


QUOTE OF THE DAY

Do not get inspired by those involved in the Kaleshwaram Project but rather follow the path of legendary engineers like Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya. Some engineers who worked on the Kaleshwaram Project maligned the profession to satisfy their political bosses. Young engineers should remember that they were hired to serve the public.

— **Komatireddy Venkat Reddy,**
Minister, Telangana



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'Terrorism won't be allowed to stage comeback in J&K'



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AVNEET KAUR'S
JET-SETTING TRAVELS FROM LONDON TO GREECE



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Can Devara Break '100 crore barrier ON DAY 1?'



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DON'T MISS...

Priority to solar power for farmers...

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has instructed the relevant officials to ensure the provision of solar-powered electricity to beneficiaries in agriculture and allied sectors. The Collector presided over a meeting with officials from the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), New Delhi, along with representatives from the horticulture, agriculture, fisheries, and animal husbandry departments on Thursday. Addressing the gathering, the Collector emphasised the importance of...

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'Weekend exercise effective in...'

People cramming their entire week's exercise in one or two days or over the weekend, could be at a lower risk of developing over 200 diseases, with similar effects to those who exercise throughout the week, a study has found. "Weekend warriors" are individuals who engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity over the weekend and yet meet the World Health Organization's recommendations of 150 minutes of exercise per week for overall health. However, researchers said it is not clear if...

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India needs to do more to boost...

India has done well in areas like infrastructure in the last 10 years, but it also needs to do more in other sectors to boost local manufacturing and job creation, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said on Thursday. In an interview with PTI, Rajan further said the government's focus on production, whether it is goods or services is a good thing, but it is also important to do it the right way. Responding to a question on the Modi government's flagship initiative 'Make in India', he said, "I would say the intention..."

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India likely to maintain...

India would want their big guns Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma to fire when the mighty hosts aim for a clean sweep against a beleaguered Bangladesh in the second and final Test starting here on Friday. The all-round bowler Ravichandran Ashwin, Shubman Gill's sublime hundred, Ravindra Jadeja's quality batting and Rishabh Pant's roaring comeback allowed India to script a comfortable victory in Chennai despite being put under pressure by the Bangladesh pacers on day one. The way India...

-SPORTS

20L jobs in 5 years

CM keen on skilled manpower for industries

- WORK-FROM-HOME PRIORITY:** Promotion of hybrid systems to enable work-from-home opportunities.
- FLOOD VICTIM SUPPORT:** Exploration of employment opportunities in flood-affected areas, as requested by victims.
- RURAL EMPLOYMENT:** Focus on providing job opportunities in rural areas.
- ACTION PLAN:** Officials directed to present an action plan in the next meeting.
- COLLABORATION WITH MNCs:** Plans to establish training centres with multinational companies for job creation.

'Develop infra in sports sector'

Rs 23 cr sanctioned for completing stadia

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to provide the necessary infrastructure to bolster the sports sector in the State. During a review meeting at the State Secretariat on Youth Services and Sports, the Chief Minister stressed that the previous TDP regime had promoted sports and initiated the construction of stadia and playgrounds. However, he lamented that the YSRCP government had halted these ongoing projects. Mr Naidu instructed officials to expedite the completion of partially built stadia, playgrounds, and sports development centres across the State. He announced that Rs 23 crore has been sanctioned for this purpose.

Continued on Page 2

'One teacher per class' policy for govt schools: Nara Lokesh

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh government will introduce a 'one teacher per class' policy in all government schools starting next year, announced Minister for IT, Electronics, and HRD, Nara Lokesh. The announcement was made during a surprise inspection of the Municipal Corporation Elementary School in Etcherla, Srikakulam. Minister Lokesh interacted with students from grades 1 to 5, asking them about their favourite subjects, lunch experiences, and their parents' occupations. The students expressed their fondness for subjects like English and Environmental Studies (EVS). Lokesh appreciated their handwriting and praised the efforts of the teachers in improving their writing skills. "The dedication of our teachers is reflected in the success of our students," said Lokesh, indicating that the new policy could be expanded across the state.

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APSRTC bags national award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), now operating as the AP Public Transport Department, has been awarded the prestigious 'Governance Now 9th India PSU IT Award' for its successful implementation of cashless transactions and paperless ticketing via its mobile app. Governance Now presented the award. V Sudhakar, Chief Engineer (IT), accepted the honour on behalf of APSRTC Managing Director Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao at a ceremony in New Delhi.

Jagan's Tirumala visit likely to trigger tension

NDA allies insist on YSRCP chief declaring his faith

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's planned visit to Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple at Tirumala Hills is likely to raise political temperatures in Andhra Pradesh as the ruling NDA is sticking to its guns on the demand that the former Chief Minister should declare his faith before entering the hill shrine. Jagan had said he would visit the temple as part of the statewide temple rituals called for by the party to atone for the 'sin' allegedly committed by Minister N Chandrababu Naidu through his allegations on Tirupati laddus. Reddy's appeal comes days after Naidu alleged that the previous YSRCP government used substandard ingredients and animal fat for making the laddus at Sri Venkateswara temple in Tirupati. The allegations sparked a massive controversy across the country. Responding to Reddy's announcement on the temple visit, the BJP's state unit on Thursday demanded he declare his faith before entering the hill shrine.

Continued on Page 2

Meet targets of Central schemes: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad reviewed the implementation of various centrally sponsored schemes in the state at the secretariat on Thursday. He held discussions with officials from the relevant departments and emphasised the need to execute these schemes to meet the set targets. The Chief Secretary examined the progress of schemes jointly funded by the Central and State Governments in areas such as Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Housing, Agriculture, Medical and Health, and Fisheries. Principal Secretary for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Sashi Bhushan Kumar, informed that 22 Centrally-sponsored schemes are currently being implemented by the department. He further elaborated that during the 2023-24 financial year, Rs 3,366 crore had been spent on these schemes, and so far, Rs 7,899 crore have been utilised in the 2024-25 financial year.

Continued on Page 2

US Consulate to promote American firms' access to AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is looking for a lot of investments and the US Consulate General in Hyderabad is eager to promote American firms' access to the State, said Consul General Jennifer Larson here on Thursday. The Consul General noted that she recently met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and ministers to talk about the kind of cooperation the consulate could facilitate. "I had a chance to come and meet with the new government six weeks ago, meet various ministers, meet with the CM, and we talked about the type of cooperation we can do in Andhra Pradesh, and they are looking for a lot of investments," Larson said on the sidelines of a human trafficking seminar. According to the diplomat, several top US companies operating out of Hyderabad, which is growing by the week, would look at the southern state with interest as to how the business landscape would develop, ease of doing business aspect and good business incentives, among others. Highlighting that the US shares a strong relationship with Andhra Pradesh along with Telangana, Larson noted that 40 per cent of Indian students in the US originate from the Telugu states. "Telugu is the fastest growing language in America. So, we have incredible people ties with Andhra. That's another reason why it is such an important state for us. The diaspora is so big in the US," said the diplomat. The Consul General underscored that promoting bilateral ties and building bridges through education and students is an excellent way. Further, Larson said Naidu had played a major role in the establishment of the US Consulate in Hyderabad, the first US diplomatic office to open in India since its independence in 1947. The Hyderabad US Consulate, which now operates out of a USD 350 million office in Hyderabad's Financial District, first commenced its operations from Paigah Palace in Begumpet in 2008 when YSR Rajasekhara Reddy was the CM of united Andhra Pradesh.

Govt committed to coastal development: Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal and Urban Development Minister Ponguru Narayana has said that the government is dedicated to coastal development and environmental protection throughout the State. The School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada, in association with the Indian Institute of Town Planners, organised a two-day national conference on Thursday, focusing on the theme "Protection of Coastal Environment through Use of Technology and Traditional Knowledge." Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural programme, Minister Narayana outlined the measures being taken by the government for coastal development and environmental protection, as well as the challenges faced. He said the organisation of such a conference as a means to address these challenges. He noted that Andhra Pradesh boasts the longest coastline in the country, stretching 972 km, making the



Minister Narayana said that the ports of Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Machilipatnam, Ramayapatnam, and Krishnapatnam have also seen substantial development. The government is committed to taking the initiative to further develop the coastal areas.

Balineni, Samineni join Jana Sena

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy, along with former MLAs Samineni Udayabhanu and Kilari Rosaiah, joined the Jana Sena Party (JSP) on Thursday. YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders, including Avanapu Vikram and his wife, also made the transition to the JSP. The three leaders were welcomed into the JSP in the presence of Jana Sena chief and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan at the party's state office in Mangalagiri. Pawan Kalyan admitted them into the Jana Sena by draping them in party scarves. Balineni Srinivasa Reddy was a prominent leader of the YSRCP in Prakasam district and served in the cabinet of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. He is also closely related to the YSR family. Samineni Udayabhanu served as the government whip in the previous administration and was a significant leader of the YSRCP in the Jaggaipet constituency. Kilari Rosaiah was elected to the Assembly on a YSRCP ticket from the Ponnuru constituency in Guntur district. Tensions within the YSRCP, particularly with Jagan Mohan Reddy, prompted their decision to join the JSP. Additionally, Ongole-based businessman Kandi Ravi Shankar and film producer Chittamaru Pravin Kumar Reddy also joined the JSP.

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JSP stages protest in front of Nani's house

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After former minister and YSRCP senior leader Perni Venkatramaiah, also known as Nani, made controversial comments about Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj & Rural Development K Pawan Kalyan on Wednesday, Jana Sena Party (JSP) leaders and supporters staged a protest in front of Nani's house in Machilipatnam on Thursday.

This was the second consecutive protest by JSP at Nani's house after the attack on his vehicle in Gudivada on September 1. The JSP leaders and supporters chanted slogans against Nani and demanded an apology. Meanwhile, YSRCP staged a counter-protest. The situation turned tense, leading to the arrest of JSP leaders and supporters by the police.



Jana Sena Party workers staging a protest in front of senior YSRCP leader Perni Nani's house in Machilipatnam on Thursday

Upon learning about the JSP protest, the police rushed to Perni Nani's house. YSRCP leaders and party workers also gathered at Nani's house, and both parties raised slogans against each other, creating a tense atmosphere. Nani's son Perni Krishna Murthy and other leaders attempted to come outside the house to argue with the JSP leaders, but the police prevented them from doing so. Meanwhile, Perni Nani, while talking to reporters, said

that he is not afraid of Pawan Kalyan's threats. He alleged that Pawan has no substance and that he is making provocative comments. He warned that if the police remained silent, incidents of violence will occur in Machilipatnam.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh held a 'Praja Darbar' at the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) district office during his visit to Visakhapatnam. At the event, the minister directly interacted with citizens, listening to their concerns and addressing their grievances. "I assure you that every issue raised will be thoroughly reviewed, and we will make every effort to resolve them," Lokesh stated, emphasizing his commitment to public service.

During the session, the minister underscored the urgent need for a comprehensive investigation into the killings and attacks on Dalits that occurred under the YSRCP government. "It is vital to ensure justice for all communities, especially the marginalised," he added.

Members of the AP Nurses Struggle Committee presented their demands to Minister Lokesh, seeking solutions for contract staff nurses. Their requests included the regularisation of nurses working under the DME, APVVP, DPH, and NHM departments, the implementation of full gross salary, mutual consent transfers, and insurance coverage. Representatives from journalists' associations also voiced their concerns, requesting 4 cents of land for free housing, a pension of Rs 10,000, and

Every grievance will be addressed: Nara Lokesh



compensation for journalists who lost their lives due to COVID-19.

Additionally, representatives from the AP Velama Teachers Federation sought justice for candidates who were not selected during the DSC 2008 notification. Meanwhile, parents of students studying medicine in Russia appealed for the NTR Foreign Education BC Overseas Scholarship, highlighting the financial burdens associated with overseas education.

A coalition of Dalit groups demanded the release of fee reimbursement arrears for engineering and degree students, which had been suspended by the previous YCP government due to high electricity bills. They urged the government to take over aided schools and colleges to strengthen the education system and called for accountability regarding the attacks on Dalits during the previous regime. Specific incidents were

brought to Minister Lokesh's attention, including the cases of Dr Sudhakar and the murders of driver Subrahmanyam, Kodikatti Srinu, and Kiran Kumar, allegedly perpetrated by YSRCP MLC Ananthababu. "We need a thorough investigation into these serious matters to ensure justice is served," the minister affirmed. Minister Lokesh concluded by stating, "We will do everything possible to address these appeals and support those in need."



Amaravati to be greenfield capital balancing environment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A regional workshop titled 'Cooling India's Cities' was hosted by Tabreed India in collaboration with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in Vijayawada on Thursday.

During the event, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Tabreed India and GIZ under the latter's 'Energy Efficiency Cooling' programme, which is jointly implemented with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power.



The workshop brought together diverse stakeholders from the government, industry, and academia to explore opportunities and address regulatory and operational barriers to facilitate the adoption of District Cooling in the greenfield capital city of Amaravati and the broader state of Andhra Pradesh.

The roundtable, moderated by Sudheer Perla, Managing Director of Tabreed Asia, and Piyush Sharma, Energy Advisor at GIZ India, focused on catalysing district cooling systems in Amaravati for both existing and upcoming industrial clusters in the state.

Sudheer Perla stated, "Amaravati's vision as a greenfield capital balancing environmental stewardship and equitable growth provides the perfect opportunity to implement District Cooling and leverage the circularity benefits it can offer. Through the potential case studies we have assessed for the region, including the capital of Amaravati, District Cooling presents a USD 5 billion investment opportunity through reduced power load and energy consumption. Amaravati has the potential to become a light-house city for sustainable urban development across Andhra Pradesh and the entire country."

Govt achieved many strides in 100 days: Rammohan Naidu

Atchannaidu announces re-establishment of Horticulture Department's AD office in Uddanam

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has praised the coalition government's efforts in Andhra Pradesh, stating that the administration has successfully revived the State's prosperity, accomplishing several significant milestones within its first 100 days in power.

Speaking at the conclusion of the Idi Manchi Prabhutvam programme in Manchineellapeta, Vajrapukotturu mandal, Naidu highlighted the stark contrast between the current government's achievements and the failures of the previous administration. "Despite holding power, the former administration failed to deliver meaningful work. In contrast, we have already cleared Rs. 3,000 in arrears over three months and launched 178 canteens serving nutritious meals for just Rs. 5," Naidu remarked.

He further emphasised the importance of fulfilling election promises, pointing out the repeal of the Land Titling Act.

"Our government is committed to the welfare of the people, no matter the challenges. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has been working tirelessly for the betterment of the State," he added. Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu also addressed the gathering, stressing that while official posts may not last, good deeds will be remembered forever. He announced several key initiatives, including the re-establishment of the Horticulture Department's AD office for the Uddanam area, which had previously been moved to Paderu. Atchannaidu also reiterated the government's commitment to improving conditions for fishermen, unveiling compensation of Rs. 10 lakh for families who lose loved ones while at sea.

"We are dedicated to constructing a coastal road, delivering on our promises," Atchannaidu assured the public. He further confirmed that households will receive three gas cylinders by Diwali, and fish landing centres would be

established soon to significantly benefit residents of Neelpet. "We are equipping fishing boats with satellite systems to provide vital information on fish availability and weather conditions," he added, while acknowledging the department's financial burden of Rs. 32,000 crore.

District Collector Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar applauded the achievements of the government over the last 100 days, particularly the release of funds from the 15th Finance Commission. He called upon the public to participate in initiatives like Swarna Andhra and Swarna Srikakulam. "We need collective efforts to achieve our goals," Pundkar said.

Local legislator Gauthi Sirisha expressed her gratitude to the fishing community for their unwavering support of the government. She assured the public that the promised distribution of Rs. 20,000 to fishermen will begin soon, and that the construction of the much-anticipated fishing jetty will be completed in the near future.

Man, his son killed as lorry knocks them down

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A man and his son were killed when a lorry ploughed through them when they were walking on the road at A. Kondur crossroads, near here on the night of Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased Mamilla Srinu and his son Mamilla Prasangi were going home on foot. A speeding lorry ran over them and killed both on the spot. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH. The lorry driver absconded.



Venkaiah Naidu visits Sainik School

Emphasises schools' critical role in training future leaders

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Former Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu visited the Sainik School in Korukonda, Vizianagaram district, operated by the Ministry of Defense. The visit aimed to engage with students and highlight the importance of holistic education in developing well-rounded individuals. Naidu expressed his joy at seeing the institution's focus on holistic development, set amidst a picturesque environment. "It brings me joy to see an educational institution focused on the holistic development of students, set in a beautiful environment surrounded by greenery," he remarked.

Accompanied by Captain SS Shastri, Naidu toured the school's departments, praising the dedicated infrastructure supporting academic learning and character building. "It is heartening to see such dedicated infrastructure that supports not just academic learning but also character building," he noted. "I was truly impressed by the display of patriotism and discipline



among the students here," he shared. The former Vice-President emphasised the school's critical role in training future leaders. "The training offered here is

exceptional for those aspiring to join the Indian Army in the future," he stated.

Naidu acknowledged the broader mission of Sainik Schools in cultivating a sense of

duty and leadership among youth. "Visiting institutions like this reminds us of the importance of guiding our young generation towards paths of service and commitment," he said.

Rail authorities ignore local needs in north Andhra

Announcement of a Vande Bharat train to Puri raises eyebrows

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The central hub of North Andhra is grappling with a severe shortage of train services to key cities, despite years of persistent pleas from both officials and the public. The recent introduction of Vande Bharat trains, while generating some excitement, has also ignited dissatisfaction among locals who feel their specific needs are being ignored.



"The launch of a Vande Bharat train between Visakhapatnam and Secunderabad was initially met with enthusiasm," said Kameswar Rao, a prominent trader in the Poorna Market. "However, the subsequent announcement of a Vande Bharat train to Puri, which lacks local demand, raised

eyebrows. It seems more about benefiting Odisha, given the Railway Minister's connections."

The situation has deteriorated further with the introduction of a Vande Bharat train from Visakhapatnam to Durg, passing through Rayagada and Titlagarh. "This new service, also not request-

ed by locals, has intensified feelings of frustration and neglect," said Sundar Patnaik, a regular traveller between the proposed route. "The response from passengers has been lukewarm, primarily due to higher ticket prices compared to bus services."

The pressing question remains: Why are railway

authorities rolling out trains that do not meet local demand while ignoring the long-standing requests from North Andhra? Residents of the port city have expressed their disappointment and are calling for more action to bridge the transportation gaps.

The business and commuting needs of North Andhra to Bengaluru are not being adequately addressed. The Prasanthi Express, which used to operate between Visakhapatnam and Bengaluru, has been rerouted to Bhubaneswar, leading to a decrease in seat availability for passengers from Visakhapatnam. "We desperately need a regular service to Bengaluru," said IT Entrepreneur. "Our appeals have largely gone unheard."

The need for train services to Tirupati is also urgent. The Tirumala Express and the double-decker train from Visakhapatnam to Tirupati are frequently overbooked, with reservations often needed months in advance. "We have been pushing for a Garib Rath on this route to accommodate the increasing demand," said Nirmal Kumar Rao, a member of the prominent Industry body.

Besides, Visakhapatnam does not have a direct train service to Chennai, a significant commercial centre. Although trains like the Coromandel and Mail pass through Visakhapatnam, they provide limited seating. Local traders and residents have been advocating for a regular train service to Chennai to satisfy the high demand.

Vijayawada Division launches Swachh Food initiative

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the ongoing Swachhata Hi Seva-2024 campaign, the Vijayawada Division of South Central Railway launched a comprehensive Swachh Food initiative on Thursday to ensure clean, hygienic, and quality food services at railway stations, onboard trains, and surrounding areas. This initiative aligns with the campaign's mission to provide a healthy and pleasant experience for passengers.



As part of the initiative, 15 pantry cars from popular express trains were inspected. Food inspectors monitored hygiene standards, including the cleanliness of washing areas and utensils. Pricing and expiry dates of food items sold onboard were also thoroughly checked.

Additionally, complaint registers and IDs of onboard vendors were reviewed, while vendors were counselled on personal hygiene and protective measures to avoid food contamination.

Further inspections were carried out at major food plazas, Rail Coach Restaurants, and

other catering units across stations. The food inspection team collected samples for laboratory testing and verified licences, medical certificates, and FSSAI certifications of vendors to ensure full compliance. The Vijayawada Haldiram's Coach Restaurant and other fast-food units were inspected.

ACROSS THE STATES



Death sentence for Kolkata man for rape-murder

Kolkata court on Thursday sentenced a man to death for the rape and murder of a seven-year-old girl in 2023...

'No more adjournments'

SC on Godhra train burning case; next hearing on Jan 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will hear on January 15 the appeals filed by the Gujarat government and several other convicts in the 2002 Godhra train burning case.

Will not allow terrorism to stage comeback in J&K: Shah

PNS ■ CHENANI/UDHAMPUR

Ahead of the third and final phase of polling in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election next week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah intensified attacks on the Congress, NC and PDP on Thursday...



The home minister said whoever spreads terror in Jammu and Kashmir will get his answer at the gallows. "I want to ask you, whether (Parliament attack convict) Afzal Guru should have been hanged or not? The NC and the Congress are now saying he should not have been hanged..."

Tech upgradation should empower the poor: Modi

Launches 3 supercomputers

PNS ■ PUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said a country can aim for high achievements only if it has a big vision and asserted that technology upgradation should be to empower the poor.



Delhi and Kolkata to facilitate pioneering scientific research, Modi said. Modi also inaugurated the Rs 850 crore High-Performance Computing system tailored for weather and climate research...

BJP leaders provoking people of Jharkhand: CM

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Thursday accused BJP leaders of 'provoking people of the state in the name of caste and religion'.



Many faces, which you would not have seen earlier, are being seen now. They will be seen only for once and thereafter they will disappear, Soren said.

Naga govt stops seer from holding 'Gau Dhvaj Yatra'

A prominent seer along with five others who had arrived in Nagaland for the 'Gau Dhvaj Sthapana Bharat Yatra' were told to return following restrictions imposed by the Nagaland government.



Allahabad HC questions use of 'Honourable' title

The Allahabad High Court is examining the protocol surrounding the use of the term 'Honourable' in official communications concerning officials of the Uttar Pradesh government...

Woman trampled to death by wild tusker in Odisha

PNS ■ BARIPADA (ODISHA)

A tribal woman was trampled to death by a wild tusker in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district on Thursday, police said.

'Stop working like political party'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the Indian Road Congress (IRC), a 90-year-old organisation that gives guidance when it comes to technical aspects of infrastructure building of our country, may be a knowledge engine, but it is functioning like a political party.

Gadkari tells Indian Road Congress



"Sometimes I feel you (IRC) are working like a political party. You are a professional organisation. You should have a permanent office with laboratories and appoint people who are interested in research and technology full-time and take advantage of their knowledge and experience," he suggested.

CASE AGAINST K'TAKA CM

Lokayukta police seeking legal clarification

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Lokayukta police are seeking 'legal clarification' to register an FIR against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, sources said on Thursday.



"We have not yet registered a case. Some legal clarification is being sought, as the special court has passed the order under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) while it should have perhaps passed the order following procedure under Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Samhita (BNSS)," a source in the Lokayukta police said.

'Weekend exercise effective in lowering disease risk'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People cramming their entire week's exercise in one or two days over the weekend, could be at a lower risk of developing over 200 diseases, with similar effects to those who exercise throughout the week, a study has found.



rior style of exercise was associated with a lower risk of heart disease and stroke compared to exercise performed evenly over a week. The research, published in the journal Circulation, analysed data from nearly 90,000 individuals in the UK Biobank dataset.

between June 2013 and December 2015, which recorded their total physical activity, including duration and intensity. They were classified under 'weekend warrior', 'regular', or 'inactive'. The study examined links between physical activity patterns and incidence of 678 conditions across 16 types of diseases, including mental health, digestive and neurological ones.

Congress has become spokesperson of urban naxals, says Nadda

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

BJP president and Union Minister JP Nadda on Thursday came down heavily on the opposition Congress, labeling it as the 'spokesperson of urban naxals' and accusing it of promoting disintegrative forces within the country.



nationalism." He asserted that the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 was achieved under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Nadda paid tribute to Jan

Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who opposed the notion of 'Ek Desh, Do Nishan, Do Vidhan, Do Pradhan,' and highlighted the BJP's commitment to its ideology. Reflecting on the history of the Congress, Nadda remarked that Mahatma Gandhi had once suggested disbanding the party after independence, a recommendation that Jawaharlal Nehru ignored.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Trouble for Siddaramaiah

Karnataka CM faces fresh political and legal challenge as alleged land scam during his previous tenure gains traction

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is facing the heat as a special court has directed the Mysuru Lokayukta police to investigate his connection with an alleged MUDA scam. This follows the Karnataka High Court's dismissal of Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the Governor's approval for the investigation. Siddaramaiah finds himself embroiled in a controversy as a probe into an alleged land scam during his previous tenure (2013-2018) gains momentum. The allegations revolve around irregularities in the denotification of prime land in Bengaluru, where government-owned land was allegedly released for private development, bypassing legal procedures. This development has not only triggered a political storm but also raised questions about the stability of his government, which is already navigating internal challenges. The case, brought to light through opposition parties and activists, accuses Siddaramaiah of misusing his position to facilitate the denotification of land in favour of private individuals. It is claimed



that these actions led to substantial financial losses to the state exchequer. The denotification process is typically reserved for cases where the government no longer requires the land for public purposes. However, the opposition alleges that the decision-making was influenced by vested interests.

The probe, aims to examine Siddaramaiah's role and whether he acted within the framework of the law. While the investigation is in its preliminary stages, the political ramifications are already visible. With the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) demanding a thorough investigation and even his resignation, the pressure on Siddaramaiah is mounting. In response to the accusations, Siddaramaiah has strongly denied any wrongdoing, calling the probe a politically motivated attempt to tarnish his image and destabilise his government. Siddaramaiah's defence rests on his claim that the land denotification was carried out in compliance with legal procedures and was vetted by relevant authorities. He also pointed out that similar cases have been registered against several politicians across party lines, suggesting that this is a standard political practice to harass the CM's of the Opposition parties and not unique to his administration. If the investigation gathers pace and incriminating evidence surfaces, it could weaken his authority, both within his party and in the eyes of the public. The BJP, as the principal opposition in Karnataka, is likely to leverage the land scam to question Siddaramaiah's integrity and leadership. Their demand for accountability could lead to prolonged political uncertainty, especially if the case moves into the courts or if there are calls for judicial oversight. Further, any perception of corruption, especially in a state like Karnataka where electoral battles are fiercely fought, could erode Siddaramaiah's public image. His government, which came to power on promises of transparency and development, may find itself in a difficult position defending its track record if this case gains momentum and more evidence surfaces.

PICTALK



An artist gives finishing touches to a clay idol of Goddess at artisans' village Kumartuli, in Kolkata

Exploring the depths of the human mind



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

As AI draws comparisons to human cognition, the mystery of the mind grows more complex, raising crucial questions about its unused potential



The human mind is a unique organic entity whose lengths of reach and visions of the range are still to be fully mapped. Many believe that an average mind works at less than 30 per cent of its potential. Putting this in the context of artificial intelligence, the matter becomes even more complex. There is a theory doing the rounds in the field of artificial intelligence that suggests that entities of artificial intelligence have the potential of organic functioning, just like the human mind.

The evidence for this is fairly mixed. Some conclusions may emerge over time. The crucial question concerning artificial intelligence however does include its possibilities and potential for organic evolution and growth. As observed, sooner or later, answers will emerge. Even otherwise, the human mind is a suo motu logic of its existence. Attempts to map it, are indeed one of the exciting aspects of human endeavour. Notwithstanding some breakthroughs in mapping the brain, there are areas of brain function that need a closer look both physically and operationally. Interestingly, notwithstanding all this, there is a common reference to the 'second childhood' of human beings, where people, upon reaching a certain

age, start behaving with child-like traits. It is difficult to explain this process, but it is fairly obvious to notice.

Similarly, the jury is out on the age by which, the basic orientation of the brain fully takes place. One also needs to know when it matures enough to develop a relationship between the 'conscious' brain and the 'subconscious' brain.

Notwithstanding the diverse interpretations of the above narrative, it is obvious that at some stage the basic foundations of the mind seemingly get concretised. One such example is the influence of early childhood experiences on a growing human being. There are stages of childhood emerging into early adulthood.

All this becomes integral to the individual's ways of thinking and behaving. Popularly, this is known to affect the orientations of a growing individual on matters of finance, gender or for that matter even values.

The list can be extended but more to the point one does not know, exhaustively, of all the influences which go into the making of an operationally adult human mind. Very often, there may be latent influences on a human mind



MANY AREAS OF THOUGHT, REFLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND RESEARCH MAY CONTAIN INDICATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE MIND. IT MAY BE A CHALLENGE, BUT A CHALLENGE THAT CANNOT BE EVADED

that may not manifest themselves until a much later point in adulthood.

All in all, many ambiguities remain, and so do many contradictions that stay alive so far as the working of the mind is concerned. Above all, it is generally believed that hormonal changes affect the working of the mind. Both men and women reportedly pass through menopause in their later life. Many are of the view that menopausal effects are more identifiable amongst the women than the men. An issue, however, remains to be fully answered: what are the factors that influence the working of the mind?

Yet another element that influences behaviour is the fall out of a mental shock. It can have many approximations of derailing the thought process of the individual, and indeed, impacting many values. Put simply, many areas of thought, reflection, analysis, and research may contain indications of understanding the dynamics of the mind. It may be a challenge, but a challenge that cannot be evaded.

Further, there are also some transgenerational aspects to it. Say, how two parents deal with each other, or singly and collectively deal with a child

is an important factor for the child's growth. This can carry on across generations. Physiologically, the passing of some genes is known to happen across generations.

This is not only in terms of physical characteristics but also certain diseases that may have affected one of the grandparents in a given generation and resurfaced again two generations later in the physical system of a descendant. The mapping of this process, as of today, needs much additional work to be done.

This also contains a whole research agenda of human physiology, physical anthropology, medicines and more. Such a subject matter would deserve an integrated approach of not just, anthropology, psychology, genetic sciences and more, but a whole setup of support disciplines with appropriate interdisciplinary framework.

This will give insights into the physiology of the human being and the composition of the brain and mind. It is a challenging task, but it is a task that cannot be avoided.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVERNOR SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Madam — Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, in an unprecedented move on the evening of June 29 last year, unilaterally removed Tamil Nadu Minister V Senthilbalaji from the Council of Ministers. But he hastily backtracked from his decision late at night because he too knew that his act was not only illegal but also unconstitutional. Some people say that Ravi has always been in the habit of being in controversies. But I believe that R N Ravi is a Governor later, first he is the order follower of the ruling Home Ministry. The ideology of the Home Ministry is clearly visible in every decision and every speech of him.

For example, just two days ago, while giving a lecture, he said that 'secularism is a European concept, that is why it was not a part of the Indian Constitution earlier, later, an 'insecure Prime Minister' got it added to the Constitution during the Emergency'.

For example, in one of his sentences, he first hinted at the concept of a Hindutva nation and secondly, he also criticised former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Some critics are demanding the immediate removal of R N Ravi from the post of Governor, whereas I believe that this is an ideological war which has been started by the central Government through the Governor, hence it would be better to answer this verbal war with thoughts only. Ravi should be asked, and then he will also say that the entire Constitution of India is external and is a copy of Europe, especially Britain, hence the entire Constitution should be abolished? Is our Constitution, on the basis of which we are proudly waving the flag of being the largest democracy today, also a European concept?

Has the Governor forgotten that he has taken oath of this Constitution? Secularism is an integral part of our Constitution. It is our biggest duty to keep religion separate from politics.
Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Ukraine appreciates India's efforts



The meeting of Ukrainian President Zelensky with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of his US visit for the Quad is taken with the overwhelming gesture from the Ukrainian counterparts. Ukraine has been visited by almost all the Quad leaders in person, and India particularly is playing a spe-

cial role in establishing peace within Ukraine with its humanitarian assistance, negotiating stability deals and peace settlement mediation between Ukraine and Russia. The Indian efforts for peace initiation is so far are still moving ahead in the back channel diplomatic level. For which Ukraine is thankful for the clear support of India towards Ukrainian integrity and sovereignty. India's efforts in this regards is particularly welcoming that, we take care of every nation near or far from us; stuck in the political or economic or geopolitical turmoil, India's assistance will be helpful to ensure peace and tranquillity in the war hit country. Also such moves will also help India to meet its commitment of becoming Vishwa Shanti Guru or World's Peace Leader in the time to come. This peace collaboration between India and Ukraine will take Indian diplomatic skills to the next level.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

INDIA'S HOCKEY DOMINANCE CONTINUES

Madam—Indian hockey is on a high as exemplified by the way Manpreet Singh's men dominated the Men's Asian trophy at China's Hulunbuir. Notwithstanding the fact that India was the favourites to lift the title, the boys had to perform on the day, and they did. Although India fought hard to overcome an unexpected resistance from China in the final, the same team it had blanked in the league match, there was little doubt that it was the best team on display throughout the tournament. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics bronze medal, 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games gold medal, bronze at the recent Paris Olympics, and now Asian gold: India has had an excellent run on the astro turf for a couple of years, after a long, long period. The best part of the present Indian hockey team is the unity and spirit with which they come across the field come what may. Coach Craig Fulton's disinclination towards unnecessary and unwarranted chopping of players, in contrast to a few former coaches, has played its role. The talented players, of course, are indispensable

to Indian hockey. At the same time, it is felt that India should not rest on its laurels; 2026 World Cup in Belgium and the Netherlands should be another platform to showcase their undoubted brilliance.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

ENCOUNTERS RAISE CONCERNS

Madam — The recent reports of police encounters resulting in the deaths of alleged criminals raise a critical question about our justice system and accountability, such as how can we allow a system where police act as judge, jury, and executioner? Does law enforcement cross the line from justice to vigilantism? The tragic killings in Badlapur, Unnao, and Chennai reveal a disturbing trend. We need to consider how we can assure accountability that seems to reward extrajudicial actions. It is imperative for supreme courts to intervene and uphold the principles of justice in democracy.

Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

World tourism day: Uniting people, fostering peace

Whether visiting cultural landmarks, enjoying local cuisine, or simply interacting with people, tourism fosters global unity and peace

Every year on September 27, the world celebrates World Tourism Day, a reminder of the crucial role that tourism plays in fostering cultural exchange, boosting economies, and promoting peace. As borders open and people explore new destinations, tourism serves as a bridge, uniting diverse cultures and breaking down barriers between nations.

In 2024, as we celebrate World Tourism Day, the theme focuses on the far-reaching benefits of travel beyond leisure, recognising how tourism helps us understand the world, its people, and its many cultures in deeper and more meaningful ways. Tourism is not merely about sightseeing; it's about experiencing the essence of a place, its history, and its culture. As Bulat Nurmukhanov, Deputy Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee, emphasises, "Tourism is primarily a way to immerse oneself in new cultures and experience history." Through tourism, individuals are given the chance to see the world through different lenses, fostering greater acceptance and understanding of other peo-



ple and their ways of life. This broader understanding is why cities like Moscow have prioritised cultural tourism as a key driver for their economic and social growth. The Moscow tourism strategy emphasises the importance of museums, exhibitions, and cultural events, which help travelers connect with the history and artistic traditions of the region. This approach reflects a global shift in tourism, where travelers seek deeper, more authentic experiences that expand their worldviews. Tourism has always played a unique role in creating connections between people from different backgrounds. It allows us to learn from one another, building bridges of

understanding and respect. On World Tourism Day, this aspect of travel is especially highlighted, as we reflect on how it fosters harmony in an increasingly interconnected world.

As Kush Kapoor CEO of Roseate Hotels & Resorts, points out, "Tourism is about the connections we forge and the cultural experiences we offer." Kapoor stresses the importance of offering travelers more than just a stay, but a chance to explore different cultures and traditions. In a world where differences can sometimes divide, tourism brings people together, promoting peace and mutual respect.

For hotels and resorts, the focus is now on providing culturally aware experiences, from diverse culinary offerings to personalised services that reflect the traditions and customs of visitors. This kind of attention to cultural diversity enriches the overall travel experience, making it more inclusive and meaningful. Beyond cultural connections, tourism is a major economic driver for many countries. It generates millions of jobs, supports local businesses, and

contributes to the global economy. Sustainable tourism focuses on minimising the environmental footprint of travel while maximising the positive social and economic impact on host communities. From eco-friendly hotels to tours that support local artisans, tourism can be a powerful tool for inclusive development and environmental protection.

Perhaps the most significant impact of tourism is its role in promoting global peace and understanding. By encouraging interactions between people of different cultures, tourism helps to break down prejudices and build mutual respect. As we celebrate World Tourism Day, it's important to remember that each journey is not just a trip to a new place but an opportunity to engage with the world in a way that promotes peace and harmony. When people experience the customs, values, and traditions of other cultures, they begin to appreciate the similarities and shared humanity that unite us all.

(The author is a travel writer, views expressed are personal)



ANJALI PATHAK

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

SHARPENING THE QUAD VISION

Quad summit focused on maintaining peace in the Indo-Pacific region as its top priority



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Modi's high-profile visit to the US this week reiterated the salience of US-India bilateral, underscored by several key decisions with a clear focus on the future of this 21st century partnership. This visit by the Indian PM, coming after his trips to Russia and Ukraine, points towards a multi-pronged approach, where India is willing to have diplomatic engagements at the highest level, keeping its national interests sacrosanct.

That PM Modi and President Biden have found a mutual friendship framework, despite the Indian PM having held a political roadshow of sorts with his predecessor in the Oval Office, is a signal to the large world, that the US-India bilateral has bipartisan support. The Quas leaders' summit, Modi's rockstar concert-style engagement with the Indian diaspora and his meeting with top CEOs from the technology sector in the US, all point towards an escape velocity having been achieved by the US and India, with no scope of a look back.

China was the invisible elephant in the room, at the Quad leaders' summit. The statement from the Quad summit without naming an aggressive, maritime international law violator, China, mentioned "As four leading maritime democracies in the Indo-Pacific, we unequivocally stand for the maintenance of peace and stability across this dynamic region, as an indispensable element of global security and prosperity.

We strongly oppose any destabilising or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion. We condemn recent illicit missile launches in the region that violate UN Security Council resolutions. We express serious concern over recent dangerous and aggressive actions in the maritime domain. We seek a region where no country dominates and no country is dominated—one where all countries are free from coercion, and can exercise their agency to determine their futures. We are united in our commitment to upholding a stable and open international system, with its strong support for human rights, the principle of freedom, rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and peaceful settlement of disputes and prohibition on the threat or use of force in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter. Respect for the leadership of regional institutions, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), is and will remain at the centre of the Quad's efforts." While Quad is not a defence partnership like NATO, the presence of a global superpower, China with its coercive maneuverers in the entire Indian Ocean region, bore heavily on the leaders during the summit in Delaware. Delhi, Delaware (President Biden's hometown), Sydney, and Tokyo are keenly watching the international waters, and violations by China have been reported.

The leaders announced "Today we are announcing a new regional Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI), to enable our partners in the region to maximise tools provided through IPMDA and other Quad partner initiatives, to monitor and secure their waters, enforce their laws, and deter unlawful behavior. We look forward to India hosting the inaugural MAITRI workshop in 2025. In addition, Quad partners intend to layer new technology and data into IPMDA over the coming year, to continue to deliver cutting edge capability and information to the region." China would continue to be a key concern for Quad leaders, and would perhaps serve as the super glue closely packing these four countries, with major interest in the Indo-Pacific region in a tighter embrace.

The next Quad leaders' summit is likely to be hosted by Delhi, where a new US president is likely to be the key guest of honour. Given that ex-President Trump had encouraged the Quad grouping and President Biden has elevated it to leaders summit, it is safe to assume that QUAD is here to stay.

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

Dissanayake's rise amidst Sri Lanka's political uncertainty

As the nation transitions under Dissanayake's leadership, questions loom about his ability to navigate the complex web of rivalries that define Sri Lanka's volatile democracy



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

One of the senior editors in Colombo recounted an experience he had in Parliament after a crucial debate, where he observed two politicians discussing serious issues. After the discussion, the editor remarked to one of the leaders, "Look, you always attack him in Parliament, but behind the scenes, you are so close and listen to him carefully." This leader was none other than Anura Kumara Dissanayake, the newly elected ninth Executive President of Sri Lanka and leader of the Marxist-Leninist Party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. The person he was listening to was his predecessor, former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, a neoliberal democrat. In response to the editor's comment, Dissanayake stated, "Whatever we say in Parliament, listening to him for five minutes behind the scenes is where we can learn a lot about politics."

Wickremesinghe embodies the craft of political manoeuvring, while Dissanayake represents an idealism that has sought to reshape politics through violent revolution, a pursuit that has, lamentably, cost over 60,000 young lives. But later, he engineered a shift among a few key party members to adopt a middle ground to attract liberal democrats through the NPP alliance. So far, it has been a successful story.



The friendship between these two leaders grew for a reason: Wickremesinghe was facing serious internal rifts within his party, the United National Party, where his junior, Sajith Premadasa, was rebelling against him. The history of this party is filled with tales of internal conflicts and bitter betrayals that continue to haunt its prosperity. Nevertheless, Wickremesinghe demonstrated resilience, showing that no matter who declared a power struggle against him, he could adeptly play the game of politics. This Machiavellian politician, well-versed in power dynamics, understands that he would never engage in a battle when it could be won through deception. The painful reality, however, is the consequences of these internal conflicts within political parties as the country enters a new era dominated by "political coalitions." In my opinion, this is not a healthy exercise for a robust democracy.

The erosion of political parties, the backbone of political ideologies, inevitably paves the way for unprecedented crises and precarious social outcomes. However, few realise that the friendship between Wickremesinghe, a man from Colombo's elite and a well-established political family, played [knowingly or unknowingly] a vital role in President Dissanayake's victory. The longstanding enmity between Wickremesinghe and Premadasa was undoubtedly a significant factor in Dissanayake's success, even though many predicted that no candidate would secure the over 50 per cent of votes required to win.

The results reflect the polarised political divisions in Sri Lanka, where minority-dominated areas remarkably rejected Dissanayake, presenting a significant challenge for the forthcoming general elections, as his political alliance will need to secure over 113 seats out of 225 to establish its power in Parliament.

Erik Solheim, former Norwegian minister and climate change advisor to Sri Lanka, who has been actively involved in Sri Lankan politics since the LTTE era as



THE RESULTS REFLECT THE POLARISED POLITICAL DIVISIONS IN SRI LANKA, WHERE MINORITY-DOMINATED AREAS REMARKABLY REJECTED DISSANAYAKE, PRESENTING A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE FOR FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTIONS, AS HIS POLITICAL ALLIANCE WILL NEED TO SECURE OVER 113 SEATS OUT OF 225 TO ESTABLISH ITS POWER IN PARLIAMENT

a mediator in peace talks, commented on the significance of this election, stating, "The weakness of the election winner is that his coalition has very little experience running a complicated state like Sri Lanka. They may struggle to achieve a majority in Parliament and implement their many promises in a challenging economic environment."

Despite the worldwide congratulatory messages pouring in for the new leader, I find these insights particularly useful for forecasting the future trajectory of electoral outcomes and the challenges that the island nation is likely to face. The caretaker government, appointed for just two months until 14 November, faces low expectations and should refrain from making new appointments, wisely retaining some senior ministry secretaries from the previous administration.

If the President fails to secure a majority in the House, he will need to form a coalition, but if that proves impossible, the opposition may take control of Parliament, leading to chaotic infighting—an alarming scenario for an inexperienced President unprepared for Sri Lanka's complex political landscape. This situation accentuates significant uncertainties ahead. Historical trends suggest that a President's party or coalition often secures a majority in subsequent elections; however, the recent election results, where the winning candidate failed to garner over 50 per cent of the vote amidst three main contenders, complicate this.

The strong support for Sajith Premadasa and Ranil Wickremesinghe in Tamil-dominated provinces indicates a serious challenge for the newly elected President and his coalition as they approach the upcoming par-

liamentary elections. However, what is remarkable about this election is that it was exceptionally peaceful, with no violence reported, allowing for a refreshing power transition. The commendable role played by the Elections Commission in Sri Lanka cannot be overstated. This calmness is particularly surprising in a country where people previously took to the streets, violently ousting the Prime Minister and President after experiencing a devastating economic crisis. Many find it hard to believe. Nonetheless, this should not be seen as the calm before the storm, as the country's economy remains precarious. No leader can fulfil all the promises made during the election campaign. The responsibility now lies with the leader and his team to convince the public, fostering understanding and collaboration to overcome the challenges ahead. This is where the reality of the much-discussed "new renaissance" will be tested against the ground realities. The nation-state and its historical trajectory will provide important lessons in understanding what the future may hold. What does it mean for a nation's history to be an intricate weave of choices and consequences rather than a mere succession of events? This perspective compels us to reflect on the profound implications of individual and collective decisions on the essence of a nation. The dismissal of "what ifs" simplifies a complex reality rich with potential paths, urging us to explore the interplay between certainty and possibility.

In the post-independence landscape, missed opportunities for reconciliation and economic transformation reveal a dissonance between political aspira-

tions and societal realities. The notion of a "false renaissance" recurs throughout pivotal moments: the 1948 declaration of Independence, the 1956 Sinhala Only Act, the 1972 establishment of a republic, the 1977 shift to an open economy, the election of the first female executive president in 1994, the conclusion of the civil war in 2009, and the election of an apolitical leader (Gotabaya Rajapaksa) to overhaul the social structure in 2019—all serve as warnings against complacency born from superficial progress that obscures unresolved tensions and deep-rooted systemic issues.

Therefore, sensationalising the new leader's humble family background and expressing anger towards the "self-proclaimed elites" and their alleged corruption may not provide the sustainable answers that the nation desperately seeks. Instead, it is the collective will and the leader's capacity to engage with those who oppose him that will be essential for embarking on this new journey. While propaganda may orchestrate a false renaissance, the shimmering illusions of progress starkly contrast with the gritty ground reality, exposing a profound philosophical enigma: the allure of superficial advancement often obscures the underlying fractures of society. This compels us to confront the uncomfortable truths of our existence that we habitually choose to ignore in our quest for meaning and coherence.

This challenge now lies before the new leadership. Behold an essential, paradoxical truth: within this tranquil interlude lies the profound anticipation of the storm to come.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are Personal)

Agri-tech 2.0 : Digital innovations paving the path to sustainable farming

By boosting productivity, promoting sustainability and reducing environmental impact, these technologies offer a pathway for sustainable future

As the global population heads toward an estimated 10 billion by 2050, the agricultural sector faces mounting pressure to significantly increase food production. For India, with its vast and diverse agricultural landscape, this presents a critical challenge. Traditional farming methods alone will not be enough to meet the needs of a growing population while also addressing the threats posed by climate change, dwindling natural resources and the imperative for sustainable practices. In this context, agri-tech, the convergence of technology and agriculture, offers a transformative pathway forward. By integrating cutting-edge digital technologies into farming, India has the potential to enhance productivity, sustain-



AUROBIND UPADHYAYA

ability, and resilience. This article explores how these emerging technologies are reshaping the agricultural sector in India, positioning it to meet the demands of the future.

Agriculture at a Crossroads : For decades, agriculture has been the backbone of India's economy, employing over 50 per cent of the workforce and contributing significantly to GDP. However, the sector is

now facing unprecedented strain. The growing population, along with environmental challenges such as erratic weather patterns, water scarcity, and soil degradation, has placed the industry at a critical juncture. The traditional methods of farming are no longer sufficient to meet the increasing demand for food while preserving the environment. This is where agri-tech comes into play, providing innovative solutions that can transform Indian agriculture by improving efficiency and promoting sustainable practices.

Precision Agriculture: Data-Driven Farming : One of the most promising advancements in agri-tech is precision agriculture, which leverages technologies such as GPS, IoT sen-

sors, and drones to optimise farming operations. By gathering and analysing real-time data on factors like soil health, weather conditions, and crop growth, precision agriculture enables farmers to make informed decisions. This approach helps in the efficient use of water, fertilisers, and pesticides, minimising waste and environmental harm while maximising crop yields.

In India, the adoption of precision agriculture is accelerating. According to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), these techniques have the potential to increase yields by 15-25 per cent while reducing input costs by 10-15 per cent. The precision agriculture market in India is expected to grow significantly, from USD 57.6 mil-



lion in 2020 to USD 124.2 million by 2025. Government initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) for water conservation and the Soil Health Card Scheme for better fertiliser management are further driving this growth.

AI and Machine Learning : Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are also playing a crucial role in modernising Indian agricul-

ture. By analysing vast amounts of data from satellite imagery, weather forecasts, and historical crop performance, AI algorithms can predict potential problems like pest outbreaks and suggest the best times for planting. AI-powered platforms are already being used to predict pest infestations and optimise pesticide use, potentially reducing the need for harmful chemicals by up to 30 per cent.

Ensuring Transparency : Blockchain technology is emerging as a revolutionary tool in agricultural supply chains. By offering a decentralised ledger for recording transactions, blockchain ensures transparency, reduces fraud, and promotes fair trade practices. For farmers, suppliers, and consumers alike,

blockchain provides verifiable information about the origin and journey of food products, ensuring adherence to sustainability standards. The blockchain market in India's agriculture and food supply chain is expected to grow at a CAGR of 47.8 per cent, reaching USD 289 million by 2027.

IoT and Smart Farming : The Internet of Things (IoT) is revolutionising how farmers monitor and manage their crops. IoT devices, such as soil moisture sensors and weather stations, provide real-time data on environmental conditions, allowing for better decision-making in the field. For example, smart irrigation systems can adjust water usage based on real-time data, saving water and improving crop health. The IoT in agriculture market

in India is projected to reach USD 634.5 million by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 12.5 per cent.

Use of Drones : Equipped with high-resolution cameras and sensors, drones provide farmers with detailed aerial imagery of their fields. This helps in identifying issues such as nutrient deficiencies, pest infestations, and water stress. Farmers can then take targeted actions, reducing waste and environmental damage. The use of drones in Indian agriculture is expected to grow substantially, with the market anticipated to reach USD 108 million by 2025.

(The writer is chief growth officer with Arahas Technologies; views are personal)

OFFSET'S JAW-DROPPING ALLEGATIONS; CARDI B GIVES FIERCE RESPONSE

Cardi B and Offset's tumultuous relationship has experienced another dramatic twist. Offset has made a public claim during their divorce that his estranged wife cheated on him while she was pregnant. Cardi, who is not afraid of confrontation, addressed the accusations and appeared to verify them in a later tweet by saying, "AND DID!!!!"

The rapper known as Bodak Yellow was on Instagram Live late on Wednesday night, entertaining his fans, when she received a message from Offset's verified account. "U f-cked with a baby inside, tell the truth!!!" he said per a screenshot from the recording shared on X.

Shortly after Cardi expressed her anger, she disclosed that Offset has been attempting to control her with gifts and warnings as she tries to move on from their relationship. The singer requested a divorce from the former Migos rapper in July, mentioning various reasons for their split, including his unfaithfulness. Even though there were rumours about Offset being unfaithful, individuals close to the pair have refuted that this was the main cause of their split. At the same time, there are rumours circulating about the Money hitmaker launching a new album in the current year.

"You want to play those games with me? We're going to play those games too," Cardi B blasted her soon-to-be ex-husband during the Instagram Live, highlighting his threats. "Since you wanna f-ing threaten me, talking about you wanna take my st. You want to take my s**t because I'm moving on? Move on! Move on... Why can't you move on?" she continued.



what's brewing?

KJo under fire: MAI hits back on 'movie outing for a family' claims

Director Karan Johar pointed out that a trip to the movies for a family of four in India costs Rs 10,000. The *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* director Zoya Akhtar concurred with him regarding the high-cost individuals incur to see a movie at a theatre. The Multiplex Association of India (MAI) has responded to KJo's statements by presenting evidence that the average cost for a family of four at multiplexes is slightly more than one-tenth of Karan's estimation.

In a statement, MAI said, "In 2023, the average ticket price (ATP) across all cinemas in India was Rs 130 per ticket. The country's largest cinema chain, PVRINOX, reported an ATP of Rs 258 for the fiscal year 2023-24." It further noted that the average Spend Per Head (SPH) on food and beverage (F&B) at the multiplex's theatres during this period stood at Rs 132.

Responding to Karan Johar's claim, MAI stated, "This brings the total average expenditure for a family of four to Rs 1,560—significantly different from the Rs 10,000."

Karan Johar, in a discussion, revealed findings from a survey he had recently come across. "They went to 100 homes and out of those 100 homes, 90 said they would watch only two films a year (in theatres). This is of an income group that is a massive part of our audience base. They can't afford it. They may come out on Diwali,

or if they hear about a film like *Street 2?*"

He added, "Family members said that they don't like to go to cinema halls because when kids say that they want popcorn or something to eat, they feel bad denying them. So they would rather go to a restaurant, where they're not paying for the ticket; they're paying only for the food. They said, 'Our child will point and say he wants caramel popcorn, but we can't afford it.' Because the average cost for a family of four can be Rs 10,000. And maybe those Rs 10,000 are not in their economic planning at all."

Further in its statement, MAI pointed out the different factors that affect movie ticket prices. "Cinema pricing is dynamic and flexible. Prices fluctuate based on factors like location, day of the week, seat type, film format, and cinema format," read the statement signed by Kamal Gianchandani, President, Multiplex Association of India. They also stated that exhibitors and cinema owners frequently implement tactics like providing discounts and promotions in order to make going to the movies more cost-effective, "not only during less busy periods but also on busy days."



'When I signed Jigra, I was in my tigress mode'



Alia Bhatt is currently involved in the promotion of her upcoming movie *Jigra*, set to be released next month. During a conversation between *Devara: Part 1* actor Jr NTR, filmmaker Karan Johar and Alia, she discussed signing *Jigra* immediately after welcoming her daughter Raha Kapoor. She also noticed the maternal instinct portrayed in the film, focusing on her character's attempt to rescue her brother.

During the chat, Alia opened up about the time she received the offer of doing *Jigra* and said, "When I signed *Jigra*, I think I was in my tigress mode. I was in my most protective mode—like, 'No one come near her, mode. That was the energy. That is why I always say destiny, luck, and life have so much to play in things going a certain way. Forget the fate of *Jigra*, the fact that it came to me also was... wow what is this timing! That I am feeling this way and it came. It had all of those things laced over it."

Alia shared how motherhood changed her as an actor and as a person, saying, "I don't think I am the same person. Life has so much more meaning and I think actors can get really self-obsessed if they are constantly thinking about themselves... Now when there is another being in your life suddenly it is like Alia, who? It is Raha, Raha, Raha! Alia comes in and out! The focus is on her, nurturing and my mind always being there is something that will never change now."



ASHTON KUTCHER, MILA KUNIS STILL GOING STRONG, NO DIVORCE

Rumours about Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis breaking up have been dismissed, with a source verifying that the couple is staying together.

The source spoke to individuals and rejected the rumours, saying, "This is completely absurd and untrue." The rumours resurfaced after Kutcher's previous connection to Sean 'Diddy' Combs was brought back into focus.

The renewed circulation of old photos featuring Kutcher and Combs, who were arrested for charges such as sex trafficking and racketeering, amplified the rumours of their separation.

Nevertheless, another source made it clear that Kutcher is not involved in the current legal issues concerning Combs. Ashton is not involved in any of this. He is not a part of this discussion involving Diddy. The source mentioned that Ashton has only witnessed Diddy at a few social and business gatherings that were all captured by the media.

Ashton and Mila initially crossed paths while they were working together on the popular TV show *That '70s Show*, which ran from 1998 to 2006. The couple started a relationship in 2012 following Kutcher's separation from Demi Moore and Kunis' breakup with her longtime partner, Macaulay Culkin. In July 2015, they tied the knot and now have two kids, Wyatt, who is 9 years old and Dimitri, who is 7.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



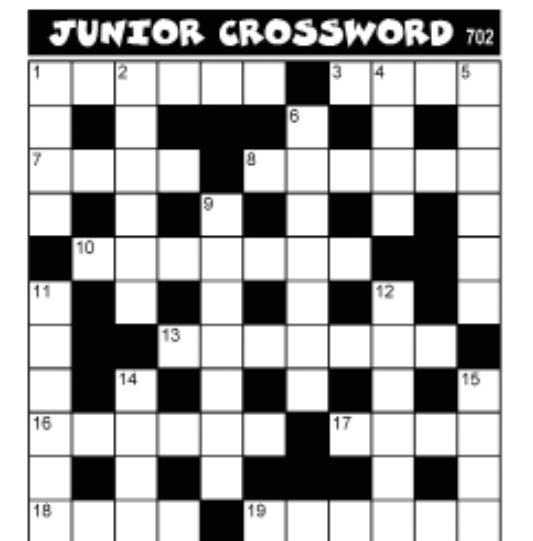
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

- ACROSS**
- An archer fires these
 - Seize
 - The body's covering
 - Wanting food
 - Rich
 - Not straight
 - Best
 - The world's most eaten grain
 - Utters
 - A fire-breathing monster
- DOWN**
- Too
 - Spilled
 - Scraps of cloth
 - Purchasing
 - A soft thing to sit on or put on a couch
 - A type of shop that sells flowers
 - High, steep rock-faces
 - Needlework
 - Jealousy
 - A blood vessel



Avneet Kaur's jet-setting travels from London to Greece

SHIKHA DUGGAL
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Actress Avneet Kaur chose the world's top summer vacation spots as her ideal personal getaway. From London to Paris, the Amalfi Coast to Germany, she had ticked it all!

Let's not forget, her gram posts got us all craving a vacation. So let's take you through her latest voyage.

"Oh, I was travelling with my pals over the summer from London, Paris, Amsterdam, Greece, Italy, Portofino, the Amalfi Coast, to Germany. One of the longest and most enjoyable trips I have ever had! I had always wanted to travel to Greece and now I found myself there. Travelling and experiencing what's happening outside our country is extremely important. Indeed, I would not wish to revisit the southern region of Italy. That definitely wasn't my feel," one of the busiest actresses of the hour today expresses.

Getting her to come on board for our travelogue was also one of our goals, we wanted to give our readers some homework so they could learn how their favourite actress made her overseas vacation an unforgettable experience. Oo la!ala! "Every country was unique. London is my home away from home because I travel there so often. In Paris, I was all business when it came to fashion! In addition, I was travelling between several climates because I had suddenly left hot Italy for cold Germany. It's summertime after all, so I purposefully picked out ensembles with lots of colour pops. I practically wore everything in style throughout this trip: maxi skirts, pastel colors, flowery jewellery. All of this eventually pales in comparison to my fascination with luxury bags! If I claim not to be infatuated with Dior and Chanel, I will be lying. I made sure that even my swimsuits looked stylish when I got clicked," shared the *Tiku Weds Sheru* fame.

All of the places she had on her list were very different and excited her. She

states, for instance, "We tried everything lemon because the people at Mykonos were very welcoming and the other place we went after that was really famous for lemons. I developed a deep affection for Italian culture. I took part in their celebrations and dancing. Despite the fact that I was unable to locate any hidden spots there, I can tell my fans that Positano was the one destination on the trip that truly impressed me. I went to this incredibly awesome "cave party." I will always be reminded of this encounter."

Later in the chat, the *Alladdin* star recalls the journey she had with her folks and says, "We liked to pick hotels in the main areas. We reserved rooms at Mykonos' greatest and most popular hotel! It was the epitome of luxury. But not at all like our richly cultural India. Every region of our nation begs for a different narrative. While I travel the world, my own country holds the greatest personal significance for me. I also adore historical fiction! Rajasthan is the place to go for this."

In this exclusive conversation, Avneet had

a lot more to say to us besides her recent tour. Because you're probably going to see your favourite internet sensation at a hilly location in the country if she's feeling a lot more stressful in her life. She underlines that India's hill stations are already making great progress, so it's not always necessary to go outside. She could also want to try something like a spa day. In the midst of a jungle, she requests a massage! Plans that are interesting, as we must state. Conversely, she said, "I always travel by train from London to Paris; there's a particular train that runs there. It's something I recently learned about; I had no idea it ran underground. That has always seemed to stifle me a little. There's also the difference between swimming in the ocean and in a pool. This is no light undertaking! I reserve a yacht party each time I go on vacation. I generally use a floater when I jump into the ocean, but I didn't have one in Greece, which was an additional terrifying experience for me. Once I was at ease, I went snorkeling by myself. It was exciting

and risky at the same time. I was living my ZNMD moment!"

Yes, she also shared a recollection from her early years. Mussorie is where she had the best childhood vacation memories. It is unforgettable because Kullu Manali was the closest hill station to her while her family was in Punjab. "I have it all recorded on an album. Then, I found that I was now experiencing nostalgia from shooting in the North. And I have an endless wish list. I want to consider going skydiving, camping under the northern lights, having never seen Switzerland, or seeing the locations of *Twilight* or the *Game of Thrones*. Hehe." She informed us by the end of the interview about her habit of returning postcards from each nation she visited. She continues going back to see Notting Hill in London because she is so in love with it. After that, her mother insists on getting her fridge magnets from every country; presently, there isn't any room on her fridge for more magnets. Yikes!



Redefining urban living with rooftop amenities

Rapid urbanisation is stimulating the real estate market. The IBEF projects that India's urban population would grow to 542.70 million by 2025 and 675.50 million by 2035. This expansion, combined with the desire for modern living standards, has made rooftop facilities a popular trend and a wise investment for purchasers and builders. Buildings in densely populated cities with limited space only provide minimal housing and parking. However, this is changing as people want access to facilities often found in suburban townships.

In bustling city centers where high-rise and mid-rise buildings offer unmatched convenience and facilities, people often crave fresh air and outdoor tranquility, especially when navigating through traffic to reach public parks becomes daunting. To address this dilemma, rooftop amenities have surged in popularity. They offer easy access to outdoor spaces right within the building, making them a practical and appealing alternative.

ARCHITECTS' RESPONSE

Architects are also responding by integrating rooftop amenities into building designs, transforming these once utilitarian spaces into attractive lifestyle enhancers. Global trends and the economic push for uniqueness are enriching urban landscapes, making rooftop amenities a key selling point. This blend of tradition and modernity is evident in Indian architecture, where western minimalism's clean lines and functionality are embraced, especially in commercial and upscale residential projects. Furthermore, addressing climate concerns and growing emphasis on wellness, open-air gyms, yoga decks and sustainable designs, reflects broader global influences on Indian architectural practices.

ROOFTOP TYPES

Various types of rooftop facilities in a building improve the living experience through modern design and construction techniques. This includes:

Rooftop pool: Pools are universally appealing, found in resorts and multi-family communities worldwide. While not always heavily utilised, they remain a significant draw for any housing development. Well-designed pool areas serve as central community hubs and popular gathering spots and if the pools are facing towards the edges, they make fantastic infinity pools with a view of the cityscapes.

Lounge space: Rooftop lounges are always popular and when well-designed, they significantly enhance the space. Sleek, comfortable seating complemented by lighting, shade and privacy elements creates an ideal environment for relaxation and enjoyment. Adding vibrant furnishings and stylish accents makes it both inviting and distinctive. And creating seating zones around a fire pit fosters a welcoming atmosphere for people to unwind and socialize, maximising year-round use and enhancing the overall appeal.

Green space: Lush green spaces offer a serene getaway, bridging urban life with nature. They provide shade, enhance air quality and are perfect for families to unwind outdoors. Rooftop gardens, especially, offer panoramic views and natural insulation help cut down on energy use and utility bills.

Fitness area: Staying in shape is made easier with a gym that offers a rooftop track for walking or jogging, allowing individuals to exercise. The facility also includes dedicated spaces for yoga sessions, exercise classes, or individual workouts, providing the added benefit of an outdoor-like environment.

Rooftop amenities aren't just a perk for buyers—they're a strategic advantage for builders and real estate agents. These features enhance the appeal of properties by offering desirable living standards, often resulting in swift sales right from the start. In urban areas, where outdoor space is scarce, well-planned rooftop spaces boost the overall luxury appeal of the project, which can lead to higher property values over time. Rooftop amenities should also be constructed with safety in mind as well. Such eye-catching features help properties distinguish themselves in a competitive market, even attracting tenants faster and minimising vacancy periods.

However, maintenance and construction costs can pose significant challenges for both homeowners and builders. The architectural complexity and upkeep demands can strain budgets and affect financial planning in the long term. As urbanisation is driving increased investment in luxury properties featuring rooftop amenities, expected to be a lasting trend. As new urban trends emerge and densely packed buildings fill up, there is a growing inclination towards investing in vibrant, spacious environments.

(The author, Priyatham Kumar, is the founder of Homes247.)

The talented and gorgeous Avneet Kaur, who had her all-in-one travel experiences in her latest trip, speaks exclusively with *The Pioneer*, taking us through her travel diaries



LOVE, SITARA: Dysfunction never felt so right!

TEJAL SINHA
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Love, Sitara is a new romantic drama with elements of family life revolving around the life of Sitara, played by actress Sobhita Dhulipala. In this direct-to-OTT release, she portrays the role of an interior designer. Directed by Vandana Kataria, the film is ready to be released soon.

PLOT

"Harr happy family ek jaisi hoti hai, lekin har unhappy family ek dusrae se bilkul alag hoti hai." This voiceover by Sobhita can be heard, which leads to the beginning of this slice-of-life drama.

The titular character Sitara (played by Sobhita Dhulipala) is an interior designer who is an independent woman who doesn't really believe much in the concept of marriage. However, eventually she desires to get married to Arjun (played by Rajeev Siddhartha), a passionate chef on the brink of international success, with whom, like any other modern relationship, there were breakups and patch-ups. Now they are finally getting married. Yeyyyyyy!!!! She meets her BFF Anjali (played by Tamara D' Souza) and gives her the news, which turns out to be shockingly surprising news.

HIGHLIGHTS

Love, Sitara, If you think is only about romance, well yes, it is, but let's not forget the fact that the comedy and humour that the story

DIRECTED BY: Vandana Kataria
PRODUCED BY: Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP Movies
CAST: Sobhita Dhulipala, Rajeev Siddhartha, Sonali Kulkarni, Sanjay Bhutani, B Jayashree, Virginia Rodrigues, Tamara D'Souza and Rijul Ray
WRITTEN BY: Sonia Bahl, Abbas Dalal, Hussain Dalal and Vandana
STREAMING ON: ZEE5
RATING: 3.5/5

brings in are just top-notch. The story kickstarts with how Sitara turns her own mind about getting married. But as the story progresses, there's not one but back-to-back twists that make *Love, Sitara* a must-watch 'family-terner'. The emotional aspect of this film sets it apart from other recent films. It goes beyond that as it strives to clarify how previous pains and family pressures impact love and decision-making. The chemistry between Sitara and Arjun is beyond your regular lead stars as it makes you feel much more relatable, especially in the current times.

DRAWBACKS

Love, Sitara is one of those well-executed pro-



jects, which makes it difficult for you to find anything negative. But yes, there are a few scenes that get pretty much predictable, especially in the first half. However, these are minor quibbles in an otherwise engaging series.

PERFORMANCES

Sobhita, as the titular character Sitara, is as amazing as she's always been. All of those who have loved her in *Made in Heaven* and *The Night Manager* for that matter cannot stop but fall in love with her yet again. Well, not that she's played a similar character, but the different shades that she brings to her character are fantastic. Her physique, nuanced expressions and body language bring a rare authenticity to the character, making her journey and struggles deeply compelling. What we personally love the most is also her wedding looks, be it in the golden saree paired with vibrant red blouse, paired with gajra and bindi, or her engagement look, where she opts for an orange lehenga.

Rajeev Siddhartha as Arjun is beyond just a green flag. He is a complete green forest, as they say. He inhabits the role with natural ease, making us dream of a guy as who he is. His character, Arjun, is very clear with what he wants to do in life, though he gets no support from his father. Be it as an ideal would-be son-in-law, best friend's fiancé, or Sitara's fiancé, he is a whole bunch of sweethearts who anyone would regret breaking his heart. (Oopppsssss! A small hint of what happens.)

B Jayashree as Amamma is a darling, yaa! I mean, just being the queen of the house, the savage Amamma is a love. Her dialogues and her expressions tickle your funny bones to the extent that you have tears rolling down

your eyes. She certainly wins your heart every time she speaks.

The rest of the cast, be it Sonali Kulkarni as Hema Chechi, Virginia as Latha, Sanjay Bhutani as Govind, Tamara as Anjali, or Rijul Ray as Sitara's very good old friend, all have their own importance and significantly contribute to the story. Well, here's a brownie point for you all, dear readers: Every character brings in their own twists and spice to the story.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

While the story is beyond a doubt quite engaging, let's not forget for the fact that the cinematography plays an even greater role, taking the viewers through the breathtaking views of Kerala. The camera shots become a character in themselves. The screenplay by Sonia Bahl, along with the other two writers, Abbas Dalal and Hussain Dalal, really touches the characters and makes the audience feel for them in their problems. Talking of the music, be it the fun *Ungliyon Pe* or a song that's bombarded with emotions, *Hai Dil Darya* amalgamates well with the particular scenes.

VERDICT

Love, Sitara is a must-watch, especially for lovers of deep films. Watching Sobhita in multiple shades of emotions and phases is outstanding. Whether you want a romantic story or a family saga, *Love, Sitara* is a perfect package of everything that you seek.

CAN DEVARA BREAK ₹100 CRORE BARRIER ON DAY 1?

NEARLY TEN LAKH TICKETS HAVE BEEN SOLD ONLY FOR THE TELUGU VERSION SO FAR, WITH OVERSEAS PRE-BOOKINGS CROSSING THE \$2.5 MILLION MARK

The Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor starrer film *Devara* is poised to create history on its opening day, according to the bookings. Many multiplexes in Hyderabad and Secunderabad are screening this film as many times as possible, with almost all shows running houseful. Koratala Siva is the director, while Kalyan Ram Nandamuri and Sudhakar Mikkilineni are the producers. Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan plays the villain, with Anirudh Ravichander providing the music.

The film has done a pre-release business of nearly Rs 215 crore, the highest for Jr NTR's career. Nizam area rights alone sold for Rs 42 crore and in Andhra, it's Rs 50 crore. With ceded rights fetching Rs 23 crore, Telangana and Andhra distribution rights sold for a whopping Rs 115 crore. Interestingly, both the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana governments granted permission for extra shows and released a G.O. to hike ticket prices.

Jr NTR is currently in the USA promoting the film overseas. The overseas rights sold for Rs 30 crore, the highest for Jr NTR. Pre-bookings overseas have already crossed \$2.5 million, and it seems Jr NTR is about to create a sensation on the film's opening day.

In India, advance bookings are showing huge numbers for the first day. Some expect that the film could easily surpass Rs 100 crore gross on its first day worldwide, based on pre-bookings alone. Nearly ten lakh tickets have been sold just for the Telugu version of the film.

Jr NTR is returning to a solo film after six years, with his last being *Aravind Sametha*. He followed it with the multi-starrer *RRR*, alongside Ram Charan, directed by SS Rajamouli. If *Devara* crosses Rs 100 crore gross on its opening day, Jr NTR will become the second actor after Prabhas to achieve this feat.



Ajay's fierce look unveiled for *Pottel*

Yuva Chandraa Krishna and Ananya Nagalla take the lead in the film *Pottel*, a rustic action entertainer directed by Sahit Motkhuri in his third directorial venture. Ajay plays a powerful role, and on the occasion of his birthday on Thursday, the makers revealed a new poster showcasing him in a ferocious avatar. His salt-and-pepper look, combined with an intense gaze, heightens the character's ferocity.

Produced by Nishank Reddy Kudithi and Suresh Kumar Sadige, the film is set for a theatrical release during the Dasara festival.

The teaser and other promotional content have generated positive buzz around the film. According to the makers, *Pottel* will deliver a strong message about the importance of education. The music is composed by Shekar Chandra.



EXCLUSIVE

IS EESHA REBBA DATING? LATEST SCOOP!

Actress Eesha Rebba, known for juggling web series and films, is currently working on an untitled project helmed by director Sanjeev AR. Starring alongside Tharun Bhascker in this rural drama, the shoot is taking place in and around Rajahmundry. But here's the real scoop—according to insiders, Eesha is rumoured to be in a relationship with a director-turned-actor!

Eesha, who first grabbed the spotlight with her debut in *Anthaku Mundu Aa Tharuwatha*, directed by Indraganti Mohana Krishna, has

seen her share of media buzz linking her to prominent directors. Her filmography includes hits like *Ami Tumi*, *Aravinda Sametha* and *Raagala 24 Gantallo*, and more recently, her acclaimed role in the web series *Daya*.

Now, whispers from Film Nagar suggest the actress is getting serious with her mystery beau, who's been through a divorce and is now ready to take the plunge again. With her last film, *Mama Mascheendra*, failing to make waves at the box office, all eyes are on Eesha's personal life. Could this be the plot twist her fans didn't see coming?

FNCC donates ₹25 lakh to AP CM

The Telugu film industry continues to extend a helping hand to flood victims in Andhra Pradesh. Many film personalities have made generous donations to the AP Chief Minister's Fund, while film bodies like the Producers Council and Film Chamber of Commerce have also pitched in. The Film Nagar Cultural Club (FNCC) has joined the relief efforts, donating Rs 25 lakhs to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. FNCC president G Adishesagiri Rao, secretary Mohan Mullapudi, and joint secretary Peddi Raju met the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to present the cheque.

The recent floods in the Telugu states have been devastating and it's heartening to see organizations like the Film Nagar Cultural Club (FNCC) stepping up to help. According to Adishesagiri Rao, president of FNCC, the organisation has always been at the forefront of relief programs during the natural calamities.

Mohan Mullapudi, secretary of the Film



Nagar Cultural Club (FNCC), announced that the organisation has made donations to both the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana state governments to support flood relief efforts. Expressing gratitude, he acknowledged the steadfast support of both state governments towards the FNCC, appreciating their collaborative spirit.

Wait is over! Paruchuri brothers confirm *Mr. Celebrity's* release on Oct 4



Sudarshan Paruchuri, grandson of renowned writers Paruchuri Brothers, is set to make his debut as a lead actor in the upcoming film *Mr. Celebrity*. Directed by debutant Chandina Ravi Kishore, the movie is slated for release on October 4. The film's producers, N Panduranga Rao and Chinna Reddaiah, are confident about the project's success. Paruchuri Brothers, proud grandparents, announced the release date and extended their best wishes to Sudarshan for a successful debut.

"Our grandson Sudarshan is making his debut with *Mr. Celebrity*, which is slated for release on October 4. Despite being his first film, director Ravi Kishore has crafted it impressively, and it's sure to captivate everyone," said Paruchuri Gopalakrishna.

Meanwhile, Paruchuri Venkateswara Rao said, "Our grandson Sudarshan is making his debut with *Mr. Celebrity*, which is slated for release on October 4. Despite being his first film, director Ravi Kishore has crafted it impressively, and it's sure to captivate everyone."

The film stars Varalaxmi Sarathkumar and Sri Deeksha as the leading ladies of *Mr. Celebrity*.

Director TJ Gnanavel opens up on *Vettaiyan* ahead of release

With just two weeks until its release, anticipation builds for Superstar Rajinikanth's *Vettaiyan*. The film's preview, unveiled at the audio launch, offered a glimpse into its action-packed narrative. TJ Gnanavel, the director, has begun promoting the film, sharing insights in a recent interview. *Vettaiyan* follows the story of an encounter specialist, played by Rajinikanth, exploring his thoughts and stance on encounters. Unlike previous films, we delve into the character's background, Gnanavel explained. Acknowledging the heightened expectations post Jailer's success, Gnanavel ensured he stayed true to his vision while incorporating elements fitting Rajinikanth's image and stardom. *Vettaiyan* promises action, songs and fights, but remains focused on its core message. I didn't compromise my creative vision for Rajinikanth, Gnanavel asserted. The director's comments hint at a captivating blend of style and substance in *Vettaiyan*, eagerly anticipated by fans worldwide!



Next Kannadiga to conquer Bollywood

Kannada actor Samarjit Lankesh, the son of renowned filmmaker Indrajith Lankesh, is making waves in the film industry with speculation about his next big project. The young actor, who made his debut this year with *Gowri*, has been turning heads since being spotted outside Dharma Productions' office. His appearance has sparked rumours about his possible collaboration with the prestigious production house, known for launching new talent and backing major

Bollywood hits. Though no official statement has been made, the buzz around Samarjit's potential Dharma project has left fans eager for an announcement. Having already showcased his acting prowess in *Gowri*, Samarjit is seen as one of the most promising newcomers in the Kannada film industry, with aspirations to make a pan-Indian impact. His connection to a major Bollywood production could catapult him into the national spotlight, following in the footsteps of several South

Indian actors who have made successful Bollywood debuts. As the son of Indrajith Lankesh, Samarjit comes from a strong cinematic lineage, and his entry into the Dharma camp would mark a significant milestone in his budding career. Whether or not the rumours prove true, his presence in Mumbai and the speculation around his next project only serve to amplify the growing excitement about his future in Indian cinema. Fans and industry insiders alike are keeping a close eye on his next move.

