past have not failed in Myanmar. It has the biggest military in southeast Asia not unfamiliar with coups. Thailand holds the dubious record of 32 coups since 1932. More than nearly four years later, Gen Min Aung Hlaing-led Junta in Myanmar is fighting a losing battle but this time not against Buddhist monks and civil society but against a well-coordinated alliance of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAO), local militia and the new People's Defence Force born out of ousted Aung San Suu Kyii's National League for Democracy which is calling itself the National Unity Government (NUG). They are the Resistance.

The junta had so far managed rebels and revolts seeking autonomy/independence through ceasefire agreements. The junta is a formidable triservice force adept in counter-insurgency. For it to be flailing is surprising. Battlefield losses have been unprecedented in both territory and manpower through battle fatigue and fighting its people has been taxing on the psyche of soldiers and Generals. An implosion is no longer fanciful. Reliable sources place 70 per cent loss of territory. The Resistance does not control all the territory that the Junta retreated from as it does not have holding capability. But it does control key sectors along the borders that the junta ceded due to surrender/desertions. Stretched for troops Junta has followed a scorched earth policy: indiscriminate bombings by artillery, helicopters and aircraft to avenge defeat that UNHRC's Volcker Tolker(?) has called genocidal. This has led to nearly 400,000 IDPs with many having crossed over into neighbouring Bangladesh, India, China and



Thailand. Junta has had to abandon trade routes to China in the northern Shan state; along the Karenni National Army-controlled border with Thailand at Myawaddy; in Rakhine state with Bangladesh and parts of Mizoram in Chin state and in Sagaing region opposite all of Manipur except Ukhrul and Moreh that PDF controls.

The Kuki-Zo-Chin people in Chinland are ethnically similar to Mizos. Chinese have had active links with the Arakan Army in Rakhine state which traverses India's Multi-Modal Kaladan river connectivity project originating in India-operated Sittwe Port in Rakhine, the key to India's Act East policy. So, with the Junta forced out of Chin, Rakhine, Sagaing and Magwae, contiguous with the Indian border, New Delhi must engage these new power wielders. But it is dithering which could lead to Chinese fishing in troubled waters in a region where Manipur is breaking into a new dangerous phase of inter-ethnic conflict.

Earlier in September embattled Gen Hlaing warned civilians in territory captured by Resistance that it will soon counterattack to regain ground. He also declared the Three Brotherhood Alliance in Shan state as a terrorist organization. It is these groups including the Arakan Army, that have captured the prestigious Army's North East Command at Lashio and in

THE JUNTA IS A FORMIDABLE TRISERVICE FORCE ADEPT IN COUNTER-INSURGENCY. FOR IT TO BE FLAILING IS SURPRISING. BATTLEFIELD LOSSES HAVE BEEN UNPRECEDENTED IN BOTH TERRITORY AND MANPOWER THROUGH BATTLE FATIGUE AND FIGHTING ITS PEOPLE HAS BEEN TAXING ON THE PSYCHE OF SOLDIERS AND GENERALS

Shan state and now Mandalay's Central Command headquarters, is threatened.

How much longer the junta can fight on multiple fronts is unclear even as Gen Hlaing has continually extended the emergency while advocating holding of election which is most unlikely. He is disinclined to use the good offices of pro-Junta countries in ASEAN like Laos, its current chair, Cambodia and Thailand to start a dialogue which the PDF and EAOs will reject as they see the balance of advantage with them. With the economy in grave distress, this war cannot go on indefinitely.

China has and continues to play a crucial role in supporting the Junta and selected EAOs in the north and west. China and Russia are the junta's main sources of military hardware though India too has provided non-lethal military equipment. Army tanks, artillery and small arms are Chinese. So are most of the transport and fighter aircraft. The same goes for the Navy though India has provided Coast Guard vessels.

Russian MiG 29 and Su30 aircraft have been serviced by HAL and India has provided aviation fuel which is a sanctioned item. New Delhi has called for a ceasefire and a return to a democratic process but its support for the Junta is undiminished as it burnt its fingers two decades ago in supporting NLD in preference to

the Junta which led to Chinese ascendancy. Although the Junta has a love-hate relationship with Beijing it is forced to take its support due to its proximity and domination of the economy. Still, India must review its policy due to the changed ground reality and engage the forces that control the border areas.

A working relationship with the Arakan Army and Chinland authorities is essential to restore stability to troubled Manipur. It should also consider establishing humanitarian corridors to provide succour and relief to people bombed out of their habitat. India can keep reciting the import of its Act East policy to Asian neighbours but its implementation is contingent upon the operationalisation of connectivity projects like the trilateral highway through Myanmar to Thailand and the Multi-Modal Kaladan river project from Sittwe Port to Paletwa and on to Mizoram. India's eastern and western flanks are both vulnerable especially the east which is sandwiched between Bangladesh and Myanmar. A triangulation of threats from Pak-China-Bangladesh cannot be ruled out.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

India brokers peace



As a further escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict appears likely, India's possible role in peace negotiations have come into sharp focus, in the wake of recent diplomatic activity, mainly of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Ajit

Doval. Given India's unique placement on the spectrum of positions on the conflict, based on its historic, strong ties with Russia, can New Delhi belatedly step up as a possible peacemaker in the conflict persisting for well over two years? The Ukraine's Ambassador to India Oleksandr Polishchuk said that Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had proposed a retrospective move by India to join the peace process ahead of plans for a second Peace Summit in October or November this year, and that Ukraine had more "ambition" than for India to play "post office" between the leaders. We hope that PM Modi's visit to Ukraine and conversations with President Zelenskyy indicate India's support for the peace-building effort.

Jayanthi Ramani | Coimbatore

Promises made should be followed by clear timelines and transparent policies, ensuring that the political enthusiasm doesn't fade post-election. The people of Jammu need long-term solutions, not just campaign rhetoric. It's vital that this momentum is maintained, and leaders remain accountable to the commitments they've made during this charged political engagement. As the campaign wraps up, eyes will be on the next steps and whether real progress follows the promises made.

Priya Gupta | Kushinagar

ALL LANGUAGES MUST BE TREATED ALIKE

Madam — This is in response to the news report titled "Hindi, other languages are friends: Shah" (September 15). Based upon my "limited knowledge", ideal friends would share even a piece of bread equally, how tiny crumb it might be! But the language of few North Indian states are so "friendly" that it dominates over all other languages in this huge democratic land of diversities not only in Centralised sphere, but also in pusillanimous states like West Bengal where Hindi gets brutally imposed

in Railway Banking Postal sectors. Hindi is so "friendly" with others that it enjoys more Central fund for its "promotion" than the amount allotted for rest of the Indian languages put together! Yet, it remains the fact that there lies no provision of any "National Language" in the Indian Constitution. Hindi is just another language of this multi-lingual India; the latter's right over the country is neither superior nor inferior to the other languages. Thus, those who zealously project Hindi as "numero uno" and imposing it over all are merely assaulting the very basis of the Constitution — posing a fatal assault upon all norms of democracy and equality. The Government should see to it that all funds related to promotion of languages do not get usurped by Hindi. Thus if an equitable distribution of Central resources is ensured, it would benefit the cause of all languages and dialects to a great extent.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

LEARNING IS A LIFELONG PROCESS

Life is a continuous education, every experience shapes our understanding



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

From the time we are born till the day we die; we keep on learning something in life. Irrespective of whether we want it or not, we can't stop learning because there is no existence of life without the process of learning. Our whole life is a bundle of experience and in turn, an education, where we all are in ever learning mode, every moment and everywhere. As conscious beings, having sense organs, also known as the five doors of knowledge, we, by our very nature, cannot remain without creating perception.

Our ears are always open, so we are constantly listening. The words that go through our ears to our brains are like lessons that we receive constantly. Similarly, we see the whole world through our eyes which also results in learning good things as well as bad things. The electrical impulses that we receive through our skin or taste buds, reach our brain which is also a kind of learning for us. However, one must understand the fact that all the above mentioned processes of learning take place by awareness or consciousness that is present in our brain without which learning is next to impossible. Once we finish our studies, we feel that the education phase of our life is finally over and now it's time for us to go out in the world & attain the highest level of success. But doesn't this sound too casual & an odd idea? That only a quarter of our lives should be devoted to learning, and then we should simply rest on our laurels for the remaining part of our lives? Well!! It is said that learning never exhausts the mind, so why do we restrict the process of learning until we are pursuing formal education? Just because you've



finished your formal education, doesn't mean that your education is over! It's quite an erroneous idea, but unfortunately, the majority of us have absorbed it subconsciously. Remember!! It is only a dead body that ceases to participate in the process of learning & not the ones who resonate with life. Our life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us enlightened, even though many times it is hard to realize this. We must always remember that the setbacks and grieves that we endure help us in our marching onward. Hence, we must always make it a point to learn something about everything and everything about something. Throughout our journey of life, we constantly learn some such lessons that result in the formation of sanskaras according to our karma. Hence, if we know clearly that learning is unavoidable and that we are always learning good or bad things, resulting in good or bad sanskaras that lead to happiness or sorrow, then we will never say that we have no time or no interest in learning. Likewise, if we know that our sanskaras go along with our life after life, then we will be more careful in learning good things and in giving up bad things because education seems to be an elixir that can bring us a healthy mind & body along with a lasting fruitful life. We all need to be enlightened & we urgently need to improve the quality of our thoughts, speech and actions. Since we cannot avoid learning, even if we wish, why don't we then learn to inculcate, in us, moral values, virtues or good qualities so that we may make progress towards perfection? What do we gain by making lame excuses, saying that we have no time or that we are not interested? What is it that we are interested in? Are we interested in our downfall, decay or doom? In sinking and drowning deep down in the quagmire of vices, evils and mud? Remember!! The more we delay, the worse will be our condition and the more difficult it be to rectify our ways.

The process of learning, as was said earlier, is ceaseless and continuous and hence someone has rightly said "we learn everyday & shed the ego and the perception that I know everything". Hence we cannot stop it even if we try our best, putting all our might into it. So why not remain alert & follow the right path that saves us from tragedies, traumas, tensions and turmoil of life? The answer lies within us.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

Karnataka's dilemma: Conservation vs development



B K SINGH

Buffer zones, designed to protect water bodies, biodiversity, and forest ecosystems, are under threat as development pressures in Karnataka intensify



The buffer Zones are contemplated to secure the core area of streams, water bodies and biodiversity sites and definitions in each case are supported by respective statutes, government guidelines and Court orders. The flow of water in stormwater drains and urban lakes needs to be regulated at the time of cloud bursts in the city causing flooding. Karnataka State Board for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution was amended in December 2021 to locate red industries beyond 500 meters from the centre of the stream and also at the same distance from the outer boundary of the lake. 75 meter buffer Zone is fixed for orange industries and 30 meters for non-polluting green establishments.

Zonal regulation of Bangalore Development Authority also prohibits any development within 30 meters from the outer boundary of the lake and similarly primary, secondary and tertiary drains have a buffer zone of 50, 25 and 15 meters from the centre on either side. Karnataka government is contemplating utilising barren buffer Zone areas for development and this would not go well with the environment conservation ethos and would have wide ranging repercussions like destroying the natural drainage pattern of the landscape and would bring misery to the people at the time of flash floods. It is recommended to evict encroachments from buffer areas and plant up with native tree species.

To protect the integrity of the forests and to minimize the interference of communities around, rule 41 of Karnataka Forest Rules, 1969 specifies a buffer Zone of 100 meters from the periphery of Reserved Forests. The rule in effect prohibits the grant of any revenue land within 100 meters from the fringes of the forests without express approval from the Forest Department. Legislatures in 1969 knew that if revenue land abutting forests is granted to any individual or used for community projects, the forests would be subjected to anthropogenic pressure and



THE GROUP OF POLLUTING INDUSTRIES LIKE MINING, QUARRYING, ETC HAS BEEN PROHIBITED IN ESZ, WHILE SOME BUSINESSES LIKE RESORTS, TREE FELLING ETC ARE TO BE REGULATED AND ECO-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES LIKE AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT ARE TO BE PERMITTED

would be encroached and degraded. Today we find that the provision has not been implemented in true spirit and there has been large-scale unauthorized occupation of forest lands after plundering the tree growth. Revenue lands are also lost in the process. If the provision is not properly regulated, even the deemed forests will be plundered and tree growth and lands will be lost. Forests are the mothers of rivers. The origin and catchments of many rivers are notified by Tiger Reserves (TRs). The original TRs that have been carved out of forests, Sanctuaries and National Parks are its core areas.

By an amendment in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in 2006, it was mandated to include areas surrounding the core, as buffer areas. In respect of several TRs, buffer areas have already been notified, but many more are still pending. The buffer areas of the TRs include forest areas, sometimes even part of the Sanctuaries and National Parks interspersed with villages and agricultural lands. With the apprehension that the area commands a higher degree of protection and it may be difficult to divert any portion of it for public projects later, many state Governments are holding back the notification.

Buffer for Nagarhole TR in Kodagu district of Karnataka has not been notified even after 18 years of amendment. Cores and buffers of TRs comprise luxuriant forests and are an important source of water, air, carbon sequestration, and controlling disease-spreading viruses necessary for the survival of humans and all other forms of life on earth. Taking a cue from the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the

Supreme Court of India earlier laid down an 'Eco Sensitive Zone' (ESZ) of 10 km from the periphery of National Parks and Sanctuaries, which are not TRs. It led to a huge public outcry and that resulted in several state Governments moving the Court for modification. Finally, the Court has relented and prescribed a minimum width of 1 km. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has categorized industries into three groups.

The group of polluting industries like mining, quarrying, etc has been prohibited in ESZ, while some businesses like resorts, tree felling etc are to be regulated and eco-friendly activities like agriculture and horticulture development are to be permitted. Mining and quarrying lobby located on the fringes of National Parks and Sanctuaries, who aspire to expand the activities, prevail on public representatives and government to lower the width of the strip and postpone ESZ notification.

Many ESZ proposals are caught in the crossfire and are held back either by respective state governments or central governments, making the conservation of biodiversity and protection of soil and water more difficult. This makes National Parks and Sanctuaries insecure. Anshi National Park and Dandeli Sanctuary of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka have ESZ strip of zero meter width along some portion of the boundary. The origin of river Kali, on which we are dependent for power, is kept out of ESZ and made insecure.

To make way for the Saravathi pump storage project near Jog Falls, the width of the ESZ strip around Saravathi Sanctuary is reduced from the proposed 2 km

to 1 km. Energy experts have questioned the viability of such projects, where excess power generated during the night time is utilized to pump the same water to the upper reservoir, which in turn can again be utilized for power generation by allowing it to flow down to the lower reservoir under gravity. We have also to sacrifice 200 ha of virgin forests of the Western Ghats in this case. This author had an opportunity to visit a similar project site "Purulia Pump storage project" in West Bengal in 1993 while working in the Government of India. Against the recommendation, the project was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

We destroyed 200 ha of wonderful Sal forests and today the project is a failure. Sal forests are the source of artisan wells and we lost them. The tragedy in Wayanad in the wee hours of 30th July 2024 is also attributed to the diversion of wooded areas for tea plantations and mining causing a major shift in land use pattern and exposing the earth rich in clayey soil to absorb water during incessant rains, swell sufficiently to become unstable and prone for landslides. Expert Committees headed by Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan have recommended Western Ghats areas be notified as Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESA) so that environmentally hazardous activities like deforestation and diverting lands for mining, industries etc are prohibited. Both the states of Karnataka and Kerala have not come on board to notify section of Western Ghats areas in the state as ESA.

(The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, Karnataka; views are personal)

India must address the growing crisis of spinal cord injuries

As India faces an alarming rise in spinal cord injuries, the call for a comprehensive support system has never been more urgent

As India faces the staggering reality of thousands of fatalities and with 15 lakh people living with spinal cord injuries (SCIs), the call for a robust support system is now more critical than ever. On the occasion of SCI Day (September 5), the healthcare experts and leaders geared up to strongly advocate for a holistic and inclusive solution that includes surgical interventions and comprehensive rehabilitation programs.

According to the WHO reports every year, between 250,000 and 500,000 people suffer a spinal cord injury (SCI). The majority of SCIs are due to preventable causes such as Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs), Falls or Violence. As many as 1.2 lakh die and



VIKAS TANDON

another 12 lakhs are seriously injured in road accidents in India. India has 15 lakh people with SCIs and nearly 20,000 people are added each year. SCI is devastating, with morbidity not only limited to physical aspects but emotional, social, and vocational life areas too. Violence stands as one of the top three causes of SCIs in India, according to a recent study by the Indian Spinal

Injuries Centre (ISIC). Analyzing data from 2012 to 2022, the study revealed that road RTAs accounted for 44% of SCIs, followed closely by falls from heights at 38.3%. Violent incidents, including stabbings and shootings, also significantly contributed, highlighting the diverse factors leading to these life-altering injuries. The study encompassed 1,537 SCI patients admitted between 2012 and 2022, maintaining consistency with earlier findings from 2002 to 2010, which reported RTAs at 45% and falls at 39.64%. In the last 10 years, the Centre treated nearly 200 SCI patients who were victims of violence.

This year's theme of SCI Day is "End Violence - Protect Spinal Cord." It is very crucial

to intensify awareness and preventive and curative efforts. Spinal cord injuries are not just physical afflictions; they profoundly alter every aspect of life, including emotional well-being, social interactions, and vocational capabilities. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that includes policy recognition, accessibility, enhanced safety measures, and robust treatment and rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation is vital for improving the functional abilities of persons with SCIs. This multifaceted process includes physiotherapy, occupational therapy, peer counselling, plastic surgery, psychological mentorship, nursing care, assistive technology, uro-



logical care, and vocational support—often essential following surgical stabilization of the spinal column.

Rehabilitation, which is critical in teaching patients to adapt to their new normal post-injury, remains inadequately covered under existing government schemes and

insurance plans. Unfortunately, rehabilitation costs are rarely covered by government schemes like CGHS, DGEHS, and ECHS, nor by many insurance companies, posing significant financial challenges for SCI patients. The Delhi High Court's 2023 directive to include disabled

persons in insurance schemes is a significant step toward equality, especially for SCI patients facing ongoing medical expenses.

The 2016 Disabilities Act expanded recognized disabilities but excludes spinal cord injury (SCI) as a separate category. Including SCI would grant patients access to key benefits like reservations and vocational support. Despite progress in accessibility under the Accessible India Campaign, universal access and vocational opportunities for SCI patients remain incomplete. On the treatment and care part, all solutions under one roof are needed with highly experienced, internationally trained, and dedicated spine surgeons. The Centre has also established India's first dedicat-

ed neuro-urology department to take care of SCI patients who suffer considerably after spine surgery and are neglected. Institutions like ISIC provide essential surgical, rehabilitation, and vocational training, but gaps remain in broader societal support, particularly in accessibility and long-term healthcare affordability. It should be a mission to create holistic and inclusive solutions for those battling spinal cord injuries, aiming to build a society that truly values diversity and inclusivity. There is a need to provide more facilities and services for all SCI patients, including those who are victims of violence.

(The writer is chief of Spinal Services, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, New Delhi; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



India to host Global Food Regulators Summit

India will host the second edition of Global Food Regulators Summit during September 19-21 in the national capital, where delegates of more than 70 countries will brainstorm on key regulations. The summit is being organised by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) under the aegis of the Union Health and Family Welfare ministry. The first edition of this summit was held in July 2023 in India as a co-branded event of G20. According to a background note, delegates from more than 70 countries are expected to participate in this summit to discuss and prepare strategy on key regulatory issues. The summit aims to foster international collaborations and knowledge-sharing on food safety and regulatory issues. It also seeks to promote dialogue on critical aspects such as food safety, risk assessment, analytical competence and capacity building initiatives. The summit would also highlight India's commitment to leading global efforts in enhancing food safety standards and ensuring food security.



Redcliffe Labs raises \$42 million

Diagnostic services provider Redcliffe Labs on Tuesday said it has raised USD 42 million (about Rs 352 crore), which will be used for expansion across Tier II and III cities in India. The funding round was led by Denmark's IFU (Investeringstjenestefond for Udviklingslande), which invested USD 20 million, followed by existing investor LeapFrog Investments with USD 15 million. Redcliffe's existing shareholders HealthQuad and Spark Growth Ventures also invested in the round. "This fresh injection of capital will fuel Redcliffe's expansion plans, focusing on deepening its presence in Tier II and III cities across India," a company statement said. Founded in 2018, Redcliffe Labs offers services across more than 200 cities in India. "With this raise, we're poised to increase accessibility to advanced diagnostic services across the nation with a commitment to empower individuals with the knowledge on healthcare."



LIC cuts holding in DCM Shriram Industries to 4.66 pc

Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) on Tuesday said it has pared its stake in DCM Shriram Industries by more than 2 per cent to 4.66 per cent over a period of about three years. In a regulatory filing, LIC said there is a net decrease of 2.016 per cent in its holding in DCM Shriram during the period October 8, 2021, and September 13, 2024. The shares were sold at an average price of Rs 110.072. "...the Life Insurance Corporation of India has decreased its shareholding in equity shares of DCM Shriram Industries Ltd from 58,06,760 to 40,52,635 i.e., 6.675 per cent to 4.659 per cent of the paid-up capital of the said company," LIC said. DCM Shriram Industries is primarily engaged in production and sale of sugar, alcohol and industrial fibres. Shares of DCM Shriram Industries settled 1.77 per cent lower at Rs 194 apiece on the BSE.

India, UK may hold next round of talks on trade pact in Oct

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the UK are expected to hold the next round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement in October to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said the officials of the UK are briefing their new ministers about the proposed free trade agreement (FTA).

The two sides have already taken stock of the progress of talks at secretary and minister levels.

"The briefings are going on in the UK...they are briefing their new ministers and based on that, the negotiations will start. We are hoping that in October, the negotiations should resume," Barthwal told reporters here.

He also said India is progressing on all FTAs, but there are certain things which are not in control of anyone.

The India-UK talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

Due to the elections in



India and Britain, both the countries lost that period.

There are pending issues in both the goods and services sectors.

The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty.

On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.

Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK

services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance).

The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which includes goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights.

The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from 20.36 billion in 2022-23.

The Labour Party's election manifesto for the recent polls also committed to clinching the deal.

A virtual meeting between

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Jonathan Reynolds, UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade was held on July 11 to discuss next steps on the pact.

Talking about the trade agreement with Australia, the secretary said that the two sides are looking at ways to conclude the negotiations before December.

He added that chief negotiators of both the sides are meeting on the pact, besides the trade ministers.

India and Australia implemented an interim pact, officially dubbed as Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in December 2022 and now are in negotiations to expand its scope.

He added that FTAs are long-term negotiations as these are comprehensive in nature involving over 20 chapters.

"They are time-taking. But I must say that we are moving forward on all our FTAs except Canada. We had paused (that). All other FTAs are progressing very well," he said.

Govt asks edible oil firms not to hike retail price

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has asked edible oil processors not to hike retail prices following recent increase in import duties, as there is enough stock of cooking oils that were shipped at a lower duty.

The food ministry said the stocks imported at lower duties would easily last 45-50 days, and therefore the processors should refrain from increasing maximum retail prices (MRP).

Last week, the Centre implemented an increase in the basic customs duty on various edible oils to support domestic oilseed prices.

Effective September 14, 2024, the basic customs duty on crude soyabean oil, crude palm oil, and crude sunflower oil has been raised to 20 per cent from nil, making the effective duty on crude oils to 27.5 per cent. Additionally, the basic cus-

toms duty on refined palm oil, refined sunflower oil, and refined soyabean oil has been increased from 12.5 per cent to 32.5 per cent, making the effective duty on refined oils to 35.75 per cent.

On Tuesday, Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra chaired a meeting with the representatives from Solvent Extraction Association of India (SEA), Indian Vegetable Oil Producers' Association (IVPA) and Soyabean Oil Producers Association (SOPA) to discuss the pricing strategy.

"The leading edible oil associations were advised to ensure that the MRP of each oil is maintained till the availability of edible oil stocks imported at 0 per cent and 12.5 per cent Basic Customs Duty (BCD) and take up the issue with their members immediately," an official statement said.



Gold imports doubled to record high of \$10.06 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold imports more than doubled in August to a record high of USD 10.06 billion, mainly on account of a drastic cut in customs duty and ongoing festive demand, according to the Commerce Ministry data.

Gold imports stood at USD 4.93 billion in August 2023.

On record high imports, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the tariff rates on gold have been reduced drastically so that smuggling and other activities can come down.

"And this is the time when jewellers start stocking for their inventories to be sold in the festive season," he told reporters.

In the Budget, the government slashed the duty from 15 per cent to 6 per cent.

India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), dipped by 4.23 per cent to USD 12.64 billion during April-July 2024-25.

In 2023-24, India's gold imports surged by 30 per cent



to USD 45.54 billion.

Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports, with about 40 per cent share, followed by the UAE (over 16 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent).

The precious metal accounts for over 5 per cent of the country's total imports.

The jump in gold imports pushed the country's trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) to USD 29.65 billion in August.

India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China. The imports mainly take care of the demand by the jewellery industry.

India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP

in the March quarter. For FY24, the current account deficit narrowed to USD 23.2 billion or 0.7 per cent of GDP against USD 67 billion or 2 per cent of GDP in FY23.

A current account deficit occurs when the value of goods and services imported and other payments exceeds the value of the export of goods and services and other receipts by a country in a particular period.

India is seeking review of certain provisions of the free trade agreement with the UAE, which came into force on May 1, 2022.

The review assumes significance as experts have raised serious concerns over the spurt in imports of precious metals from the UAE under the trade agreement.

Seeking an urgent review of the pact, think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has stated that the India-UAE CEPA allows unlimited imports of gold, silver, platinum, and diamonds from the UAE into India with zero tariffs in the coming years.

India should come up with bio-plastics policy: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India should come out with a national bio-plastics policy with fiscal incentives like capital subsidy as well as government support for research & development, according to a report.

The report titled 'Incentivising Bioplastics, a Biopolymer' by EY and ASSOCHAM outlines a strategic vision for transforming India's bio-plastics industry through targeted government interventions and regulatory changes along with educational campaigns and leveraging India's agricultural strengths to enhance sustainability and environmental performance.

To establish India as a premier hub for production of

bio-plastics, the report calls for comprehensive National Bioplastics Policy in India.

It suggested fiscal incentives like capital subsidies of up to 50 per cent on eligible capital investments over five years to encourage the development of bioplastics manufacturing and infrastructure.

The report also called for regulatory framework mandating use of bio-plastics, implementing QCOs (quality control orders), imposing import restrictions, and rationalising GST rates required for the growth of industry.

Government support for research and development, job creation and infrastructure within these clusters is essential for advancing technological innovation and ensuring economic viability, it added.



ELI SCHEMES Labour ministry to move Cabinet note, says Mandaviya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday said the ministry will move a Cabinet note on the employment-linked incentive (ELI) scheme announced in the Union Budget 2024-25 in July.

The minister emphasised upon the importance of a robust mechanism to ensure that the benefits of the ELI Scheme reach the true beneficiaries. "The ministry is finalising a Cabinet note on ELI scheme and it will be soon placed before the Cabinet for approval," he told reporters here. "The ELI Scheme aims to create over 2 crore jobs in the country in a period of 2 years. This will significantly contribute to increasing employment opportunities and enhancing livelihood. Three schemes for 'Employment Linked Incentive' were announced in Union Budget 2024-25.

NIFTY SCALES FRESH PEAK ON POSITIVE GLOBAL TRENDS

Sensex closes above 83,000 for 1st time

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rose by nearly 91 points to close at a fresh lifetime high while Nifty settled above the 25,400 level for the first time in a range-bound trade on Tuesday amid firm global trends ahead of the much-awaited US Fed's decision on interest rates.

Extending its record-setting spree for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 90.88 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at a lifetime high of 83,079.66. The key index settled above the 83,000 level for the first time. During the day, it rose by 163.63



points or 0.19 per cent to 83,152.41.

The NSE Nifty gained 34.80 points or 0.14 per cent to settle above 25,400 level for the first time at 25,418.55 - its

record closing high.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan, Larsen & Toubro, ICICI Bank, Bajaj

Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Reliance Industries were the biggest gainers.

Tata Motors, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, JSW Steel, ITC and Asian Paints were the biggest laggards.

"The Indian market exhibited a subtle positive momentum, driven by the anticipation of a rate cut cycle by the US FED. Although a 25-bps cut is largely factored in, the market remains attuned to the FED's comments on the health of the economy and the future trajectory of rate cuts," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Sitharaman reviews capex plan of Railways Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday reviewed the capex plan of the Railways Ministry and asked officials to focus on safety and convenience of commuters.

Sitharaman also told the officials to expedite the implementation of Kavach system (India's indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system) in a phased manner and meet the allocated capex target in the stipulated timeframe.

MoR officials informed the Minister that Kavach-related works are currently in progress in over 3000Rkm (route km) on the Delhi-Howrah and Delhi-Mumbai sections.

"Underlining the focus of the government on providing 'ease of living' for citizens, Sitharaman urged the officials of the Ministry of Railways to focus on capacity augmentation, safety and commuter convenience, including doubling

and electrification of existing railway tracks and also laying of new railway lines across the country as per the capex outlay provisioned in the Union Budget," a finance ministry statement said.

Sitharaman also stated that the Railways Ministry should expedite the conversion of 40,000 normal rail bogies to Vande Bharat standards as announced in the Interim Budget 2024-25 in order to enhance the safety, convenience and comfort of passengers.

Sitharaman exhorted the officials to ensure that capex target for FY 2024-25 is achieved in a time-bound manner and take forward the momentum achieved in the first 100 days of this Government, the statement added.

This meeting is a part of the series of review meetings that have been scheduled with Ministries/Departments with significant capex outlays in the Union Budget.



Rs 32.45 L cr investment pledged in renewables

PNS ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union New & Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said a total investment of Rs 32.45 lakh crore is committed in renewable energy projects till 2030.

This assumes significance in view of India's ambitious target of over 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. Addressing a press conference at the fourth Global Renewable Energy Investment Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST), Joshi said that state governments have given 'Sankalp Patra' (commitment) of 520 GW.

TRADE DEFICIT WIDENS TO 10-MONTH HIGH Exports plunge 9.3 pc to \$34.71 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's exports registered a steepest decline in 13-month falling 9.3 per cent in August to USD 34.71 billion due to global economic uncertainties, while the trade deficit soared to a 10-month of USD 29.65 billion.

According to the government data released on Tuesday, imports increased by 3.3 per cent to USD 64.36 billion, which is a record high, due to a significant jump in the inbound shipments of gold and silver.

While gold imports more than doubled to USD 10.06 billion in August from USD



4.93 billion in the same month last year, silver imports swelled to USD 727 million in the month under review from USD 159 million in August 2023.

Due to a decline in petrole-

um prices, crude oil imports dipped by 32.38 per cent to USD 11 billion. The dip in prices has also impacted the merchandise exports.

The trade deficit, or the gap between imports and

exports, in October 2023 was USD 30.43 billion. The merchandise exports in July last year contracted by over 10 per cent.

India's merchandise exports dipped by 1.5 per cent in July. Exports during April-August this fiscal increased 1.14 per cent to USD 178.68 billion, and imports grew 7 per cent to USD 295.32 billion.

Merchandise trade deficit during April-August 2024 was USD 116.64 billion compared to USD 99.16 billion during April-August 2023.

Briefing the media on data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that in the current global situation, exports is

a huge challenge.

Reasons like slowdown in China and continued recession in the EU and the US too are impacting the exports; dipping oil prices and rise in transportation cost due to the Red Sea crisis are hurting the shipments.

"There are a lot of challenges in trade," Barthwal told reporters here.

However, he added that despite these issues India's exports during the first five months of this fiscal have registered a positive growth.

Exports of petroleum products declined by 37.56 per cent to USD 5.95 billion during the month.

what's brewing?

KHUSHI, JUNAID KHAN TO STAR IN ROM-COM

Phantom Studios and AGS Entertainment announced a highly anticipated upcoming movie about love in the digital era, featuring Khushi Kapoor and Junaid Khan as the main characters. This upcoming romantic drama, directed by Advait Chandan, is scheduled to hit theatres on February 7, 2025. The poster shared on Tuesday read, "Phantom Studios and AGS Entertainment announce the theatrical release of our film about love, likes and everything in between with Khushi Kapoor and Junaid Khan. Film to be Directed by Advait Chandan (sic)."

The upcoming movie, expected to delve into the intertwining themes of contemporary love, social networking and relationships, is already sparking interest because of its unique casting of Kapoor and Khan, two emerging talents from prominent Bollywood lineages. Chandan, famous for his highly praised work in *Secret Superstar*, is anticipated to apply his skillful expertise to this romantic tale.

Even though the title of the film is still a secret, fans are excitedly anticipating further information. The movie is anticipated to be a significant part of the 2025 Bollywood schedule with its release during Valentine's week. Khushi's most recent appearance was in *The Archies*, directed by Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti. Junaid had his first appearance in *Maharaj*, where he acted alongside Jaideep Ahlawat, Sharvari and other actors.



RAKUL PREPS FOR DE DE PYAAR DE 2

Rakul Preet Singh has always added an extra charm to her characters in films. This is precisely why her fans eagerly await her upcoming projects. Interestingly, her fans are in for a treat as the actress is preparing for her new role in *De De Pyaar De 2* and this is indeed exciting news for them.

Taking to her social media, Rakul shared an image of a script and wrote: "#ddpd2 Here we go!! Scenes for this schedule. It's always so much fun to create a character and live her journey! Ok off to learning dialogue now!"

As Rakul has finally started working on her highly anticipated film *De De Pyaar De 2*, everyone is excited to see how she will once again win our hearts with her captivating persona. While her chemistry with Ajay Devgn was loved by the audience, her return is surely going to be a treat for her fans.



Indian adaptation of The Traitors underway!

Collaborating with leading independent distributor All3Media International for the local adaptation of IDTV's Bafta and Emmy Award-winning global format produced by BBC Studios India Productions, Prime Video India is set to showcase the unscripted original reality show, *The Traitors*. Emerging as one of the fastest-growing reality game-show formats in the world, with over 20 countries across continents adapting it for local audiences and languages, the Indian adaptation of *The Traitors* will premiere exclusively on Prime Video in Hindi with subtitles in English.

The thrilling and captivating original series is the ultimate game of trust and deception that challenges the intellect, wit, and strategic prowess of its players as they compete for the large cash jackpot. 20 players arrive at a royal palace, hoping to win the accumulated cash bounty that is amassed through various physical and psychological missions carried out by them. Players will be identified as 'innocents', but unbeknownst to them, a few from their midst will be the 'traitors', carefully and secretly chosen at the beginning of the show by the host. In a game of vicious twists and turns, cold-hearted deception, and constant manipulations, the traitors will need to eliminate the innocents, unless the innocents are able to identify them before it's too late! The Indian adaptation of *The Traitors* promises to make for an entertaining and nail-biting watch for audiences all across.

Adding another feather to his hat, host Karan Johar said, "*The Traitors* is one of the most watched reality series, with its popularity growing all over the world as the audience laps up the riveting drama and entertainment. Having watched the UK and US versions, I have become an avid fan of the format and am in awe of Claudia Winkleman and Alan Cumming, who are so marvelous in the way they host their respective shows with poise yet suspenseful theatrics that leave you at the edge of your seat. Building on the very successful relationship with Prime Video, I am thrilled to take on the mantle as the host for the Indian adaptation of the show. And the 20 players on the show are in for an unforgettable and unpredictable journey, especially with me operating in the shadows."

The Traitors (Dutch title: *De Verraders*) was created and developed by Marc Pos and IDTV Creative Director Jasper Hoogendoorn in cooperation with RTL Creative Unit.

'Shame on you': Dalljiet slams Nikhil Patel for 'wearing a ring again'



After her split from Shalin Bhanot, Dalljiet Kaur tied the knot with Nikhil Patel, a businessman residing in Kenya. They got married in March 2023. Nevertheless, within a year of getting married, the couple encountered problems in their personal lives. Dalljiet alleged that Patel was involved in an extramarital relationship, but Patel refuted the claims. In the midst of this, the actress was surprised to see Nikhil with a ring on his wedding finger. Dalljiet went on her Instagram stories and criticised her estranged spouse Nikhil Patel. In her initial message, the actress pointed out that Patel was wearing a 'ring again' on his wedding finger. "Congrats SN, must applaud the audacity to splash it again on social media. Well done, both of you. Already wearing a ring again Nikhil. Well done (sic)," wrote Kaur.

The television actress further mentioned, "Well done you are almost successful in destroying her family too. Though I do wonder what her family looks like for you to be wearing a promise ring already. My God, shame on you (sic)." Dalljiet mentioned that Nikhil may declare that he wore the 'ring' as if it were a precious gem. Yet, she pondered why her estranged husband had it on his 'wedding finger'. "But why wear it on the wedding finger? And then make sure it is seen on your Instagram Stories? You are anything but Naive...(sic)," she stated.

Sean Diddy Combs taken under custody in Manhattan!



Sean Diddy Combs was arrested by federal authorities in Manhattan, New York on Monday night following a grand jury indictment. The arrest was supposed to happen on Tuesday but ended up being made earlier due to unforeseen circumstances. It seems that the arrest was related to multiple lawsuits involving accusations of sex trafficking and other crimes. The legal inquiry that followed the actions led to the search warrants being issued and carried out at his residences in Miami and Beverly Hills.

TMZ reported that Diddy was taken into custody at a midtown hotel in Manhattan, where he had been staying. Homeland Security made a swift arrest at the hotel late Monday night. Diddy was brought to the FBI field office in the borough after being arrested. A law enforcement source informed the media outlet that the hip hop mogul's initial arrest was scheduled for Tuesday, September 17. Someone who knows about the charges said to the New York Times that Diddy was arrested following an indictment by a grand jury. The charges have not been announced yet because the indictment is currently sealed. Nevertheless, the source informed the media platform that the American rapper was detained for racketeering and sex trafficking offenses. He had been under investigation by the police after his girlfriend, Cassie Ventura, accused him of sex trafficking and years of abuse.

Formerly known as Puff Daddy's attorney, Marc Agnifilo told, "We are disappointed with the decision to pursue what we believe is an unjust prosecution of Combs by the U.S. Attorney's Office. Sean "Diddy" Combs is a music icon, self-made entrepreneur, loving family man and proven philanthropist who has spent the last 30 years building an empire, adoring his children and working to uplift the Black communi-



Pamela Anderson honoured with Golden Eye Award at ZFF

Actor Pamela Anderson is all set to be honoured at the Zurich Film Festival. She will be receiving the Golden Eye Award for her career achievements on October 4, as per reports. Zurich Film Festival is an annual film festival that has been held in Zurich, Switzerland. It will be beginning from October 3 till October 13. Pamela will present her latest film, *Gia Coppola's The Last Showgirl* at the festival. It is the story of a 50-year-old showgirl, Shelley, played by Anderson, whose

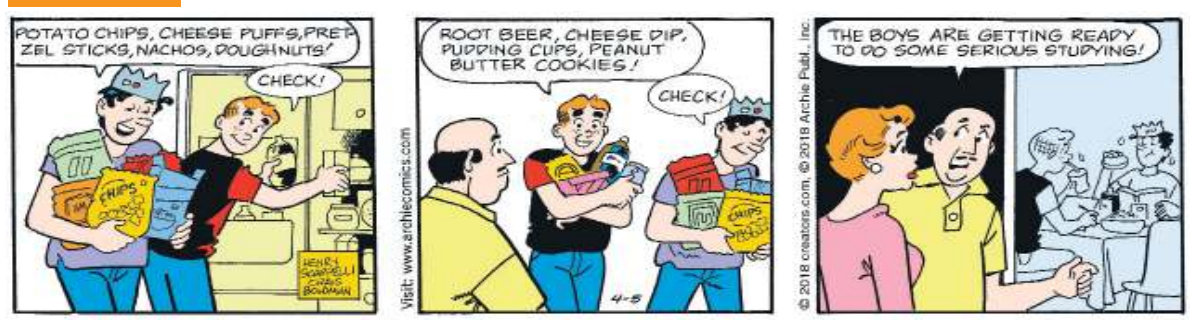
show gets cancelled in Las Vegas after 30 years and how she faces uncertainties in life and tries to work on the relationship with her daughter. She makes attempts to improve the bond with the help of her colleague Annette, played by Jamie Lee Curtis. While praising the actor, ZFF artistic director Christian Jungen shared, "Pamela poured her heart and soul into the character of Shelley and captivated us right from the start. She completely immersed herself in her character, turned Shelley's

inner life inside out with her facial expressions and made sure that we sympathised with her." He added, "A terrific performance, perhaps the best of her career, which deserves an Oscar nomination. We are therefore delighted to honour Pamela Anderson, this cult actress with whom many of us have grown up and who has reinvented herself time and again, at the Zurich Film Festival," according to reports. *The Last Showgirl* is a 2024 American drama film directed by Gia Coppola and written by Kate Gersten. It

features Pamela Anderson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Dave Bautista, Brenda Song, Kiernan Shipka and Billie Lourd. Talking about Pamela's work front, her other credits include *Raw Justice*, *Barb Wire*, *Scary Movie 3*, *Borat*, *Superhero Movie*, *The Institute*, *Baywatch City Hunter*, among others.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



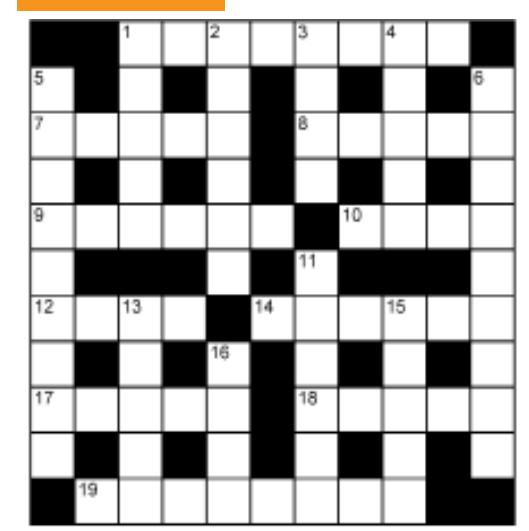
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



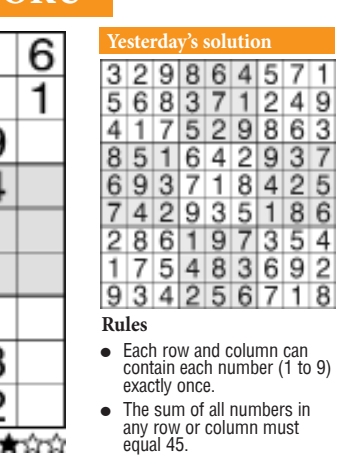
NANCY



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



ACROSS

- In a bottle
- A baking ingredient
- A clothing size
- One or the other
- A heavy metal
- A small sharp carpet nail
- Lump of gold
- A smell
- A body organ
- A minder of sheep

DOWN

- White frozen dew
- Grow vegetables here
- Have a conversation
- A health professional

SOLUTION

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

GINGER MEGGS





FASHION FORWARD, PLANET APPROVED

PNS|HYDERABAD

Under the golden September sun and the manicured lawns of The Bristol Hotel, the highly anticipated Global India Couture Week took center stage, captivating the global fashion elite with a celebration of design, sustainability and cultural mastery. From September 11 to 15, 2024, the week shimmered with a rare elegance, offering a harmonious blend of India's rich artisanal heritage and the bold innovations shaping the future of fashion.

With the festival's theme, "Sustainability is Future," at the forefront, GICW 2024 was not just a visual spectacle but a clarion call for the fashion world to rethink its relationship with the planet. At the heart of it all? The artisans, designers and forward-thinkers who, through every thread and stitch, reminded us that the future of fashion is as much about revering the past as it is about embracing change.

Runway of tradition and tomorrow

The GICW runway was a visual masterpiece, a seamless journey through time, tradition and the future of fashion. India's finest designers captivated the audience with collections that honoured ancient crafts while embracing innovative, eco-conscious aesthetics.

Robert Naorem, a fashion entrepreneur, designer and makeup artist from Manipur, transported the audience to his homeland, where folk art and sustainability converged in a stunning showcase of men's and women's wear crafted from handloom fabrics.

Opening the festival with his collection, Naorem celebrated the beauty of handloom and sustainability. Speaking to *The Pioneer*, he shared, "Our collection is deeply rooted in the craftsmanship of handloom, with a subtle infusion of modernity. The fabrics we use are incredibly versatile, capable of being dyed and re-dyed multiple times. All of our dyes are natural and organic, reflecting our dedication to sustainability."

Backstage, Naorem elaborated on his process: "We've also repurposed fabrics from previous showcases by re-dyeing them and adding intricate embroidery, giving them a completely new and refreshed look." His passion for heritage shone through, underscoring his belief that tradition is the heart of modern fashion.

And the true show-stealing moment came when Urvashi Rautela, the showstopper for Robert Naorem, walked the runway in a traditional Manipuri wedding dress—a stunning red potli. Her ensemble was beautifully complemented by gold jewelry, including necklaces, earrings and bangles, all of which epitomised the elegance and cultural richness of Manipuri heritage. She looked absolutely breathtaking!

Manoviraj Khosla, one of India's ace fashion designers, showcased his latest men's wear collection on Day 2 of the GICW.

Under the opulent September skies, Global India Couture Week 2024 captivated the world with an extraordinary blend of India's rich artisanal heritage and avant-garde sustainability. From intricate handloom masterpieces to revolutionary eco-conscious designs, this year's festival set a new benchmark for fashion's evolution, seamlessly merging tradition with tomorrow's vision. *The Pioneer* covers it all!



"Sustainability is not about cutting corners—it's about going deeper," Khosla emphasised. His collection, often influenced by the Punk Revolution—with elements like green hair, jewellery, and rat tails—seamlessly incorporated sustainability through the use of recycled materials.

Model Nikhil Hariwansh praised Khosla's work, saying, "Manoviraj Khosla's collection beautifully reflects the theme of sustainability, merging innovative, eco-friendly fabrics with his distinctive style. His dedication to using sustainable materials and thoughtful craftsmanship shows how fashion can be both forward-thinking and environmentally conscious. Working with Khosla is always a pleasure. The atmosphere at his shows is fun and dynamic, and with his longtime collaborator and show director Prasad Bidapa, the event takes on an added flair, making it truly unique."

Craftsmanship reimaged

Designer Anandana Gaur Singh's latest collection showcased long-forgotten motifs and weaving techniques, beautifully highlighting the vibrant colors of Indian silk yarn. "We blend bright and pastel hues to create lightweight, versatile pieces that are wearable for all occasions," she told us.

Banarasi, a brand deeply rooted in its legacy, holds a special place in our hearts. Stuti Weaves, as an organisation, is deeply committed to ensuring consistent work opportunities for our weavers and their families. Singh emphasised, "With the rise of machine-dominated textile production, our efforts are crucial in safeguarding the rich tradition of handwoven textiles from being overshadowed by mass-produced, machine-made fabrics."

Their handwoven products are not just steeped in heritage; they transcend the transient nature of fast fashion. These pieces are meant to be cherished, preserved and passed down through generations. For instance, the dupatta worn by the showstopper was over 100 years old—a testament to the enduring beauty and timelessness of our craft.

"It's about more than just wearing these garments—it's about celebrating the artistry, sharing it with the younger

generation, and embracing sustainability. Just as a bride wears her mother's saree on her wedding day, we too can honor our rich cultural heritage and tradition. Let's ensure that sarees don't remain confined to the pages of textbooks but instead are proudly embraced as a living part of our legacy," the designer said with a beaming smile.

On day four of GICW, Saloni Panwar and Salman of Gulabo Jaipur showcased their latest festive collection, aptly named Nayab. From co-ord sets in shades of off-white, green, black and more to stunning Anarkali suits and dresses, Nayab truly lived up to its name. The iconic diva Karisma Kapoor walked the runway as the showstopper, exuding grace and elegance.

Set to the nostalgic tune of *Mehndi Hai Rakhne Wali* in the background, Karisma captivated the audience in a striking black kurta-skirt ensemble adorned with intricate golden handcraft work, paired with a black dupatta. Her look oozed the rich legacy of Jaipuri craftsmanship.

Her hair was styled in a sleek, elegant bun adorned with roses, while her makeup perfectly highlighted her features, with smokey eyes, blushed cheeks, shimmering eyeshadow and glossy lips. A gorgeous maangtika and jhumkas complemented her look, adding a touch of traditional elegance. As she waved to the crowd and blew kisses to a few lucky fans, Delhi was left utterly enchanted.

Artisanal excellence in every corner

Beyond the glamorous catwalk, the festival came alive in the form of vibrant stalls, where visitors were invited to dive deeper into India's storied traditions. Several meticulously curated stalls dotted the festival ground, each a testament to the skill and dedication of artisans from across India's diverse regions.



Buyers, collectors and fashion enthusiasts flocked to the stalls, where sustainable clothing, hand-crafted jewellery, and eco-friendly accessories dazzled under the sky.

To conclude day 4, actress Nushratt Bharuccha walked the runway as the showstopper for Tanieya Khanuja, a distinguished luxury prêt-à-couture brand celebrated for its commitment to conscious luxury. Founded by Tanieya Khanuja, the collection showcased by Khanuja featured a sophisticated range of structured ensembles, bodycon dresses, elegant sarees and power pantsuits.

Nushratt Bharuccha, radiant as ever, donned a stunning creation that perfectly captured the essence of Tanieya Khanuja's vision. As she walked the ramp, her elegance and poise added a final flourish to an evening that celebrated fashion's ability to be both stylish and sustainable.

The grand finale of Global India Couture Week 2024 brought together some of fashion's finest.

NIFD Global Jaipur impressed with innovative designs, showcasing their creative edge. Rajdeep Ranawat mesmerised with his fusion of traditional Indian craftsmanship and modern silhouettes, while O:Live Couture dazzled with its contemporary, sophisticated bespoke pieces. Anju Modi closed the show with her rich handloom fabrics and intricate embroidery, paying tribute to India's cultural heritage. Together, these brands highlighted the perfect blend of tradition and modernity in Indian couture.

FASHION'S NEXT CHAPTER: Sustainable, bold and bright

As the final model sashayed down the runway and the applause filled the night sky, one thing was certain: GICW 2024 had done more than just present collections. It had shifted the conversation. In a world grappling with environmental challenges, the festival's focus on sustainability was more than timely—it was visionary.

The Global Fashion Festival has left an indelible mark, not just on India's fashion scene but on the global fashion landscape. It's a reminder that fashion isn't just about what we wear—it's about the stories we tell, the lives we touch, and the future we create.

And if GICW 2024 is anything to go by, the future of fashion is looking brighter, bolder and most importantly, sustainable.

Small feet, big impact: Vunnam duo's journey from classrooms to clean-ups

AARTI SREENATH
aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

At just 9 years old, Teerdha Vunnam embarked on an entrepreneurial journey that many only dream of, starting Foodite, a company dedicated to healthy snacks for children. What sparked this interest in business at such a young age?

Teerdha fondly recalls in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, "When my sister Bilwa won *Milo Evaru Koteswari*, the Telugu version of *KBC*, they opened a bank account for her. I thought, 'Maybe I should have one too!' But I wondered, 'What will I put in it?' That's how I got interested in entrepreneurship."

Driven by the desire to fill her new bank account, Teerdha began to think critically about the habits of children her age. "I noticed kids of my age would eat healthy meals but snack on junk food. That's when I thought, Why not introduce healthy snacks?" Thus, Foodite was born, offering nutritious snacks that reflected the healthy eating habits Teerdha grew up with.

As a young entrepreneur, Teerdha's journey wasn't without its challenges. "The biggest hurdle was people questioning my age. They saw me as just a kid and didn't think I was serious about entrepreneurship. They assumed it was a phase I'd grow out of, but I was determined," she explains.

But Teerdha's story is far from singular. Her sister, Bilvoa, played a significant role in shaping her environmental consciousness and entrepreneurial spirit. Bilvoa recalls, "Our family has always been eco-friendly and my mom, in particular, was deeply involved in environmental causes. When I was two, I began holding placards and spreading awareness alongside her. Teerdha and I have always supported each other, bouncing ideas off one another." The sisters' bond also extended to philanthropy. Both have been active in supporting causes such as Hyderabad Urban Makeover and the Robin Hood Army. "It's about doing good for society and the environment," says Teerdha, who adds, "I've always wanted to contribute and these organisations provided the perfect platform."

One of Teerdha's proudest moments came from her initiative, Adopt a Tree and Save Earth, where she distributed over 35,000 saplings to the public. "People thought I was selling them, but I told them, 'It costs a promise—to keep it alive for three years!'" she smiles. Three years later, when participants showed her the grown trees, it was a truly fulfilling moment.

Bilvoa, equally passionate about environmental causes, shares how they spearheaded the Lake Revival project in their school and initiated Project Recycle Bin, where students collected recyclable waste and set up dustbins in their neighbourhoods. "It was a great way to learn about the circular economy and the importance of recycling," she recalls.

In 2022, the sisters co-founded the Ozon Run, a movement dedicated to raising awareness about the ozone layer's depletion. "During the pandemic, the ozone layer began to heal, but as soon as people returned to normal life, the depletion resumed," says Bilvoa. Each year, the Ozon Run adopts a new goal to spread environmental awareness. "In the first year, we focused on increasing the green cover in Hyderabad by distributing saplings. The second year, we introduced the concept of 'organic festivals' by giving away seed Ganesha idols to participants."

This year's Ozon Run took on the issue of road hygiene in Hyderabad, with participants signing a petition to improve cleanliness. "We handed the petition to the respective authorities, making it a collective effort," says Bilvoa, emphasising the importance of public participation.

The petition submitted by the Vunnam sisters focused on

In an exclusive discussion with *The Pioneer*, the Vunnam sisters Teerdha and Bilwa take us through their extraordinary journey of doing their bit for the betterment of the environment in Hyderabad



addressing the increasing waste on the roads in their community. Teerdha highlighted that despite being taxpayers—or, in her case, a taxpayer's daughter—the cleanliness of the roads was not being maintained. The petition not only detailed the specific community and school backing it but also emphasised why the petitioners felt compelled to act, including how poor road conditions could lead to health concerns, like viral fever.

Teerdha shared how she personally approached the GHMC commissioner to voice these concerns, explaining that as taxpayers, they expected cleaner roads. She noted that it wasn't a matter of inability on the authorities' part but rather a lack of will to maintain consistent efforts. Her conversation with the commissioner led to the roads being cleaned in less than 24 hours, a moment that demonstrated how persistence and action could bring about tangible results.

In addition to their petition efforts, the sisters spearheaded the *Green Steps initiative*. This project, co-authored by Teerdha and her sister Bilvoa, is a book-cum-journal aimed at encouraging individuals to adopt more sustainable practices in their daily lives. The journal includes sections where people can track activities like watering plants, organic festivals, practicing yoga and monitoring plastic usage. The guide also provides tips on sustainability and introduces concepts like circular economy and reducing plastic waste. Furthermore, it encourages group involvement, where one community or school can challenge another to participate in clean-up drives or other eco-friendly activities. Teerdha and Bilvoa ensured that *Green Steps* was made available online to minimise paper waste, aligning with their eco-conscious approach. Their overarching goal with this initiative was to make sustainability a habit, akin to brushing your teeth or segregating waste, so it becomes a natural part of daily life. Teerdha's role as a Climate Action Ambassador further deepened her commitment to these causes.

When asked how she balances her time between being a student, entrepreneur and activist, Teerdha attributed her ability to time management. Starting young, she developed a natural rhythm that allowed her to focus on school while dedicating time to her entrepreneurial and environmental pursuits. Schoolwork required only a small portion of her day, leaving room for her passions.

Funding for their initiatives primarily comes from sponsorships and fundraisers. Teerdha shared that while they receive government support in the form of permissions and certifications—like for their lake revival project—the financial backing largely comes from their efforts and the support of individuals who believe in their cause. Teerdha concluded the interview with advice for other young people who want to make a difference but don't know where to start. "It doesn't matter how small or big it is," she said. "What matters is that you start and that it impacts at least one person—even if that person is yourself."

Posture's impact on shoulder health

Good posture can not only make you look confident and well-aligned but can also help in maintaining overall body health, especially when it comes to your shoulders. For that, you must first understand the shoulder-spine relationship.

The shoulder is a ball-and-socket joint, which means it's designed to have an extremely mobile joint. The shoulder is connected to the spine by numerous muscles, ligaments, and tendons that help support it and allow it to move. The primary connections are formed where the scapula (shoulder blade) meets the clavicle (collar bone) and humerus (upper arm bone), thus creating the shoulder joint, and where the thoracic spine in your upper or mid back supports the scapula, allowing your shoulder to move. Muscles such as your trapezius, rhomboids, and rotator cuff muscles all link your spine to your shoulder, so you need stability but also mobility.

How poor posture affects the shoulders?

When you have bad posture, like slouching or hunching over, it will create an imbalance in the shoulder-spine relationship.

● **Rounded shoulders:** This is a posture problem where your shoulders are in front of the midline region. It usually occurs because of sitting for long hours or working on a computer. This position shortens the chest muscles and overstretches the upper back muscles, leading to an imbalance.

● **Forward head posture:** When your head is pushed forward, it puts a strain on the neck and upper back muscles. This shift leads to the shoulders internally rotating, consequently increasing the risk of impingement and other injuries.

● **Kyphosis:** Increased forward thoracic spine curvature can impede the scapular motion and cause an unequal stress distribution at the shoulder joint.

Consequences of poor posture

● **Muscle imbalance:** Bad posture creates a muscular imbalance between the front and back of your body. This can put strain on the shoulder as the chest muscles tighten and the upper back muscles weaken.

● **Joint misalignment:** Shoulders and spines with misalignment increase the wear and tear on joints that are liable to be

injured, more like rotator cuff tears and shoulder impingement.

● **Reduced range of motion:** A misaligned spine reduces the range of the shoulder, so it is difficult to perform everyday tasks and increases the possibility of getting strains or dislocations.

● **Increased injury risk:** When your posture is poor, it leads to an unstable base for your shoulder movements, which means that the risk of acute injuries (e.g., dislocations) and chronic conditions (e.g., tendonitis) skyrocket.

Tips for improving posture and shoulder health

Improving posture and shoulder health requires multiple approaches. First, set up a proper workstation. Make sure your computer screen is at eye level or slightly below, your feet are flat on the floor or on a small footrest and your chair supports the natural curve of your lower back. Strong posture-specific exercises targeting the

muscles of the upper back and shoulders can help, with exercises such as rows, scapular retractions, and shoulder blade squeezes being helpful. Regular daily stretching of the chest, neck and shoulders is also vital to promote flexibility and balance between opposing muscle groups. In addition to these specific strategies, it is important to be mindful of your posture throughout the day in both sitting and standing positions.

Most importantly, if you are struggling with chronic and persistent pain and limited movement, consider seeing a physical therapist for an expert evaluation to get specific recommendations on exercises and adjustments that you personally need in order to improve your posture and mobility.

The shoulder-spine connection is a critical aspect of overall physical health. Poor posture can lead to various shoulder problems, including muscle imbalances, joint misalignments, and increased injury risk. By understanding this connection and implementing strategies to maintain good posture, you can significantly improve your shoulder health and reduce the risk of injuries. Small adjustments and regular exercises can make a big difference in maintaining a healthy shoulder-spine relationship.

(The author, Dr. Gurdeep Avinash Ratra, is a Consultant - Orthopedics at Manipal Hospitals.)



NEW SUPPORT STAFF WILL HAVE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE, BUT NO PROBLEM AS OF NOW: ROHIT SHARMA

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said head coach Gautam Gambhir's style is different from his predecessor Rahul Dravid but insisted he shares a good rapport with the new appointee, and the rest of his fresh set of support staff. Gambhir, a World Cup-winning former opener, took charge of India in July during a white ball tour to Sri Lanka, and will now helm the team in its first Test series under his tutelage against Bangladesh, beginning here on Thursday. In Gambhir's first outing as coach, India swept the T20I series against the Islanders 3-0, but lost the ensuing ODI series 0-2. "Obviously, Rahul bhai, Vikram Rathour (former batting coach) and Paras Mhambrey (former bowling coach) were a different team and it is only acceptable that the new support staff will bring different perspective," Rohit said in the pre-series press

conference here on Tuesday. "But the matches that we engaged in (with the new staff) in Sri Lanka, they seemed to be sensible and understanding. They began to learn things pretty quickly within the team," he added. Dravid's tenure ended after India's T20 World Cup triumph in the West Indies and he will next be seen heading the coaching staff of IPL side Rajasthan Royals. Rathour and Mhambrey were replaced by Abhishek Nayar (assistant coach) and South African Morne Morkel (bowling coach), while former Dutch all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate also joined as an assistant coach. While Nayar joining the team was largely a given, Morkel and Doeschate, who worked with Gambhir at the Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, beat former pacers R Vinayakumar and L Balaji in the race to spots among the India support staff. Rohit used his long association with Gambhir during the latter's playing days, and with



Abhishek Nayar in the Mumbai dressing room to underline his comfortable working relation with them. "It's a new (support) staff for sure, but I have known Gautam

Gambhir and Abhishek Nayar long enough. Every support staff has its operating style, and that's what we were expecting. "I have worked with different coaches over 17 years of my

career, and it's vital to understand that all of them have a unique perspective (about cricket), and it's a must that you adjust with them," said Rohit. While Rohit has never worked alongside Morkel and Doeschate, the 37-year-old said he has enough knowledge of them from their days as cricketers to strike a comfortable equation. "I have also played matches against Morne Morkel and Ryan ten Doeschate. I have some close encounters with Morkel, but not so much with Ryan, may be a couple of matches. But that doesn't matter. "As of now, there have been no issues or problems as such (with the new set of support staff). We have a great understanding of each other. "Good understanding is important, and I have that with them," he added on his dynamics with the new head coach and his team. In his first media interaction after taking charge in July, the 42-year-old Gambhir had also rejected apprehensions about his equation with the team's senior players by citing his familiarity with them during his playing days.



Massive hike in Women's T20 WC prize fund as ICC announces pay parity

PTI ■ DUBAI

In a landmark decision, the International Cricket Council on Tuesday announced equal prize money for men and women in World Cups, starting with next month's women's T20 showpiece, the purse for which has been hiked by a staggering 225 per cent to USD 7.95 million. The winners of the women's T20 World Cup will walk away with USD 2.34 million from this fund, a 134 per cent increase on the USD one million awarded to Australian women when they clinched the title in South Africa in 2023, said the ICC in a statement. Men's T20 World Cup champions India had received USD 2.45 million in cash prize earlier this year. "The ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 will be the first ICC event where women will receive the same prize money as their male counterparts, marking a significant milestone in the sport's history," said the ICC. The decision ensures that the ICC reached its prize money equity target seven years ahead of its schedule of 2030. The runners-up at the showpiece event next month will get USD 1.17 million, an increase of 134 per cent in comparison to the USD 500,000 South Africa received for reaching the final on home soil at Newlands Cricket

Ground. The two losing semi-finalists will earn USD 675,000 (up from USD 210,000 in 2023), with the overall prize pot totalling USD 7,958,080, a massive increase of 225 per cent from last year's total fund of USD 2.45 million. Each win during the group stages will see teams take home USD 31,154, while the six teams who fail to reach the semi-finals will share a pool of USD 1.35 million depending on their finishing positions. In comparison, the equivalent pool for the six teams in 2023 was USD 180,000, shared equally. Teams who finish third or fourth in their group will take USD 270,000 each while the teams who finish fifth in their group will both receive USD 135,000. "This move is in line with the ICC's strategy to prioritise the women's game and accelerate its growth by 2032. Teams will now receive equal prize money for the equivalent finishing position at comparable events as well as the same amount for winning a match at those events," the ICC added. The ninth edition of the tournament will take place across two venues in the UAE - Dubai and Sharjah - from October 3 to 20. All group matches will be completed before October 15. The semi-finals are scheduled for October 17 and 18, followed by the final on October 20.

Playing against India is the best challenge you get nowadays: Bangladesh coach

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha feels playing against cricketing powerhouse India will give his team a fair assessment of where it stands internationally, as he looks forward to relishing the challenge against Rohit Sharma's side in the two-Test series commencing on Thursday. Bangladesh are coming off a triumphant 2-0 away Test-series win against Pakistan, having annihilated the Shan Masood-led side by 10 wickets in the opening game, following which they won the second match by six wickets. However, India, currently leading the World Test Championship (WTC) table, are expected to pose a much stronger challenge to Bangladesh despite the eastern neighbours riding high on confidence.

"We are encouraged by playing the best team in the world, and coming to India and playing against them is the best challenge you get nowadays. Playing against the best always gives you the perception of where you stand, and as sports persons, we always look forward to it," said Hathurusingha, the former Sri Lankan all-rounder, who was appointed Bangladesh coach early last year, during a pre-match press conference on Tuesday. Bangladesh, following the two-Test series against India, will also play three T20Is starting October 6. Hathurusingha, when asked if the Test series whitewash of Pakistan had created pressure of expectation on his side coming into the series against India, said that though the victories had boosted the team's confidence, it also knew its strengths and weaknesses.



"It's (win against Pakistan) certainly given us a lot of confidence coming into this series. Keeping the outcome aside, the way we played the series and we handled certain situations, like lagging and coming back, and the people who contributed to it -- all give us a lot of belief for this series" "Pressure (of playing against India) is

a privilege. We understand where we stand, along with our strengths and limitations," he said. The Bangladesh squad comprises eight specialist batters, six bowlers and two all-rounders and Hathurusingha called it the "most rounded" side across departments. "This is probably the most rounded team produced by Bangladesh. We have covered a lot of bases and have got a lot of fast bowlers," he said. "We also have an experienced spin attack, besides also having a great depth in our batting. Also, two of our spinners are genuine batters with Test hundreds. It all gives a great balance to our side, along with confidence." Bangladesh will continue to have the services of veterans like Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mehidy Hasan Miraz. While Shakib was decent across departments in Pakistan, Mushfiqur

emerged as the side's highest run-scorer in the series, while Miraz was their top wicket-taker. "Shakib has always played a huge part in Bangladesh cricket, and he always gives us the luxury to balance the team the way we want, thanks to his all-round abilities," he said. "His adaptability and experience add to it. He is coming off a county stint and is in good shape. Miraz has been the most-improved Bangladesh cricketer in the last 5-6 years and is ready to take over whenever Shakib moves out. "He has been batting well, and his bowling has always been his number one strength, while he has also been great on the field lately," added the Sri Lankan. Speaking about the track, which has a fair sprinkling of red soil, Hathurusingha said it looked like a "sporting wicket".

Gillespie backs Australia bowlers to do the job against red-hot India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's formidable bowling attack featuring Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon "can do the job" against "red hot" India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy later this year, believes head coach of Pakistan's Test team Jason Gillespie. Since 2014-15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with India winning four consecutive series, including the historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21. But Gillespie, who claimed 259 wickets in 71 Tests, feels Australian bowlers can reverse the trend. "I will be backing them in and I am sure they can do the job," the former Australian pacer told 'Fox Sports'. "They are the best bowlers in the country. Their records speak for themselves. This quartet, including Nathan



Lyon, is the best possible bowling attack that Australia can put out in the park," he added. The Rohit Sharma-led Indian team hasn't lost a series in the ongoing WTC cycle with India defeating West Indies (away) and England (home) and holding South Africa (away) to

a draw. However, Gillespie is confident that Australia can beat the visitors. "They are red-hot, they are playing some good Test cricket for a while now. Even though they have beaten Australia in recent times. I think Australia have a chance to beat India this time around," he said. The series, a part of the World Test Championship, gets underway from November 22 in Perth. It is also for the first time since 1991-92 that India and Australia will play five Tests for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Following David Warner's retirement, Steve Smith had moved up to fill the void in the opening slot but he has not fared well, averaging a mere 28.50 in four Tests with only one fifty to his name. Gillespie said he would expect Smith to return to the coveted No 4 slot - where the batter is 34 runs short of completing 6,000 runs in Tests. "Players like David Warner are pretty tough to replace. I didn't mind the idea of Steve Smith going up in the order. I have a feeling that he might have slot back in the middle order to bat at 4," Gillespie added. The finalists of the last WTC cycle, India and Australia occupy the top two.

ICC delegation to review security and other arrangements for Champions Trophy

PTI ■ KARACHI

A five-member delegation of the International Cricket Council (ICC) will land in Karachi on Tuesday for an inspection visit for next year's Champions Trophy in Pakistan. Top officials of ICC's Events and Security Departments and the General Manager Cricket and Production Manager are part of the delegation. Andy Atkinson, the ICC Pitch Consultant, had also visited Pakistan on

three different occasions since April. According to details, the ICC delegation would discuss the tentative schedule of the tournament which was prepared and sent by the Pakistan Cricket Board to them some months back. "The tentative schedule is important because it involves the Indian team being based in Lahore and playing all their matches in the city," a well-informed source said. The source said a scenario where the Indian government does not allow the

Indian travel to Pakistan will also be discussed. The delegation would inspect the ongoing construction work in Karachi and the team hotel arrangements before flying to Islamabad and Lahore for the same purpose. "The delegation which includes their ICC Security Manager would also get briefings from security officials in Pakistan." The source said it is entirely up to the ICC when they decide to finalise and announce the tournament schedule.

MLC franchisee keen on signing James Anderson: Report

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England pacer James Anderson could return to T20 cricket after a decade following a Major League Cricket team's interest in hiring his services for the upcoming 2025 season. The 42-year-old, who retired from international cricket in July, has not played any white-ball cricket since 2019. His

last T20 match was the 2014 NatWest Blast final for Lancashire while his last T20 assignment for England was in 2009. However, "senior figures with at least one MLC team have had their interest pricked by Anderson's comments last month about a return to white-ball cricket," according to a 'BBC Sports' report. The franchise is looking to hire the services of England's



all-time leading Test wicket-taker for the third edition of the T20 league in United States next year. The short stint in MLC could make Anderson, who took 704 wickets in 188 Tests, richer by 135,000 pounds (approx 1,49,00,000). Last month, Anderson had said he is "still fit enough" to continue his cricket career and will consider a move into white-ball cricket.

Harmanpreet, Sreejesh shortlisted for FIH Hockey Stars Awards

PTI ■ LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND)

India captain Harmanpreet Singh was on Tuesday nominated for the player of the year award by the FIH while the legendary PR Sreejesh will be in contention for goalkeeper of the year honour. The International Hockey Federation's (FIH) announced the shortlisted candidates. Both Harmanpreet and Sreejesh played vital roles in India's splendid campaign in the Paris Olympics where the team claimed a bronze medal. Skipper Harmanpreet led from the front with 10 goals - most for any player in the tournament. Harmanpreet will compete with Thierry Brinkman (Netherlands), Joep de Mol (Netherlands), Hannes Müller (Germany), and Zach Wallace (England) for the award. Playing in his last tournament for India, the venerable Sreejesh put forth resolute display of defence throughout the campaign, especially against the Great Britain

when the team was reduced to 10 men in the second quarter of the quarterfinal. India beat Great Britain 4-2 in penalty shootout to reach the semifinal and later on defeated Spain 2-1 to win the bronze medal contest. Sreejesh has competition from Pirmin Blaak (Netherlands), Luis Calzado (Spain), Jean-Paul Danneberg (GER), and Tomas Santiago (Argentina). "The list of nominees was established by an Expert Panel composed of players, coaches and officials selected by each of their Continental Federations," the FIH said on its website. "The expert panel was provided access to match data from all international matches held in 2024, including Test matches, the FIH Hockey Pro League, FIH Hockey Nations Cups, FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers and the Olympic Games Paris 2024 before establishing the final list of nominees." The voting process will remain



open till October 11 for national associations (represented by their respective national teams' captains and coaches), fans, players, coaches, officials and media. "The votes of the Expert Panel count for 40 per cent of the overall result. Those from National Associations count for a further 20 per cent. The fans and other players (20 per cent) as well as the media (20 per cent) will make the remaining 40 per cent," the FIH added. The expert panel consists of Janne Muller-Wieland (Germany) and Simon Mason (England) from Europe, Tahir Zaman (Pakistan) and Ms Deepika (India) from Asia, Soledad Iparraguirre (Argentina) and Craig Parnham (USA) from Pan America, Sarah Bennett (Zimbabwe) and Ahmed Youssef (Egypt) from Africa and Amber Church (New Zealand) and Adam Webster (Australia) from Oceania. NOMINEES FOR FIH HOCKEY STARS AWARDS: Women: Gu Bingfeng (China), Yibbi Jansen

(Netherlands), Nike Lorenz (Germany), Stephanie Vanden Borre (Belgium), Xan de Waard (Netherlands). Men: Thierry Brinkman (Netherlands), Joep de Mol (Netherlands), Hannes Müller (Germany), Harmanpreet Singh (India), Zach Wallace (England). GOALKEEPER OF THE YEAR AWARD: Women: Cristina Cosentino (Argentina), Aisling D'Hooghe (Belgium), Nathalie Kubalski (Germany), Anne Veenendaal (Netherlands), Ye Jiao (China). Men: Pirmin Blaak (Netherlands), Luis Calzado (Spain), Jean-Paul Danneberg (GER), Tomas Santiago (Argentina), PR Sreejesh (India). RISING STAR OF THE YEAR AWARD: Women: Claire Colwill (Australia), Zoe Diaz (Argentina), Tan Jinzhuang (China), Emily White (Belgium), Linnea Weidemann (Germany). Men: Bautista Capurro (Argentina), Bruno Font (Spain), Sufyan Khan (Pakistan), Michel Struthoff (Germany), Arno Van Dessel (Belgium).

'I can't wait to take on the villainous role now!'

Actress Ritika Singh, who is currently basking on the success of her latest venture, *Bench Life*, speaks to *The Pioneer* about balancing acting and mixed martial arts simultaneously and also takes us back through the shooting sets. She also shared some exclusive insights about her upcoming South project

SHIKHA DUGGAL

One must-watch jewel in the ever-expanding Telugu digital world is Sony LIV's most recent original series, *Bench Life*. With a distinctive blend of sympathetic characters, intriguing storylines and an authentic representation of everyday life, this captivating series, directed by Manasa Sharma and produced by Niharika Konidela's Pink Elephant Pictures, has been making waves.

Bench Life is a fascinating contribution to the Telugu storytelling scene with its novel viewpoint, subtle performances and careful examination of subjects that appeal to audiences. The lead actress, Ritika Singh, accords with us as well!

She vocalises, "In the series, my character experiences hardships and I recall going through similar things in my own life. Acting was my full-time career, but I never neglected to set aside time for martial arts practice. See where it led me! I participated in the global championship last year. I learned karate from my father, but let me just say that not every actor receives the same kind of support. He has only ever asked me to choose my roles wisely throughout my entire life."

Her career has featured a distinctive fusion of grounded, daily characters like those in *Bench Life* and action-packed roles like those in *Irudhi Suttru*. But how did she manage to balance these opposing roles? Well, the mixed martial artist supposes, "On



I WISH I LOOKED A BIT THINNER IN BENCH LIFE, BUT I COULDN'T HAVE ACCOMPLISHED IT BECAUSE I WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY SHOOTING FOR MY FORTHCOMING SOUTH VENTURE, WHERE I AM MEANT TO PLAY TWO ROLES

the sets of *Bench Life*, it was difficult for me to control my enthusiasm because, well, in actual life, I get really excited easily. Given that my character wasn't in the best of moods, I was expected to play the part of a nice girl. As a result, I played it cool and subtle in *Bench Life*. Since that was the whole point, I'm sure that when people saw my series, they must have felt cut off from my character."

As we have all seen, a lot of young professionals identified with the themes of *Bench Life*, which included pursuing ambitions and being dissatisfied in the workplace. Based on the same assumptions, the Filmfare awardee

hypothesises for us, "I'm glad to see that people are straying from those conventional careers. I can locate them going on an exploration! I get really excited when I hear young ladies wanting to be hairstylists or nail artists. Barriers are finally being broken by globalisation. The situation was entirely different six years ago; nowadays, we have coaching classes for everything. We created this series for precisely this reason."

But it goes beyond that. Ritika, for instance, says, "I am all for risks in real life (she titters a little). I'm addicted to adrenaline. I enjoy living in danger!

Engaging with a risky individual doesn't even bother me, hehe. If not, my existence would be far too monotonous. I actually don't like an organised existence and I'm not trying to come across as poisonous at all. Taking chances is always enjoyable."

Continuing on a more general note, she says, "I have given numerous self-defense workshops throughout my life, so for me, I can remember performing a particular song called *Kalapakkaara* with Dulquer Salmaan and receiving criticism asking why I did it! For the sake of representation, they expected me to play a very strong part. They thought I was promoting myself to become famous. However, the song was not even filmed from a compromising position, so why the outcry? And come on, I'd want to respond to people that my co-star Dulquer is also a highly responsible actor—he never permits anything obscene to occur on set. Therefore, an actress can still film a special song even if she plays an independent role. A special song like *Kalapakkaara* meant nothing more to me than to celebrate women. I can still have hot looks on-screen. Furthermore, I never support shady behaviour in the industry."

With great anticipation, the *Oh My Kadavule* fame says, "I wish I had looked a bit thinner in *Bench Life*, but I couldn't have accomplished it because I was simultaneously shooting for my forthcoming South venture where I am meant to play two roles. People have been complimenting me on my appearance in *Bench Life*, so I guess I did okay. I am happy with it. I can't wait to take on a villainous role now! I want to be in charge and mix it up with chic action sequences."

CHOREOGRAPHER'S CASE

It is a case of sexual harassment at workplace: REDRESSAL PANEL

The woman choreographer who lodged a police complaint on choreographer Jani Master is a serious case, feels the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce Sexual Harassment Redressal Panel.

"It is not the case of two individuals; it is sexual harassment at the workplace and it is a serious case," said Jhansi, the Chairman of the Panel. She added that she approached the panel a few days ago and they recorded the statements of both parties.

"There are no proper guidelines here because the film industry is not a single organisation, so we follow the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (POSH) guidelines," she said.

She added that they formed a committee in the industry in 2018 and from then onwards they are working on it. "Since the government and committee must meet and establish appropriate norms for the workplace, we are forced to work much harder because we lack a structure and set of rules."

She continued by saying that they are currently handling problems as they arise. "Till now we only have single-digit cases, because some women may not come forward because of fear and also worry about if they file a complaint, they may not get work, so that's the one reason most of the women are not coming forward if something happened at their workplace," she said.

The committee openly addressed the choreographer issue on Tuesday to raise awareness among women facing challenges at work. "If the person is talented, she/he can get work in the industry and it is proved in the present case. The female choreographer who complained about a male choreographer is working with top production houses and top actors. Actually, both choreographers are extremely talented," said Jhansi.

Thammareddy Bharadwaj, one of the members of the panel, said that the victim had first approached him with her problems. "She told her problems and we got her a choreographer card and also spoke to their association. When the issue got serious, we asked her to go for a police complaint and she did. They will start

their enquiry and we have already started our enquiry," said Thammareddy Bharadwaj.

He explained that they have been doing this for several years now, but still many women haven't been comfortable coming forward to address their issues. "If anything wrong happened to a woman at her workplace, she should come forward courageously and can file a complaint with our panel; that's why we are addressing the present issue openly," said Thammareddy.

The victim had joined the industry as a minor at a very tender age, said Jhansi. "The accused is a very big person in position and authority, so we are not supporting one individual; we are taking the facts and strong evidence," she said. She added that it is sexual harassment at the workplace and working on the fast track.

"Enquiry is in the process; we have 90 days to finish, but we are on the fast track and want to complete it in fewer days," said Jhansi.

The panel convenor, Damodara Prasad, said that they asked the Dancers and Choreographers Association to put aside the choreographer from the top post. "He is holding the top post in the Telugu Film and TV Dancers and Dance Directors Association, so we asked the association to keep him aside from the post till the case is closed," said Damodara Prasad.

Everyone knows that the accused party has filed a complaint with the police department and registered an FIR. So the panel also wants to address this case openly because it gives awareness among the people, especially women who are suffering at the workplace. "We are putting a box at our Film Chamber office and they can drop their complaint; we will maintain the confidentiality of the member," said Damodara Prasad. Apart from it, they are also providing a phone number (9849972280) and an email (complaints@telugufilmchamber.in) which anyone can complain about.

"We solved a few issues that have come up over the years and we also found that there are two false cases too. After our enquiry, if anything proves against them, we will punish them according to the guidelines," he said.

Satya Dev's Zebra set to dazzle this Diwali

Satya Dev is a skilled actor, yet unfortunately, he hasn't had any great opportunities in the past years. The film *Krishnamma*, his latest release this year, earned him praise but did not perform well financially.

Currently, the actor has teamed up with Kannada actor Daali Dhananjaya for the movie *Zebra*. Eashvar Karthic holds the position of director, while SN Reddy, S Padmaja, Bala Sundaram and Dinesh Sundaram serve as producers. On Tuesday, the makers released a motion poster showcasing the main characters and revealed the film's release date. The motion poster releases the intense looks of Sathyaraj, Satya Akkala, Jennifer Piccinato, Sunil, Priya Bhavani Shankar, Daali Dhananjaya and Satya Dev. One of the most captivating elements of the motion poster is its depiction of a chess game, which symbolises the central conflict and strategic maneuvering that will drive the narrative.

According to the makers, the film is going to be an action film with some intense scenes. Ravi Basur provided the background score for this film. The makers announced that they are planning to release *Zebra* on October 31 in all south Indian languages and Hindi on the occasion of Diwali.



Pawan Kalyan is planning to shoot his films in Vijayawada!

Pawan Kalyan, the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, is currently occupied with various responsibilities. Despite being an actor, he is now more engaged in politics. Prior to entering the latest elections, the actor-turned-politician agreed to star in three Telugu movies, including *Ustaad Bhagat Singh*, *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* and *OG*. He began filming all three movies before the elections,

but once he assumed the role of Deputy Chief Minister, he has been pretty much held off with the duties. His much-anticipated film *OG* still needs a few more days to finish, while another film *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* has already completed 60% of its shooting, according to a source.

Now, the Deputy Chief Minister reassured all the producers of these films that he

intended to finish it. "It is not possible for him to come to Hyderabad and shoot here in studios because he is the Deputy CM and he needs full security. Thus, he asked the producers to erect a set in Vijayawada and they can shoot there and complete it," said the source. The producers are pleased to receive the news and have also made plans to do the same in Vijayawada.

However, the city of Vijayawada experienced severe flooding due to heavy rains, causing significant hardship for many residents. Due to this, the source also shared that the shooting plan was also postponed. Now, with the city coming a little under control, the source reveals, "The producers are making plans to erect a set in Vijayawada near the Deputy CM's house, so that he can complete the shoot. The producers are now searching for a suitable place to get the shooting. They want to shoot using the blue mat so that they can add graphics later. Pawan Kalyan wanted to complete *OG* first and then look after the other films."



TELUGU SHORT FILM AT CHICAGO SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

Emerging filmmaker Santhosh Ram Mavuri's Telugu short film *Weave of Culture* will have its Chicago debut at the Chicago South Asian Film Festival on September 22, 2024. The screening is scheduled at the Matrix Club in Naperville and will present viewers with a touching depiction of identity, diversity and the relationships that go beyond cultural differences. Director and producer Santhosh Ram Mavuri expressed that *Weave of Culture* was created out of a

strong admiration for the richness of their Handlooms and their potential extinction. "It's a celebration of the beauty that comes from understanding, embracing and learning from our own heritage," said Santhosh.

Winner at various international festivals like the 14th Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival, 8th Indian World Film Festival, World Fest Houston and Panther City Film Festival, *Weave of Culture* has already received quite a lot of recognition.



'Bahirbhoomi came in when I was contemplating stepping away from smaller projects'



Actor Noel hasn't been appearing in many films off late. In fact, he only appeared in *Rangbali*, which was released last year. However, he is starring in a movie named *Bahirbhoomi*, which is being directed by Ram Prasad Konduru. Machha Venu Madhav serves as the producer, while Rishitha Nellore takes on the role of the female lead. The film's first look has been released, with a theatrical

release anytime soon. "From the beginning, Noel has supported me for this film. The scenes between Noel and Jabardasth Phani are going to be the highlight of the film. You will get to know the significance behind the title *Bahirbhoomi* once you watch this film," said director Ram Prasad. He further stated that he emphasises the wealth of our culture when compared to Western influences in the movie. The lead-

ing actresses, Rishitha and Garima Satendra, received high praise from the director for their outstanding performances in the film.

Meanwhile, the lead star of the film, Noel, stated that he got this film at the perfect moment.

"*Bahirbhoomi* arrived at the crossroads in my career, when I was contemplating stepping away from smaller projects. This film is built on the strengths of producer Venu Madhav, director Ram Prasad

and the entire team. I am excited for audiences to experience it," said Noel. Producer Machha Venu Madhav stated that his team played a crucial role in bringing *Bahirbhoomi* to reality.

"While many recent films have opted for English titles associated with 'toilet', we boldly chose *Bahirbhoomi*, emphasising its uniqueness," said the producer. He added that he will announce the release date soon.